# ARTS AND LEARNING RESEARCH

*Edited by*

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and

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Submit the manuscript, title page and abstract of no more than 150 words to the editor by email as an attachment in MSWord. The title of the submission should appear as a running head but the author's name and affiliation should appear only on the title page to ensure anonymity in the reviewing process. In addition send one hard copy of the manuscript to the editor. The manuscript will be submitted to two or more reviewers for blind reviewing. The manuscript should be typed, double-spaced (including quotations, author's end notes and references) and normally should run about 20 pages or less in typed length. Language and format must conform to the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (5th ed., 2001). Manuscripts not conforming to these specifications will be returned to the author for proper style change.

Manuscripts are accepted for consideration with the understanding that they are original material and are not under consideration for publication elsewhere, nor will they be sent to another publication simultaneously.

Authors should be members of the American Educational Research Association (AERA). Articles considered for publication are based on presentations at the annual meeting of AERA. The deadline for submissions for Volume 21 (March 2005) is July 1, 2004. Editorial review and revisions usually take 3-4 months.

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# Message from the SIG Chair

This year is the 20th anniversary of the Arts and Learning Research Journal – an event for celebration and pride. The consistent production of a lively journal on current research topics in the arts is hugely satisfying, the more so because it is financially self-sustaining, and dependent on volunteer labour. Members with expertise in the visual arts, music, dance, theatre, drama, poetry address arts education research from points of view as diverse as aesthetics, spirituality, child development, curriculum issues, program evaluation, professional development and teacher education and use qualitative and quantitative approaches. Published papers must be previously presented at AERA, usually in the year prior to publication. Authors must be members of AERA, and we encourage them to become members of the Arts and Learning SIG.

The membership of the Arts and Learning SIG (ALSIG) has grown substantially just in the past year – from 140 in 2003 to 208 in 2004. Although AERA membership was increased this year, SIG membership remained at $10.00. Now that AERA processes memberships perhaps we can expect to maintain a higher level of membership than in the past. The SIG has an impressive international profile. Members live and work in Australia, Canada, Finland, Greece, Holland, Hong Kong, Israel, Ireland, Japan, Norway, Spain, Sweden and the U.S.A.

Of the 108 members, only 85 are on the ALSIG listserv - which is maintained by Webmaster, David Betts. We urge all members to subscribe to the list to ensure receipt of SIG newsletters, business announcements, and to enable their access to the list for SIG-related business. To subscribe go to *http://www.ed.arizona.edu/ALSIG/* and click on Listserv Information. Also on that site you will see that David has archived the AERA/ALSIG programs between 1999 and 2003.

Bobbi McKean has to be congratulated for the fine job she did as Program Chair. This is a task of enormous proportions, which she has done enthusiastically. Bravo, Bobbi!

This year we are pleased to have a winner and a runner-up for the Dissertation Award. Richard Siegesmund, chair of the Dissertation Award committee handled the process with care, and prepared the announcement that you will find at the end of the Book Review section. Congratulations to Samuel Adu-Poku, winner of this year's award, and to Kim Powell, named runner-up. Their papers will appear in Volume 21 (2004-2005) of the journal. Thank you, Richard.

Thanks are due to the scholars who participated in the review and adjudication processes. Their names are listed at the end of this journal. I encourage interested members to put their names forward as reviewers for the journal.

I want to mention the contribution of Newsletter Editor Robin Mello. In spite of an extremely hectic year she was able to put together an impressive newsletter for distribution to members on the listserve. Well done, Robin.

Laurel Campbell is membership coordinator. Her job has been to make sure that membership lists are up to date. As the AERA membership fee collection process becomes refined, the job of keeping lists up to date should become more streamlined.

Regina Murphy has done an outstanding job as Co-Editor of the journal for the period 2001-2 to 2003-4 and has agreed to take over as chief Editor for the 2004-5 Volume. We are grateful to Regina for her hard work, good judgment and her editorial expertise.

