# The Utilization of the Arts as a Method of Developing Love for Reading in a Library Environment

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This paper examines the contribution of using the arts as an educational method to reading groups in a library setting. The aim of the paper is to highlight the extent and the ways in which the inter-artistic dialogue strengthens the reading interest of the minor or adult participants and cultivates their aesthetic education. More specifically, the work aims to highlight: a. which theoretical principles and educational methods effectively support the utilization of other art forms in the reading approach, b. what specific techniques are involved in the inclusion of inter-artistic comparison in the reading process, c. in which phases of the reading process they can be included with a greater impact on reading motivation and d. how artistic works are selected depending on the literary texts being interpreted, the characteristics of the members of the reading community and the library environment. In order to answer the research questions, the opinions of two groups of participants are used: a. 15 Library Science student participants from the "Literature" course (spring semester 2022) and 18 participants from the "Applications of Reading Literacy" course (winter 2023) who systematically participated in the weekly meetings. The participants, having familiarized themselves with a variety of techniques for approaching literature, answered which they consider most appropriate for each phase of reading (thus also for inter-artistic dialogue). Based on their responses, it appeared that the use of arts in library reading groups is the most appropriate method for enhancing reading interest in preparing the response and one of the most effective methods for further engaging in dialogue about the projects during reading procedure. Also, the use of inter-artistic dialogue is particularly important for the development of critical appreciation of cultural works, as a means of awakening creativity and developing the aesthetic education of readers of all ages.

**KEYWORDS:**
Reading communities,
Inter-artistic dialogue,
Libraries,
Reading attitudes

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The shift in orientation in literary and cultural studies in the mid-20th century led to a redefinition of the ways in which both literary texts and literature communicate with the other arts. Emphasis on the functioning of their structure and the mechanisms that echo the social structure, both synchronously and diachronically, provided a more systematic approach to the dynamics between them. Inter-artistic encounters were highlighted both by Bakhtin 's theory of dialogism (1980) and Kristeva 's intertextuality (1978). The cultural derivatives, drawing from the same cultural

tradition and recording social demands, talk to each other and thus their dialogue with the reader is constantly renewed. (Siaflekis, 1999)

Constructivist and even more so Social Semiotics highlighted the interaction between the arts as cultural systems that communicate, without losing the autonomy of the cultural tradition of each. Furthermore, they revealed how the inscriptions of social values or artistic motifs in other cultural contexts affect the way the receiver selects and acquires their meaning. (Hodge & Gunther Kress, 1988) Thus, we are led at the level of literary and artistic reception to an inter-artistic poetics. With this complex term, the framework for valuing the interaction of the arts is defined. (Cowan & Albers, 2006: 124-137)

The remarks of the Roman poet Horatius in *Ars Poetica II* on the relationship between literature and painting laid the foundations for the study of the interaction and differences

between the arts. In the 20th century, interdisciplinary poetics focuses on identifying and analyzing the characteristics that define the autonomy of literature as a cultural field. As a method of approach it identifies a series of theoretical principles and tools that evaluate comparative literary and artistic works, based on conceptual categories. Its field of study is the investigation of convergences and divergences between the way each art communicates with the recipient ideological inscriptions and social connotations which are felt in each artistic derivative. (Tziovas, 2014) It utilizes tools of Hermeneutics to highlight the conditions and the different ways that literary and artistic works re-signify through their reception the relationship between subject-artistic expression, subject-social group by: era, social reality, artistic current, generation of creators and historical reader. This approach further highlights the function of intertextuality and its importance in reading response. (Barthes, 1975).

In this light, this paper aims to highlight the importance of utilizing the arts as a method of enhancing reading interest and cultivating aesthetic literacy in reading groups that are implemented in a library environment (School Library, Children's or Public Libary). The paper covers an important gap in the literature, and especially in Greek, since the extent to which inter-artistic dialogue contributes to the development of a love for reading, the goal of both formal education at all levels and libraries, especially those related to educational communities, has not been sufficiently investigated.

In this context, the research questions are formulated as follows:

- What theoretical principles and instructional techniques effectively engage the use of the arts in library reading groups.
- How are other artistic derivatives selected in the reading process, in which phases and how are they effectively adapted to their target audience.
- What characteristics of libraries are taken into account for the selection and design of inter-artistic dialogue techniques in reading groups.
- What is the opinion of the participants in reading activities regarding the effectiveness of these methods regarding the development of love for reading and aesthetic literacy.

