

Chapter Nine



Support



LET
DON'T FORGET
THIS PROJECT
SETTLES UPON
MUTUAL AID.

**DON'T FORGET
TO CLEAN.**

**DON'T FORGET
TO CENTER
YOUR BODY.**



Support: the ways your needs are met in order to rest, dream, and work on any project.

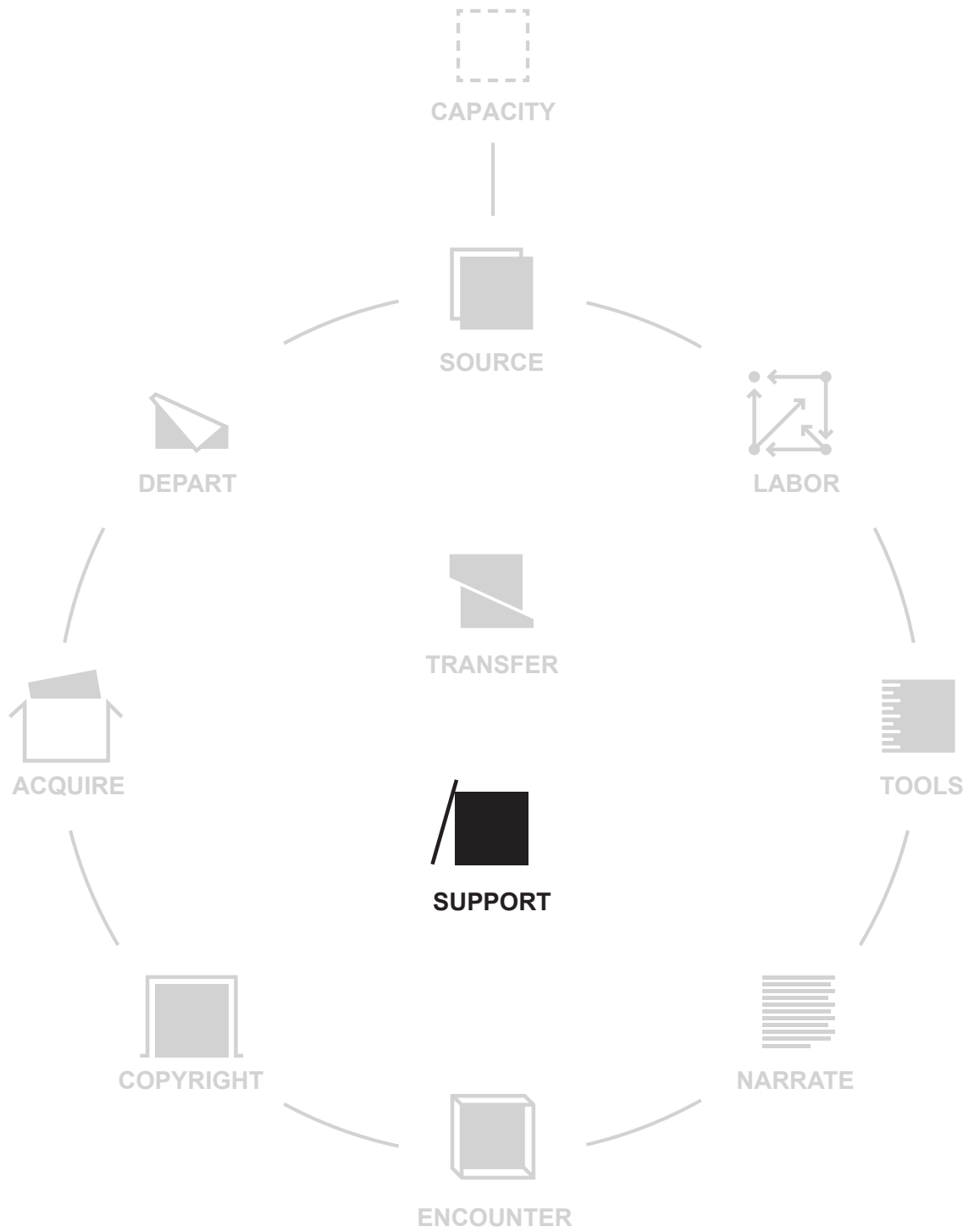
Support extends beyond the life of the project, often dictating the ways in which you navigate the contradictions of living and working as an artist.