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*The Arts and Learning Research Journal is available on ERIC microfiche at most libraries. Subscriptions are available at Ulrich's Periodicals Directory online at ulrichsweb.com or Ulrich's On Disc. Single copies may also be ordered directly from Nancy Ellis (see below). We are grateful to former Chair Nancy Ellis, who has once again agreed to handle mail orders of the journal. Nancy reminds us to urge members to ask their libraries to subscribe to print copies. This raises the profile of the journal and its authors. Reprints of journal papers can get on reading lists, but it is more likely to happen if professors have easy access to the journal.*

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# Message from the SIG Program Chair

An important resource for the Arts and Learning Research Journal is the papers presented at the Annual Meeting of the AERA. For this year's Annual Meeting, we received over 45 proposals, 6 for panel discussion sessions and 40 for individual paper presentations. All were reviewed by at least three reviewers. Based on our membership, we could accept four presentations for panel discussions and 14 individual papers for two roundtable sessions. Our program is rich in presenting investigations in both multidisciplinary work in arts education and in the individual arts disciplines and offers an interesting mix of perspectives from researchers and practitioners. I want to thank my colleague in arts education at the University of Arizona, J. David Betts, and all of the reviewers for their excellent comments and guidance throughout the selection process. We look forward to receiving submissions from these presenters for the 2004-2005/Volume 21 Arts and Learning Research Journal.

During our annual business meeting at AERA this year, Merryl Goldberg from California State University San Marcos will discuss SUAVE: A Model for Arts Integration and Professional Development. SUAVE (Socios Unidos para Artes via Educación, or, United Community for Arts in Education) is an arts integration and professional development program that was developed in 1993 as a collaboration among the California Center for the Arts - Escondido, California State University San Marcos, and several local school districts in Southern California. The philosophy underlying the program is that teaching *through* the arts (vs. the more traditional teaching *about* the arts) can be a powerful pedagogical tool for teachers to help students both further their subject-matter understanding and be introduced to the arts themselves. Presenting with Merryl are several teachers and teaching artists from the program.

The good news is that our membership is growing! As

of February 2004, we have a membership of 208. This is up substantially from last year's membership of 140. The larger our membership, the more papers we can present at the Annual Conference, and thus, the more papers we have to draw from for our journal. I hope many of you will submit proposals for presentation at the 2005 Annual Meeting.

*Bobbi McKean, Ph.D.*

*Theatre Arts Education and Outreach*
*University of Arizona*

# Introduction

**Joan Russell**
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**Regina Murphy**
*St Patrick's College, Dublin City University, Ireland*
*Co-editors, Arts and Learning Research Journal*

The invited address by Professor Philip W. Jackson to the Arts and Learning SIG in Chicago, April 2003, was in many respects a highlight of the AERA annual meeting. His inspiring presentation, "On the tight resemblance between teaching and art", provided the Arts and Learning community not only with a thought-provoking illumination of familiar concepts, but also with a sublime *raison d'être* for their continued convergence. From the ensuing discussion, it was evident that the address had also engaged educators from a range of disciplines and other spheres of interest. It is fitting, then, that we should present Professor Jackson's address as the first paper in this journal's collection so that the dialogue may continue.

Beginning with a Wallace Stevens poem Jackson unwinds the threads of his chosen metaphor and carefully examines the relationship between teaching and art. Among his elegant insights, he notes that art is the standard of comparison. Indeed works titled "The art of..." abound in our respective disciplines. Consider J. S. Bach's Art of Fugue (BWV 1080), Graham Wallas' (1926) The Art of Thought, or the unique beauty of case study research illuminated by Robert Stake (1995) in The Art of Case Study, to name but three. These works demonstrate a wealth of ingenuity and possibilities latent in a single concept. Jackson notes that art "has come to epitomize the accomplishments and deep satisfactions associated with a wide range of other activities" (Jackson, in this journal).