In order to highlight his contribution, the opinions of Library Science students who attended 2 different courses (Literature course, spring semester 2022: 15 participants) and "Applications of Reading Literacy", winter semester 2023: 18 participants) will be taken into account. Their opinions were collected through a collective discussion at the end of each semester, based on the students systematically participating in the weekly meetings. That is, after the participants came into contact with different educational techniques for

approaching literary texts, they were asked to state which they consider to be the most appropriate technique for library reading groups for both minor and adult readers (among them the use of other arts). (Berg, 2007)

## II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK-METHODOLOGY: READER-CENTERED EDUCATIONAL MODELS AND INTER-ARTISTIC DIALOGUE

The educational process, which utilizes inter-artistic dialogue in a library environment in order to cultivate reading sensitivity in the participants, combines the interdisciplinary approach, with reader -centric theories and the involvement of creative expression. This combination is also a criterion for bibliography selection. The main objective is to enhance the utilization of the readers' previous experiences and knowledge following the principles of interdisciplinarity and interdisciplinarity in reading approaches.

The proposed procedures bridge literary studies and the modern challenges of the role of libraries in terms of the mediation of the literary text and the strengthening of the love for reading. The proposed models, as will be seen in the examples of activities, primarily seek to highlight the aesthetic value of literary works. According to Eisner (2002) they apply an educational design that employs literature as an investigation of alternative approaches to the dilemmas and challenges of everyday life.

This position is also based on the opinion of Dewey (1934), who supported the added value of human contact with art. According to Rigopoulos (1997), inter-artistic dialogue as an educational method contributes to the awareness of social experiences through art and literature and pushes the receiver to a reconstruction of the relationship with himself. Also based on Kalogirou & Vissarakis (2005), we need models and techniques that will activate the subject's experiences based on reading. Such a "transaction" , as a unique moment in the reader's life, highlights the added value of the educational use of Rosenblatt's (1978) transactional model. The concept of Transaction as a method highlights the dynamic nature of reading as a social event and potentially transformative for the participants, highlighting the importance of aesthetic education.

The transactional approach ensures an openness to the process where depending on the age, interests and inclinations of the participants, as well as the specializations of the facilitators, a range of techniques involving a variety of artistic projects can be utilized. Specifically, the involvement of theater, visual arts, and cinematographic works can contribute to: a. in activating the experiences of the participants, b. in cultivating critical skills and promoting multiliteracies , c. in awakening various creative inclinations

and expression. In addition, the transactional model helps facilitate interpretive dialogue about texts. It guides the discussion of literature around thematic works of art in a way that highlights the structure of the texts. Thus, the formulation of positions on the text is facilitated through the artistic stimuli and then it is investigated whether the interpretive efforts of the members are justified or not in the text. (see Iser, 1991; Edmunds & Bauserman, 2006: 420-422)

In addition, the Hermeneutical Circle model provides the facilitator with a flexible design of the educational process, effectively incorporating the use of arts into the reading process. The whole-parts-whole structure regarding the approach to the text allows the whole audience to enjoy the text as an aesthetic good and develop interpretive skills. Especially for School or Academic Libraries, this educational model allows the utilization of further information on the history of literature, without undermining the creative context.

Useful and particularly familiar to students and teachers of the Greek educational system, since it has been applied for several years in Greek schools, is the application of the Reading approach. (Langer, 1994) The Reading approach that is completed in three phases summarizes in a sense both the previous models, as it is organized on the basis of the whole-part-whole relationship of the text, while also allowing the utilization of other arts in the reading process. It is divided into three phases: a. "Before reading" which corresponds to Rosenblatt 's first stage , b. "While reading" where it is linked to the second and third stages of the transactional model and focuses on the text-reader relationship and c. "After reading", where it corresponds to the fourth stage of the transactional and focuses on a critical management of the values and emotions that arise during the second phase, connecting literature and social life. However, the implementation of creative activities with corresponding adjustments to participants' reading readiness are shared across all phases (as creative writing). (Carter and Long, 1991)

The above models can be combined with both direct dialogic approach techniques and cooperative learning processes. In addition, they are equally effective in terms of activating the attention of members of the reading group and applying brainstorming, cognitive conflict questions, critical inquiry questions, creative text reconstruction exercises, theater activities (especially in Children's/School Libraries: Papadatos, 2009) or more demanding forms of creative expression (for example, writing a scene with the characters of the play). (Souliotis, 2012; Symeonaki, 2012).