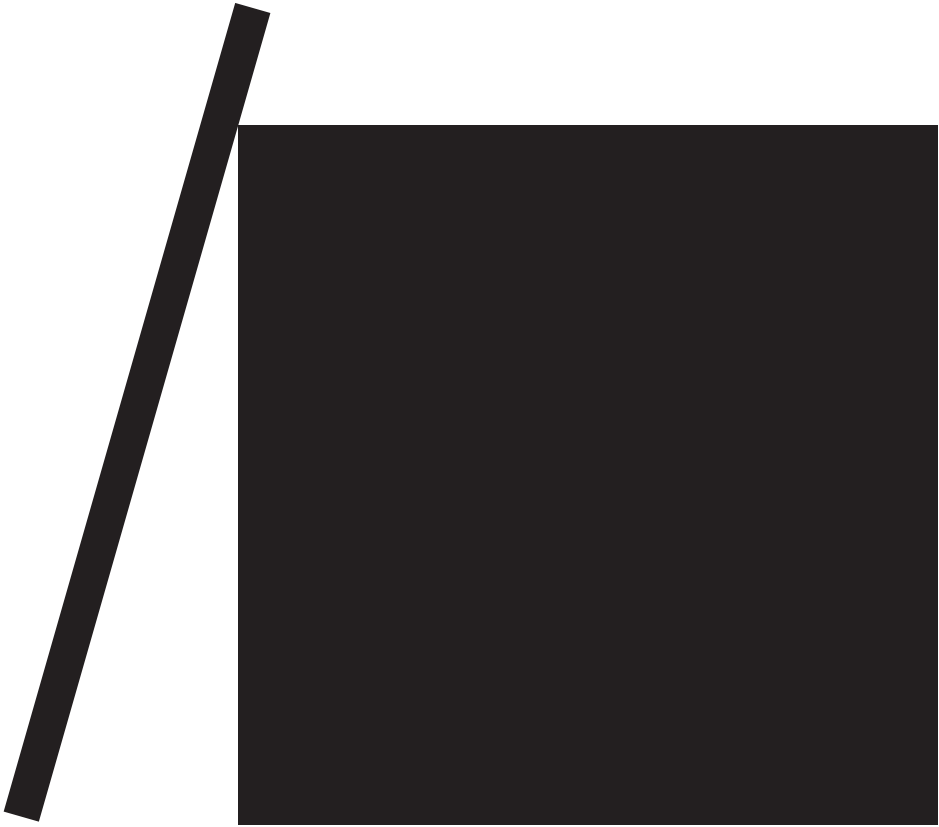
Support is implicated in all phases of the lifecycle. Types of support include: personal support, interpersonal support, and monetary support. For example, support might take the form of mutual aid and contemplative practices or as money raised through a bake sale or on a crowdfunding site.

What if support were integral to your project?

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We suggest that the following section be shared with the group as best suits your context, either read aloud—in whole or in part—or assigned to be discussed in your space of learning. Before you begin to read, we invite you to ground yourself in the space: notice the air on your skin and your feet on the ground. What are your feelings and sensations at this moment? What are you bringing to this text? Take a moment to become aware of this. We invite you to notice what comes up for you, as you are reading this chapter. We will ask you to reflect upon this at the end of this chapter.





Introduction

The phase of the lifecycle of any project that we refer to as “support” considers the ways your needs are met in order for you to dream, practice, and work on any project. Support refers to the care and maintenance that is provided and requires deep social-emotional intelligence. Types of support include: personal support, interpersonal support, and monetary support. These are described in the discussion section of the chapter.

Story

Alice Sheppard is a dancer and choreographer who attends to the complex intersections of disability, gender, and race by exploring the societal and cultural significance of difference.¹ Alice speaks about how she practiced self-care when transitioning from her life as a musician and an academic to the uncharted territory of becoming a disabled dancer:

I would say I had gone through life taking with me the kind of narrow focus that I had about being a musician to my work as a professor. I went through life checking every box—literally ... I worked through this pathway and built a narrow life. It was, at some sort of ridiculous level, what society thinks of as a high level of achievement. It was deeply privileged and in many ways extraordinarily magical. Don't get me wrong about that. My decision to leave looked very different. It involved not focusing on being the best. I gave myself permission: to start again as a dancer and permission to not ask if I am any good. To actually be able to go home at the end of the day and stop, and not do. Do you know what I mean? It was really a different way of finding my way, a different practice, a different way of thinking. This was structurally necessary because, as it turned out, the state of training for disabled dancers in the US is pretty much zero, so I couldn't obsess about being the best. Why? Because there were no ideas, no ways to get training, no way to figure it out. There was no language for what a good disabled dancer looks like. So, I had to begin at the beginning, understanding that my expertise as an academic didn't mean anything. I had to give myself permission to start again, learning holistically and not repeating the same kind of cycle. It was both a blessing that the cycle was not there for me to repeat, and also a conscious training decision not to repeat it. But I was definitely supported in that it wasn't there for me to repeat.²

Alice Sheppard's ability to “go home at the end of the day and stop, and

not do” is a practice of personal support. To be able to do this, to transition from the academy to dance, Sheppard had to learn to embody the capacities of patience and compassion. In *Chapter 5*, we define patience as the ability to “remain present amid delays or repetitions ... aware of feelings of annoyance or frustration, noticing them without acting upon them.” We define compassion as the ability to “practice sensitivity and care with yourself and with others, sensing interdependence and connection to all of life.” See *Chapter 5: Capacities* □□ for more.⁷ Sheppard embodies these capacities while continuing to push the field of disabled dance; without losing sight of the historical conditions and forces that make the state of training “pretty much zero.”

Canaries is a mutual aid network of art-adjacent womxn, trans, and gender non-conforming people living and working with autoimmune conditions and other chronic illnesses. The group name references to the phrase “canaries in the coal mine”—shorthand for those whose sensitivities are early indicators of adverse conditions in the environment. Canaries operated from 2013–17 as a support group with monthly meetings, a listserv, and an art collective. The listserv is a place members share resources, stories, and experiences of surviving in and outside of medical institutions with these chronic conditions.³

In an interview with us in 2016, Taraneh Fazeli, a curator and member of Canaries, said:

A lot of the work I’ve been doing for myself has been about ways to value my own life that aren’t about productivity. As much as I conceptually know that, I’ve been forced to live it this past year, since I went through a flare. That’s something we are constantly negotiating in our work together as a collective. We all have limited units of energy to get through the day. We navigate what it takes to build spaces and work together, to use those units of energy for each other—that is something that is key.⁴

We share Canaries with you so that you can recognize that support might be integral to your studio practice. As a mutual aid network, Canaries demonstrates the capacity that Generative Somatics calls “connection: the ability to form and sustain trusting, authentic relationships, compel others to our vision, and be a supportive presence amidst difficulty, including the ability to give and receive grounded, useful feedback.” See *Chapter 5: Capacities* □□ for more about “connection.”⁷

Discussion

The ongoing practices of support that are necessary for livelihood are

referred to as “social reproduction”⁵ which describes how the production of life and living at home and the production of goods and services in capitalist markets are interconnected processes. The word “reproduction” in its most basic sense relates to conditions and processes of regeneration. Social reproduction is the necessary and essential labor that creates and recreates the workforce, including students, unpaid workers, and employees. In order for workers to return to work each day, they need care: food, a place to sleep, and a sense of emotional well-being. For example, Alice Sheppard had to “not do,” to have moments of rest, in order to retrain as a dancer. The Canaries had to work with “limited units of energy” to work. “Social reproduction is the indeterminate messiness of maintaining everyday life”⁶ that is often produced and reproduced by the labor of women, trans people, non-binary people, Indigenous people, and People of Color. According to the 2018 results of the American Time Use Survey released by the US Bureau of Labor Statistics, “on an average day, among adults living in households with children under age 6, women spent 1 hour providing direct physical care (such as bathing or feeding a child) to household children; by contrast, men spent 25 minutes providing physical care.”⁷ In 1975, 90 percent of mothers in Iceland went on strike for a day, taking to the streets and refusing to work, cook, and look after children. These women did this to demonstrate that housework is essential for the social reproduction of the workforce. Think of the people who help you rest and relax and who support you emotionally.