Continuing a tradition established over twenty years, this volume reflects a wide range of activities from across disciplines: dance, music, drama, story telling, poetry, puppetry and visual art. Participants reflect a span of age levels from preschool to adult. The papers examine issues in both within-school and out-of-school contexts and from a range of perspectives. In all cases, a tightly held desire pervades: to understand, to get deep inside the art form, or to reveal the art of teaching with greater clarity than heretofore.

In *Pink Flamingos and Picasso: Memes and the Evolutionary Struggle for Aesthetic Survival* Barbara Faulkner suggests that the reason some aesthetic ideas survive in both "high" and "low" art forms or recur over time is the persistence of memes: fertile, living structures. Illustrating her thesis with examples of everyday objects, from cell phone tunes to the golden section, she examines Dawkins' (1976) theory of memes as a vehicle for cultural transmission. Faulkner proposes that memetic theory has the potential to significantly inform and challenge existing critical theory concepts found in issues of race, gender and socioeconomic status.

Margy McClain's *A Mexican American Folklore Dance Group as a Site of Arts and Learning* explores how "folklore dance groups" that present staged presentations of the traditional dances of their cultural communities provide valuable educational experiences to the young participants. McClain believes that for subordinate groups within societies that do not have equal access to superior educational opportunities, the validation of their cultural knowledge by means of such groups is of vital importance.

Two separate studies focus on pre-school children's drawings in different contexts. How children's "mark-making" contributes to our understanding of their growth as musicians or artists is carefully deconstructed by Rivka Elkoshi and Ellen Potter respectively. In both cases, the children's verbal responses play a critical role in the inquiry. Elkoshi investigates children's graphic notations as a representation of their musical perception in *Interpreting Children's Invented Graphic Notation.* Her findings refute earlier studies that have dominated this field for over a

decade. Potter examines criteria preschool children use to evaluate their art in "*Yes, It's a Good Picture": Preschoolers' Evaluation of Their Pictures.* She found that while younger children most frequently used autonomous, egocentric criteria, older children were more likely to use correctness criteria.

Classroom music teaching and learning are explored in two individual papers by Philip Silvey and Betty Anne Younker. In the performance mode, Silvey reports on a qualitative study that probed how choral singers come to know musical works in a personal way in *Acquaintance knowledge of musical works in the secondary music classroom.* Grounding his study in philosophy (Blieszner, 1994) and framing it with psychological theories of close relationships, and literary theory (Rosenblatt, 1978), Silvey beautifully illuminates the process of musical learning and the sociological complexity that it entails. Younker builds on her extensive corpus of work in the area of composing in an *Analysis of students' perceptions about composing* where she tracks the thought processes of 13-year-olds. Acknowledging the importance of ownership and voice in the compositional process, she analyzes the students' perceptions of the composing process, gaining valuable insight into what nurtures and guides their musical choices and actions.

Finally, in *When Pedagogy Meets Practice: Combining Arts Integration and Teacher Education in the College Classroom* Robin Mello describes the implementation of arts-based pedagogy applied to course activities in a three-year university teacher education program that resulted in positive outcomes. Mello's findings support claims that arts-inclusion nurtures the development of students' motivations, interests and preservice relationships.

The connections between teaching and art in these papers are, at times, subliminal and ephemeral; at other times, earthy and concrete. We hope that you enjoy the scholarship, the learning and the art therein.

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# On the "Tight Resemblance"
# of Teaching and Art[1,2]

**Philip W. Jackson**
*University of Chicago*

## I.

The two words "tight resemblance" that appears in the title of these remarks come from a poem by Wallace Stevens. The poem, entitled " Pastoral Nun," tells of an encounter between the poem's speaker, perhaps Stevens himself, and a nun (I envision her as being somewhat elderly), who remarks on the close relationship between art and religion or, more precisely, between poetry and her own religious convictions. What I find striking about the poem is how it manages in only fifteen lines to treat a subject of deep philosophical and psychological significance and to do so in a way that is at once poetically satisfying yet tantalizingly opaque. In addition to what it says about the relationship between art and religion the poem offers a quick look at what supposedly can happen when someone arrives at a unifying insight that promises to make a profound difference in that person's life.