Their flexibility is also evident in the possibility of adapting the process according to the reading interest and the textual genre. After all, a key pursuit in reading communities is to utilize a variety of literary texts and artistic works, emphasizing the approach of the extensive whole work. (Panos, 2003; Malafantis, 2005) The selection of the artistic works, however, is not uncritical and monophonic, but sufficiently dynamic: a result of the participation and interaction of the group members. Moderators take into account the reading profile and creative inclinations of the participants and what the library can provide to the reading community. (Kragler, 2000) According to Irving (1980), especially in juvenile audiences, games to activate participation in terms of text selection and discovery of library dynamics are suggested as particularly effective. (Moula, 2012: 4)

At this point initial and formative assessment applications can provide valuable information both about the choices of texts and their initial expectations (initial) and about the extent to which the process responds to their own interests and motivates them in dialectical reading (formative). Based on Giannikopoulou (2008) and Daniels (1994), the application of short questionnaire filling techniques, collective discussion about their preferences, project selection games in various ways to children and pre-adolescents [for example, selection based on the illustration, treasure hunt (finding books in the library etc.) and adults (e.g. didactic use of the cover etc.) can provide very useful information for the continuation of the educational approach. (Daniels, 1994)

The provision of encouraging feedback (descriptive assessment) by moderators or the plenary regarding the creative activities of individuals and groups is critical to developing a climate of trust. According to Debrenlieva-Koutsouki (2018) and Leahy (2005), they promote dialogue about literature, art and culture in general in the library space and help participants feel that their own voice is important to the completion of any educational process. (Leahy, 2005)

According to Sumsion (1992), the variety of works and their classifications offer libraries the possibility to organize different reading communities, as well as to enrich their collections with specific categories of books or the reading dynamics of individual authors - depending on the reading interest of the participants. Based on McCabe (1996) and Kalogirou (2011; 2019), inter-artistic comparison is a thematic criterion for organizing reading groups (e.g. novels and their theatrical or film adaptations), as it enhances the awakening of creativity and cultivates aesthetics their education.

In any case, educational processes involving inter-artistic dialogue need to take into account: a. the duration of the educational process, so that they are able to effectively integrate discussions and creative exercises concerning other arts and b. the fact that their use must enhance the enjoyment

of reading and therefore not act as a disorientation for the reader. In this context, the application of collaborative learning in terms of inter-artistic comparison is crucial, because it remains organically tied to a reader-centric view of the literary text.

Thus, the inter-artistic dialogue is not an end in itself for the reading group, but an extremely useful way of activating the readers' attention. According to Moje (1996) Arts utilization echoes theoretical principles and educational methods based on the power of human creativity, the open dialogue of the arts and the connection of literature, art and society. At this point, the role of the facilitator is crucial in terms of fostering a sense of security in the group members and choosing the techniques that will allow interpretive heterogeneity, in collaboration with the librarians: if the reading approach is not organized by them. (Greenwood, 2023). In order to highlight further practical applications of the inter-artistic dialogue, it is deemed necessary to focus on educational techniques aimed at an effective utilization of the arts in reading processes.

## III. A SELECTION OF EDUCATIONAL TECHNIQUES REGARDING THE UTILIZATION OF THE ARTS AND APPLICATION EXAMPLES

As mentioned, the educational utilization of other arts in the mediation of literature and in highlighting the reader's response to the text is often described with the term "inter-artistic dialogue". The pedagogical usefulness of art has been mentioned by many: from Plato and Aristotle to J. Dewey (1934) and the developmental psychologist Gardner (1990). All viewed engagement with the arts – whether as an observer or creator – as a dynamic process that activates and expands reflection, critical thinking, alternative interpretation and imagination since the arts use different symbolic systems and thus enhance the cognitive development of person. (Parker & Lepper, 1992; Christodoulidis, 1994)

We mentioned that the contribution of J. Dewey (1934) was important in general for the renewal of educational methodology, while especially with regard to this specific issue he highlighted the role of aesthetic education in the spiritual development of man. In his analyses, the contact with art was a key way of activating the experience of the learners of each level. According to Eisner (2008), contact with art allows the subjects to explore different forms of expression of their experiences and to cultivate social skills with artistic derivatives as a central axis of reference (see also Vygotsky, 1978). Based on Boyd (2009), familiarization with a variety of artistic stimuli tends to enhance cognitive flexibility and develop participants' creative readiness, essential skills in any social and learning environment.