Personal and Interpersonal Support

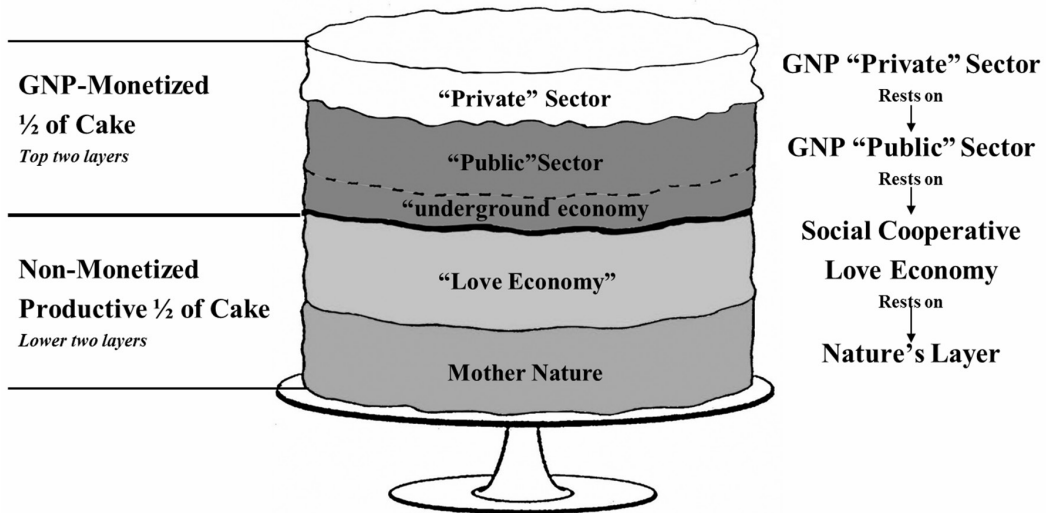
Forms of Personal Support (Contemplative Practices⁸ and Somatics) can include:

- **STILLNESS:** meditation, attunement, silence, centering, etc.
- **MOVEMENT:** yoga, walking, dance, aikido, etc.
- **RITUAL:** ceremony, sacred space, retreat, etc.
- **HEALING:** acupuncture, massage, physical therapy, aromatherapy, etc.
- **GENERATIVE PRACTICES:** visualization, tarot, beholding, etc.
- **SHARING WISDOM:** mutual mentoring, story telling, ancestral knowledge, etc.

In order for you to return to school each day, you need support: food, a place to sleep, and a sense of emotional resilience. As the anti-capitalist love note states: “You are worth more than your productivity.”⁹ To care for yourself, you must question the obsession with speed and productivity, and trouble notions of efficient and productive time.¹⁰ One way to slow

Global Futurist Hazel Henderson represented social reproduction as "sweat-equity" in the form of a layer cake. Hazel Henderson, *Total Productive System of an Industrial Society*, 1982. Courtesy of Hazel Henderson.

Total Productive System of an Industrial Society (Layer Cake With Icing)



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down and become present is to try contemplative or healing practices like meditation, centering, yoga, walking, dance, acupuncture, massage, physical therapy, or aromatherapy.

You must care for yourself and allow others to care for you because well-being is central to creativity. Just as you must learn how to use tools like a paintbrush or a table saw to create art, we believe that you must learn how to be actively present in the here and now. The political theorist and healer Anita Chari says that “creativity is the ability to sit in the space of not-knowing and not shut it down or try to control it.”¹¹ When you allow yourself to be fully present, you will notice what you are feeling. You might feel anxious, tired, depressed, distracted, or joyous and energized. What is important is that you can connect your feelings to your thoughts and actions. You can learn to care for those feelings and to consciously conserve and direct your attention and energy. People with daily contemplative practices tend to be present for whatever arises personally and interpersonally without judgment. Practices “take” time, but they also “make” time. As Taraneh said, “we navigate what it takes to build spaces and work together, to use those units of energy for each other—that is something that is key.” The Canaries emphasize interpersonal support.

Forms of Interpersonal Support can include:

- **MAINTENANCE:** cleaning, provisioning, cooking, driving, recycling, etc.
- **MOVEMENT:** yoga, walking, dance, aikido, etc.
- **LISTENING:** deep listening, mutual mentoring, intergroup dialogue circle council, etc.
- **HEALING:** acupuncture, massage, physical therapy, aromatherapy, etc.
- **LOVING:** acknowledging, smiling, laughing, hugging, holding, etc.
- **SHARING WISDOM:** mutual mentoring, story telling, ancestral knowledge, etc.