I turn to this poem because I believe that a relationship somewhat akin to the one it draws between art and religion can be said to exist between art and teaching or art and science, for that matter, or art and lots of other things. I also believe that an understanding and an acceptance of that kinship can have a significant effect on how one feels about teaching and how one goes about doing it. What follows constitutes my latest attempt to justify those two beliefs.

We must start with Stevens's poem as a whole. Following that, I will say a few words about how I see it working poetically before moving on to how it connects to teaching. I should warn that the poem contains one fairly unusual word, *apotheosis*, which Webster's Third[3] defines as "**1:** the elevation

of a human to the rank of a god: the raising of a person or a thing to a divine status: DEIFICATION **2:** the culmination or highest development of a thing: the ultimate, quintessential, or final form **3a:** the exaltation of a person or a thing to a final state of triumph or glory **b:** the ascension of a person or a thing from earthly existence to heavenly glory" (p.102)

Here is the poem:

### A PASTORAL NUN

Finally, in the last year of her age,
Having attained a present blessedness,
She said poetry and apotheosis are one.

This is the illustration that she used:
If I live according to this law I live
In an immense activity, in which

Everything becomes morning, summer, the hero,
The enraptured woman, the sequestered night,
The man that suffered lying there at ease,

Without his envious pain in body, in mind,
The favorable transformation of the wind
As of a general being or human universe.

There was another illustration, in which
The two things compared their tight resemblances:
Each matters only in that which it conceives.

\*   \*   \*   \*   \*

To decipher what is going on in those fifteen lines we might begin by noting that the poem is written as though it were a fragment, possibly the final moments, of some longer conversation between the poem's speaker and a companion, a friend perhaps. Its fragmentary nature makes it the kind of snippet of conversation that one might overhear on a crowded bus or between theater patrons chatting in an adjacent row while

the audience waits for the lights to dim. It does, however, sound a little off-key for such an informal exchange. Lines like "Having attained a present blessedness" are a bit too stilted to fit the stereotype of an informal report on something overheard. They sound more like an excerpt from a public lecture or a radio talk in which the speaker is addressing a large audience rather than speaking to a friend. Whichever audience we might envision, there can be no doubt that the subject of the speaker's talk is a set of remarks made by a nun of his or her acquaintance.

We also should not overlook the nun's apparent age. She offers her remarks, we are told, "Finally, in the last year of her age." (An odd expression, by the way. Why not in the last year of her *life*? More on that possibility later.) Moreover, they occur *after* her "having attained a present blessedness." That combination of conditions immediately heightens our interest in what the nun is supposed to have said. The timing of its occurrence makes it sound as though she may not be around too much longer (if, indeed, she is still alive). That her "present blessedness" was "attained" rather than simply granted, as blessings are commonly thought to be dispensed, makes it appear as though what she is about to say refers to something that was hard won, the fruit of careful reasoning, perhaps, or some less rational form of meditation. As eaves-droppers, the poem's readers cannot be blamed for wanting to hear more.

After that introductory build-up, however, the nun's message is rather disappointing. That poetry and apotheosis are one does not sound very earth-shaking, at least not at once. In fact, it sounds more puzzling than edifying. It also comes across as a bit dogmatic, perhaps even pontifical.

Yet as the nun continues we discover that her message conveys a personal insight of enormous significance. If she lives in accord with that insight, she goes on to explain, all kinds of strange and wonderful things begin to happen. Her world is transformed. She finds herself in the midst of an activity in which she herself partakes, so it seems. Everything becomes something other than it was, something quite wonderful.

What is going on here? What accounts for all of those changes? What is Stevens, through the medium of the nun's

testimony, trying to say? Is he telling us something about how we might live our lives?