At the level of educational utilization of art either as a basic subject of reading or as a means of deepening into other fields of knowledge and experience, the influence of the psychologist D. Perkins was decisive. Although he was not an art theorist, his analyzes highlighted the positive effects that contact with art has on the level of cognitive processes. With his reference to thinking frames argued that people draw on cognitive structures to interpret the world around them, including works of art. These processes affect both the reception of literature and the understanding of other art forms. In this sense the inter-artistic dialogue aims either to activate or to form in the participants of reading groups thinking models that will strengthen the reading readiness of the group members (see also references in Iser, 1991).

Perkins (1994) describes four stages in approaching art that could help moderators systematize how the target text's dialogue with other works of art is interpreted .
More specifically:
*Phase 1: time for observation*. Learners express their first spontaneous thoughts and questions.
*Phase 2: open and adventurous observation.* Learners become more creative by observing everything in the project. The surprise and emotions seen or evoked by the work are sought.
*Phase 3*: *analytical and deep observation.* An attempt is made to answer the questions of the first phase. Focusing on symbols and trying to interpret them.
*Phase 4*: *review of the above process.*

Perkins ' educational approach is important because it facilitates the use of the arts with cooperative learning and thus the achievement of the differentiation of learning that is a key goal in library reading groups. The flow of discussion organized based on Perkins' stages takes into account members' responses to cooperative approaches and prompts the facilitator to adjust the instructions and level of difficulty of the activities to the participants' language expression, reading readiness, and social interaction skills. (Paparousi, 2013) The coordinator takes care of maintaining the participation and the expression of opinions about the text in relation to the artistic works. A basic principle of the combination of cooperative learning and inter-artistic dialogue in individual sub-groups is to further facilitate the provision of holistic knowledge and the connection of arts and social experiences. According to Vivirdaki (2023) the stimulus-rich reading approach facilitates the transformative dimension of learning, participants overcoming negative past experiences regarding their relationship with culture. This dimension is also particularly beneficial for reading groups of adult participants. (Smith & Galbraith, 2011). The cooperation of members based on specific activities can enhance the playfulness of collective reading.

Since inter-artistic dialogue in libraries facilitates the cultivation of aesthetic literacy, not only does it not undermine reading as an experiential and discovery experience or the promotion of important democratic values, such as freedom of expression or social justice, but it contributes powerfully to limiting any form of unanimity in the way of valuation of literature. (Marnane & Heinen, 1993; Papadatos, 2009) In this direction, there is also the application of differentiated learning (Tomlinson, 2010), which may refer to the approach:

- of different excerpts of the same literary work and common artistic works by the individual groups with common activities in terms of the goal, to facilitate the flow of the educational process,
- of different short works (for example poems) and different artistic works with joint activities by the individual groups, to strengthen the dialogue between the community and the texts.
- common passages of the same work and the same artistic works with different activities from the individual groups, to develop the polyphony of literature.

A popular one among Greek teachers, judging by the number of publications of relevant applications in proceedings of Conferences on Educational Sciences and Adult Education, is the "Transformative learning through aesthetic experience" method by A. Kokkos (2010). The model utilizes art for critical reflection and revision of thought structures about art and the relationship between human and social life. Although the method was designed for application to adults in lifelong learning contexts, it has also been effectively applied to formal education. We believe, therefore, that it is a suitable method for the more systematic use of the arts in library reading groups. It tends to utilize elements from Freire 's (1985) Critical Pedagogy as well, since it is interested in a transformative learning process that will enhance social participation and critical competence. (Galda, 1998) This will be achieved through reconstructing the self at the level of experience and overcoming any stereotypical thought structures that unconsciously or consciously limit the subject. The method also concerns literature as a form of art and a means of cultivating critical reflection, but it allows possibilities for an inter-artistic approach and creative expression based either on literature or some other form of art. (Michailidis & Paschalidou, 2015; Michailidis, 2018)

The "Transformative learning through aesthetic experience" method foresees the following 6 stages that can be appropriately adapted to reading communities: a. determination of the subject, b. recording the trainees' opinions on the subject, c. determination of the sub-themes and the critical questions connected to the sub-themes, d. selection of works of art and their association with one of the

critical questions, e. processing of the works of art and finally f. revision and transformation of learners' thoughts-opinions and their written expression.