In addition to contemplative and healing practices, individual and interpersonal maintenance practices like cleaning and cooking are central to maintaining life. Try to imagine what your life would be like without cleaning, provisioning, cooking, transporting, recycling, acknowledging, or holding. We have listed multiple practices of support above so that you can try them out if they interest you. Your ability to sit with nuance and complexity, to think divergently, and to be compassionate will be strengthened through practices of support.

Support and Social Identity

Interpersonal and personal forms of support, for example various kinds of therapies, have in many cases been privatized and are often unaffordable. Contemplative practices that we mention, including meditation and yoga, may seem out of reach or accessible only for a fee in workshops in the United States, despite the fact that these practices are common components of pedagogy and culture in the contexts in which they originated. Silvia Federici has shown how local knowledges of healing and care that had been passed on from generation to generation by women, Indigenous peoples, and People of Color were outlawed with the enclosure movements of the 1400s and the rise of capitalism.¹² Federici demonstrates that by outlawing common wisdom about reproduction, and by privatizing that wisdom in the form of medical expertise, women, Indigenous people, and People of Color were forcibly denied access to much of the knowledge about caring for themselves without money.¹³ Unable to draw on intergenerational knowledge, many people today assume, for example, that a professional will need to teach them how to have a child and how to feed and care for one. Solidarity economy healing spaces, mostly organized by People of Color and Indigenous, queer, and undocumented people, offer sliding scale and free holistic health services. This is why Audre Lorde said, “caring for myself is not self-indulgence, it is self-preservation, and that is an act of political warfare.”¹⁴

The people who are employed to provide support often do so without proper compensation. Internationally, eighty percent of domestic workers are women, and most work without formal contracts or protection.¹⁵ The nurse, medical technician, or office managers of a medical facility who provide care for you when you go for a procedure may themselves not have access to the care you are receiving.¹⁶ Many artists seek out and stay at day jobs that offer health insurance because they have no other way to get the medical care they need. The job you imagine having likely depends on your social identity and monetary support. For example, if you have inherited wealth, you might imagine focusing entirely on your art practice without getting a day job. If you have student loans and do not have monetary family support, you know that you will have to balance multiple jobs while sustaining your art practice. *See Chapter 12: Transfer* ■ *for more.*⁷ The Process Work Institute speaks about social identity by using the term “rank.”¹⁷ They say that “rank [is contingent upon context and] refers to the power we have relative to one another in relationships, groups, community and the world. Some kinds of rank are earned, while others are unearned. Unearned rank is acquired through birth, or by membership in a particular race, class, gender, etc. Privilege refers to the benefits and advantages that come from one’s rank.” *How does your social*

*identity impact your ability to support yourself and others, or to socially reproduce yourself? See the Self-Reflection Assignment about Rank in Chapter 6: How Are You in the World and How is the World in You? for more.*⁷ See Adaptation of an Emotion Wheel Diagram on p. 662.

Forms of Monetary Support can include:

- **CASH GIFTS / INHERITED WEALTH:** sums of money that are given willingly without expectation of direct return.
- **DEBT:** a sum of money that is owed or due.
- **PAST SALES:** sums of money that are given in exchange for projects.
- **GRANTS:** sums of money that are given for a project that benefits the public.
- **DAY JOBS:** sums of money given in exchange for a person's labor.
- **RENTALS/INVESTMENTS:** sums of money that are put into a property or asset with the expectation of profit.
- **MUTUAL AID:** support or assistance given and reciprocated with regularity.

As an artist in the United States, you will likely have to support yourself with a day job. If you are working multiple jobs, you might not be able to attend academic or social events with your peers. You might feel as if you are missing out on opportunities to socially reproduce yourself as a “community member” or “artist” or “good student.”¹⁸ Your ability to access cash gifts, sales, loans, grants, day jobs, and investments is likely based on your intersectional social identity.¹⁹ Black, Indigenous, and People of Color, queer, and undocumented people who have been denied access to loans and mortgages and have been deprived of civil rights have developed community-based financial structures like credit unions, lending clubs, and community land trusts, which are core components of the solidarity economy, as well as non-monetary survival strategies of support that we refer to as “mutual aid.”²⁰ Mutual aid is nonmonetary support or assistance that is given and reciprocated with regularity. An example might be a lending circle, where people pool and distribute resources on a regular basis.

Quotations

Artists who make their own structures of support visible often do so in order to speak openly about the politics of social reproduction. Many artists wish to reveal the support structures that make livelihood possible. Artists often direct attention to overlooked practices that enable people to return to work the next day as healthy and capable workers.