I am not sure how Stevens himself would answer that last question but my answer to it is affirmative. It draws heavily on John Dewey's conception of the power of art to transform those who experience it (an outlook he shares with many others, needless to say) and on his depiction of how moral faith in what he calls "inclusive ideal ends" is often capable of arousing emotions powerful enough to engender enduring allegiance to those ends while at the same time serving to unify one's sense of self and one's relations to other forms of existence. Both of those complex notions are best conveyed with the help of Dewey's own words.

Let's begin our borrowing from Dewey with a single paragraph taken from his *Art as Experience*.[4] In it he starts by talking about the impact of a individual work of art but soon makes clear that he is really referring to aesthetic perception in general whenever and wherever it occurs, even when its object has nothing to do with a formal work of art. The paragraph is so rich in content and so closely related to the topic at hand that despite its length I must quote it almost in full.

> A work of art elicits and accentuates this quality of being a whole and of belonging to the larger, all-inclusive, whole which is the universe in which we live. This fact, I think, is the explanation of that feeling of exquisite intelligibility and clarity we have in the presence of an object that is experienced with esthetic intensity. It explains also the religious feeling that accompanies intense esthetic perception. We are, as it were introduced into a world beyond this world which is nevertheless the deeper reality of the world in which we live in our ordinary experiences. We are carried out beyond ourselves to find ourselves. I can see no psychological ground for such properties of an experience save that, somehow, the work of art operates to deepen and to raise to great clarity,

> that sense of an enveloping undefined whole
> that accompanies every normal experience. This
> whole is then felt as an expansion of ourselves.
> . . . Where egotism is not made the measure of
> reality and value, we are citizens of this vast
> world beyond ourselves, and any intense
> realization of its presence with and in us brings
> a peculiarly satisfying sense of unity in itself
> and with ourselves  (AE, p.195).

The relation of what Dewey says in that paragraph to the nun's testimony should be almost self-evident. Before I try to make it become even more evident, however, let me further bolster my case by adding a few of the things Dewey has to say about moral faith, these taken from the first two chapters of his book, *A Common Faith.*[5]

Faith, for Dewey, is by no means bound to the creedal doctrines of any religion. It rather denotes a comprehensive attitude toward "ends so inclusive that they unify the self" (p.22) or "possibilities" (p.23) that are viewed as being so worthwhile and so broad and all-encompassing that they give to one's life a unifying purpose. As examples of such inclusive ends Dewey mentions art, science, good citizenship, education, fellowship, friendship and love, growth in mind and body. Dewey speaks of such inclusive ends as constituting "unseen powers" (p.23). He adds that all ideals refer to possibilities yet to be accomplished and thus remain unseen until such time as they do become at least partially realized. Here is how he puts it:

> The artist, scientist, citizen, parent, as far as they
> are actuated by the spirit of their callings, are
> controlled by the unseen. For all endeavor for
> the better is moved by faith in what is possible,
> not by adherence to the actual (p.23).

He goes on to point out that though each of those ends may already be partially realized, otherwise it would be purely fanciful, its absolute fulfillment remains infinitely distant and therefore always beyond reach. As he puts it:

> These goods are there and yet they are relatively

embryonic. Many persons are shut out from generous participation in them; there are forces at work that threaten and sap existent goods as well as prevent their expansion. A clear and intense conception of a union of ideals ends with actual conditions is capable of arousing steady emotion. It may be fed by every experience, no matter what its material (p.51).

A final point to make about one's devotion to one or more of such inclusive ends is that allegiance to any or all of them must remain voluntary. It cannot be forced. The end must be chosen as one's own. Yet the choice is far from solitary, for the goal, though individually selected, is shared with others. So too, in large measure, are the means of its accomplishment.

The person making the choice need not start from scratch, even though his or her striving bears the impress of personal effort. "What one person and one group accomplish becomes the standing ground and the starting place of those who succeed them," Dewey says (p.50).