A reading group, for example, implemented in an Academic Library environment, which consists of Humanities students, are invited to critically approach the aesthetic performance of the transformation of Greek cities in the *Path to the sea* (2006) by A. Sourouni (Thessaloniki) and the visual work of Sp. Vassiliou, *Golden Athens* (1976). The collective reading focuses on the way in which the language of literature and painting criticize the modern city and attempt a nostalgic allusion to the past.



Spyros Vassiliou, *Golden Athens* (1976)

So, reading communities depending on the audience and the environment they belong to can delve more or less into the relationship between literature and other arts. At the same time, the involvement of other arts enhances the participation of participants with other artistic interests and inclinations, and tends to increase reading interest through the immediacy of experience that characterizes the arts, such as music or film. Also based on Nell (1988), a key axis of the design of similar techniques is to enhance the aesthetic pleasure and communicative freedom of the process.

In this light, the activities related to the inter-artistic dialogue must also be linked to the methodology of reading response. According with by Flood, Heath & Lapp (2005). Activities need to be clear and foster more active reading motivation, developing a love for reading. In case the learning community allows it or even claims it, the inter-artistic dialogue can also involve different forms of artistic expression (e.g. musical accompaniment of the texts during the expressive reading of its members with music of their choice. (Malafantis, 2018). To this end again the available resources and technological equipment of the library can contribute particularly (Smith, 2016).

More specifically, the inter-artistic dialogue can: a. to act as a creative prompt and preparation of the response, b. to be included in the context of the co-reading of different semiotic systems (literature-visual work-film, etc.), so as to support the experiential approach to interpretation, c. to strengthen the critical processing of the opinions that have been submitted in a context of evaluation of the reading response and d. to be

another trigger for creative expression. In the latter case, it is possible to adapt it to individual degrees of creative readiness of the participants. In addition, it can be directly linked to the production of creative speech and based on artistic stimuli, creative written expression can be encouraged. (Finley, 2018; Michailidis & Oikonomopoulou, 2023) The following approaches summarizes the educational use of inter-artistic dialogue by phase of the reading approach. Then, indicative creative activities are listed that enrich the approach of the literary text with the inter-artistic dialogue.

a. Individual or group, common for all in plenary
Let's say that in a Municipal Library, a reading group of adult participants interprets the particularly beloved novel *Lemon Forest* (1930) by K. Politis.

- Notice how the use of light in the performance of the lemon forest affects the reader emotionally about the nature of love and human relationships. What convergences and divergences can be observed regarding the issue with the painting by the painter K. Maleas (*Inside Nature,* n.d.: Private Collection). (Phase B)



K. Maleas, *Inside Nature.* Private collection

Digitally tour the National Gallery and choose other works of art that echo the emotions of the protagonist.

b. With different activities per group
Even if the novel *When They Kill Blackbirds* by H. Lee (1961) is approached in young adult Library Science students, in the context of a reading group implemented in an Academic Library environment.

- To "dress up" with the voice of a character from the novel the expression of despair of the Hellenistic work (in a Roman copy) *Complex of Laocoon* (Vatican Museum). What would he say? (Phase II)



Roman copy, *Laocoon Complex* (Vatican Museum).

- Choose a character and record their inner thoughts, which would match the posture of *The Thinker* (1904) by A. Rodin (Rodin Museum ) (Phase II)



A. Rod i n The *Thinker* (1904). Rodin Museum

With the librarian's help, locate art history books that engage in social criticism and advocate for social change in defense of human rights.

Which one would you choose to pictorially accompany the text?

To summarize, in the context of the interdisciplinary approach and the inter-artistic dialogue, active reading, the production of creative discourse and inter-artistic comparison constitute the three dimensions of creative expression in the reading community. (Michailidis & Oikonomopoulou, 2023).