“I collaborated with dancer and healer, iele paloumpis, to move within the installation and find ways of performing the texts.... What started out as an experiment between two queer and disabled bodies became a series of propositions toward tenderness, caring, and that space between what we can know about one another and what we can't, that space of witnessing and reverence of other people and their stories.” —Marissa Perel, 2015²¹

“How can you be feeling if you're not in love? You need that space, you need that lifting up, you need that traveling in your mind that love brings, transgressing the limits of your body and your imagination. Total transgression.” —Felix Gonzalez-Torres, 1995²²

“In 1998, I began spending time with my aging father and for the first four years became someone who shopped, helped with his checkbook, and drove him to church; but more importantly, I got to know this incredible man as a friend and not just a father. We began collaborating on a video, with Dad telling his friends how to wave to/talk to the camera, and this became a new way for us to communicate: making art but more importantly life together.”
—Linda Montano, 2017²³

Here are more artists, groups, and projects that come to mind when we think about support: AIR Gallery / Awesome Foundation / Carole Condé and Karl Beveridge / Alejandro Botijo / Betty's Daughter Arts Collaborative / Taeyoon Choi / Maureen Connor / Jeff Kasper / Conflict Kitchen / Harriet's Apothecary / Holyoke Creative Arts Center / Icarus Project / Institute for Wishful Thinking / Justseeds / Simone Leigh / Fred Londinier / Beverly Naidus / Marissa Perel / Marty Pottenger / The Artist's Placement Group / o+1 / ProCreate Project / The Robin Hood Investment Cooperative / Rock Dove Collective / Soho 20 Gallery / Strike Debt / SuSu / Teachers Federal Credit Union / Cassie Thornton / Ultra-red / Wochenclausur / Carey Young. What artists, groups, and projects come to mind for you?

Reflection

1. Which aspects of this chapter on support stood out to you? Take a moment to reflect upon, and write about, the following:
 - Social Reproduction
 - Personal Support (Contemplative Practices and Somatics)
 - Interpersonal Support

- Monetary Support
 - The Danish Ministry of Culture stated, “artists should not receive [monetary] support because they are poor, but because the society needs their work.”²⁴ Do you agree with this? Why or why not?
 - What are your beliefs regarding the role of the government in supporting artists?
2. * What feelings and sensations came up for you while you were reading this chapter? For example, did you feel surprise, frustration, or excitement?
 3. How did you hold these in your body? For example, did you sense these emotions in your shoulders, neck, and back while reading this chapter? *See the Social-Emotional Intelligence Project Reflection activity in Chapter 4: Teacher/Facilitator Guides.*⁷
 4. What would it mean to understand artmaking as a site of interdependence, both locally and globally, rather than as a site of individual use and exchange? Remember, art is a system of relationships. We understand from the long history of economically oriented critical theory that behind any object exists a system of extraction, of production, and of circulation whose very histories are hidden at the moment in which the object appears as free-standing, as individual, as a thing, often a commodity. For us, in this book, that “thing” is the art object.