## IV. DISCUSSION

By extension, the inter-artistic dialogue constitutes a particularly important educational method for the holistic approach to literature as an aesthetic expression in reading groups, it can concern both the commenting on common thematic patterns by authors belonging to the same or different cultural context, as well as the recognition /comparison of aesthetic choices that pass from one art to another, in a context of functional assimilation. (Finley , 2018) In light of dialogism, it indicates the range of semantic

relations that cultural derivatives develop with the social conditions of both the respective creator and receiver/reader. (Cowan & Albers, 2006)

According to the views of the 15 participating Library Science students in the Literature course (Spring 2022), the use of the arts is the most understandable way to enhance reading interest. 12 out of 15 said it was the most appropriate way to enhance reader attention during reading preparation in a library setting (Phase A). Also, 10 out of 15 stated that it is a useful way to enhance readers' creative inclinations, with the aim of deepening their reading of the work in Phase B. Accordingly, the 18 participating students in the "Applications of Reading Literacy" course (Spring 2023) stated that it increases readers' interest in the works of the spirit and allows access to a wide range of artistic works through technology as well (for example, digital tour of Museums). Its resources, collections and staff expertise are able to offer participants (and coordinators of other disciplines involved in the reading community) a reading experience rich in artistic performances. The implementation of inter-artistic dialogue in their space ensures that the approach obeys principles of equal mediation of art forms and acceptance of freedom of every form of expression. (Limberg, 2003). More specifically, 15 out of 18 noted that it is the most appropriate method for preparing the response and 10 out of 18 that it contributes to the awakening of creativity in Phase B and C (16 out of 18 considered that it precedes creative writing). In addition, 12 out of 18 reported that using the arts is a creative way of recapitulating in Phase C what has been discussed and helps develop critical thinking. (Berg, 2007)

Both target groups emphasized that it is important for the facilitator to know why and how to use artworks in plenary (11 out of 15 and 14 out of 18), as well as to what extent the library environment can contribute to a fuller and more interesting application of inter-artistic comparison in the context of text interpretation. This finding is particularly critical, because the selection of other artistic works is an important, but complementary element in highlighting the interpretive multiplicity of the literary text. In other words, it should not act as a disorientation in the process and ultimately lead to a change in the central axis of the group, which is the reading response (10 out of 15 and 17 out of 18). Such an observation does not limit the openness of the learning act, but protects the semi-structured flow from self-cancellation of its constitution. (Kalogirou, 2019; Goulis & Grosdos, 2011).

Its constructive use is part of a wider dialogue about literature, arts and culture, opens up to other forms of expression and combines effectively with both collaborative learning and creative writing (14 out of 15, 18 out of 18). In addition, it is appropriate to involve him both in the mediation of the independent work and in a cluster of texts on the same subject. On the other hand, it is based on principles of differentiation of learning, as it multimodally activates different cultural experiences and creative inclinations of the participants. (Batič & Haramija , 2018; Souliotis, 2012)

## V. CONCLUSION

In summary, inter-artistic dialogue, as well as creative writing, contribute to the activation of the imagination as a means of a new form of understanding of the relationship with ourselves. (Siaflekis , 1994; Frydaki , 2009) The view of H. James (1991) on the relationship between reality and literary expression is indicative: "A novel is a personal, direct impression of life, here, before all else, lies the value of which is greater or less, according to the intensity of this impression. But there is to be no tension, and consequently no value, except when there is freedom to feel and express.'

The selection of works that belong to other forms of expression needs to obey similar principles to what we mentioned for the selection of literary texts. To begin with, be related to the educational goals and to the reading and cultural experiences of the participants, without affecting any member of it. Their selection should strengthen the critical dialogue and be based on a creative approach to the works. The each time the adaptation of the themes that organize the further structure of the material of the meetings is an important parameter for the achievement of the educational process, as they concern both the stimulation of the attention of both minors and adult participants, as well as the connection of libraries with the social reality. (Durant & Horava , 2015).

In this light, further investigation of the role of libraries and librarians in the development of reading attitudes and in the cultivation of aesthetic literacy is needed. Furthermore, it is important to examine through a case study the attitudes of participating readers in a library environment regarding the contribution of the utilization of other arts to the development of reading motivation.

## VI. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

## VII. DISCLOSURE
None

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