1. See Alice Sheppard, "About," <http://alicesheppard.com/about/>.
2. Alice Sheppard, interview by Susan Jahoda and Caroline Woolard, BFAMFAPhD, 2016.
3. Canaries continues to be active and can be joined at: <https://groups.google.com/forum/#!forum/wearecanaries>.
4. Taraneh Fazeli, interview by BFAMFAPhD, at the School of Visual Arts, New York, NY, July 8, 2016.
5. See Fulvia Serra, "Reproducing the Struggle: A New Feminist Perspective on the Concept of Social Reproduction," *Viewpoint Magazine*, no. 5, October 31, 2015, <https://www.viewpointmag.com/2015/10/31/reproducing-the-struggle-a-new-feminist-perspective-on-the-concept-of-social-reproduction/>.
6. Cindi Katz, "Vagabond Capitalism and the Necessity of Social Reproduction," *Antipode* 33, no. 4 (September 2001): 709–728, 710, available, <http://homes.lmc.gatech.edu/~treynolds7/Katz.pdf>.
7. Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Charts by Topic: Care of household children (by adults living in households with children)," American Time Use Survey, December 20, 2016, <https://www.bls.gov/tus/charts/childcare.htm>; Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Time adults spent caring for household children as a primary activity by sex, age, and day of week, average for the combined years 2013–17," Economic News Release, Table 9, June 28, 2018, <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/atust09.htm>.
8. "Contemplative Pedagogy" discussed in Nancy Chick, "The Pedagogical Role of Mindfulness," *Center for Teaching*, Vanderbilt University, 2019, <https://cft.vanderbilt.edu/guides-sub-pages/contemplative-pedagogy/#role>.
9. "Anti-Capitalist Love Notes To You and Me," *Diary of a Mad Brown Girl*, December 22, 2016, <https://diaryofamad-browngirl.com/2016/12/22/anti-capitalist-love-notes-to-you-and-me/>.
10. See Riyad A. Shahjahan, "Being 'Lazy' and Slowing Down: Toward Decolonizing Time, our Body, and Pedagogy," *Educational Philosophy and Theory* 47, no. 5 (February 11, 2014): 488–501, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00131857.2014.880645>.
11. Anita Chari, personal correspondence with Caroline Woolard, BFAMFAPhD, 2017. Also see <http://anitachari.com/>.
12. The enclosure movements refer to the transfer of communally stewarded arable lands to individually owned plots in the twelfth century in Europe. Land was literally enclosed through the use of walls, hedges, and fences, preventing its use for grazing and cultivating. See Silvia Federici, *Caliban and the Witch: Women, the Body and Primitive Accumulation* (Brooklyn, NY: Autonomedia, 2004).
13. *Ibid.*
14. Audre Lorde, "Epilogue," in *A Burst of Light: Essays*, 130–13 (Ithaca, NY: Firebrand Books, 1988; Mineola, NY: Ixia Press, 2017), 130. Citation refers to the Ixia edition.
15. For further reading, see Martha A. Chen, "Recognizing Domestic Workers, Regulating Domestic Work: Conceptual, Measurement, and Regulatory Challenges/" *Revue Femmes et Droit*," *Canadian Journal of Women and the Law* 23, no. 1 (2011): 167–184.
16. For further reading, see Maurizio Lazzarato, "Immaterial Labor," in *Radical Thought in Italy: A Potential Politics*, ed. Paolo Virno and Michael Hardt, 133–148 (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1996).
17. Jan Dworkin, Process Work Institute, www.processwork.edu. Process Work is a multi-level approach to individual and collective change developed by Arnold Mindell. See Arnold Mindell, *Sitting in the Fire: Large Group Transformation Using Conflict and Diversity* (Portland, OR: Lao Tse Press, 1995). For more, see Julie Diamond's Powerprint worksheet online: <http://julie-diamond.net/powerprint/>.
18. Anonymous (Participant in workshop at CUE), personal conversation, at CUE Art Foundation, New York, NY, 2017.
19. For further reading, see George Lipsitz, "The Possessive Investment in Whiteness: Racialized Social Democracy and the 'White' Problem in American Studies," *American Quarterly* 47, no. 3 (September 1995): 369–387.
20. For further reading, see Jessica Gordon Nembhard, *Collective Courage: A History of African-American Cooperative Economic Thought and Practice* (Philadelphia, PA: Penn State University Press, 2014).
21. Marissa Perel, "SHIFT 2015/16 Interview: Marissa Perel," by Alex Lee & Nick Witchey (EFA Project Space Interns), *SHIFT*, at EFA Project Space Program, 2016, <http://www.projectspace-efanyc.org/marissa-perel-interview>.
22. Felix Gonzalez-Torres, "Felix Gonzalez-Torres by Ross Bleckner," interview by Ross Bleckner, *BOMB*, April 1, 1995, republished online, <https://bomb-magazine.org/articles/felix-gonzalez-torres/>.
23. Linda Montano, "Linda Mary Montane," archived web page. NYU Fales Library: Linda Montano Collection, available, http://www.lindamontano.com/14-years-of-living-art/program_possibilities/index.html
24. *Betænkning om Billedkunst (Report on Visual Arts)*, Danish Ministry of Culture, Denmark, 1998, quoted in Merja Heikkinen and the Arts Council of Finland, *The Nordic Model for Supporting Artists—Public Support for Artists in Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden*, Research Reports of the Arts Council of Finland, no. 26, in cooperation with the Nordic Cultural Institute, 2003, 21, http://www.taike.fi/documents/10162/31519/tkt26_v5_%28EDM_14_1970_2666%29.pdf.