So much, then, for our direct reliance on Dewey's words. He obviously has a lot more to say on both of the subjects that have been broached, but for now those few quotations will have to do. With those borrowed notions in hand, let's return to Stevens's nun. As seen through our freshly-acquired Deweyan spectacles, how does she look?

Let's start with his outlook on faith. The nun's status as a member of a religious community does establish her to be a woman of faith in the conventional sense of the term, though not perhaps in a fully Deweyan sense. By the time he wrote *A Common Faith* in 1934 (actually long before then) Dewey was adamant in his rejection of everything supernatural. To the extent that the nun's faith included elements of a belief in the supernatural, such as an after-life or the physical reality of miracles, and we well might presume that it did include such elements, he would have found it incompatible with his own views.

Yet we might also safely assume that the nun's faith,

though containing such elements, also included a deeply felt allegiance to several of those inclusive ends, such as fellowship, friendship and love, that Dewey posits as essential to the attainment of a feeling of wholeness and unity to one's life. It is easy to imagine the nun being as fully devoted to such ends as Dewey himself, who approached them from a purely secular point of view. We also should note that Dewey would not have hesitated to call his own devotion to such ends "religious" in nature; likewise the experience that those ends generated.

What is particularly interesting about the nun's faith however, is how it becomes intensified as a result of her insight into the similarity of poetry and apotheosis. The latter (apotheosis) is, of course, one of the central tenets, perhaps even *the* central tenet, of Christianity. In Christian terms it consists of belief in the divinity of Christ, in his divine birth and his ultimate ascension into heaven. For many of the faithful that combination of beliefs centrally defines what it means to be a Christian.

What the nun has come to see, presumably for the first time, is that art, or at least poetry, undertakes a Christ-like mission. It seeks through effort, even to the point of extreme suffering, to elevate the ordinary, the commonly human, into something quite extraordinary. Thus "everything," the nun exuberantly declares, "becomes morning, summer, the hero, the enraptured women, the sequestered night." Even the figure of the crucified Christ ("the man that suffered") with his blood-encrusted wounds and now lifeless body is seen as "lying there at ease without his envious pain in body, in mind." The pain is "envious" presumably because it has been cast out, like vile Satan himself. It can no longer abide within and thus torment the Crucified's now tranquil body.

What does that deepened insight do but, in Dewey's words, introduce the nun "into a world beyond this world which is nevertheless the deeper reality of the world in which we live in our ordinary experiences?" Like art itself, it "operates to deepen and to raise to great clarity, that sense of an enveloping undefined whole that accompanies every normal experience." Even the wind, favorably transformed, now blows as softly as

a whisper in one's ear, like the quiet breath of some Great Being.

The poem ends with "yet another illustration" of "the tight resemblance" between poetry and apotheosis. "Each matters only in that which it conceives," the nun confides. What does she mean? I read her as saying that we each seek to realize (cause to "matter" and to become materially expressed) a set of convictions—such as those entailed in the notions of poetry and apotheosis—convictions that we at least partially come to (i.e., "conceive") on our own. Those convictions are shared with others, true enough,—humanity at large, other member of our own culture, our local community, our friends and loved ones— but they remain our own conceptions in a deeply personal sense all the same.

Turning to the contents of the paragraph taken from Dewey's *Art as Experience*, what shall we say of its bearing on our understanding of the nun's experience? Does she, for example, undergo a sense "of being a whole and of belonging to the larger, all-inclusive, whole which is the universe in which we live," a sense that, as Dewey says, tends to happen in the presence of great art? Has she through her new-found insight been "introduced into a world beyond this world which is nevertheless the deeper reality of the world in which we live in our ordinary experiences"? The latter, we will recall, is yet another of Dewey's descriptions of how art sometimes works.

I dare say that she does appear to have undergone such an experience. She seems to have sensed what it is like to be a whole person, an integrated self, which includes a sense of belonging to the larger, all-inclusive whole that comprises the universe in which we live. She may have experienced such a sense before, possibly on several occasions, but perhaps not with the same ardor and overflowing enthusiasm that her words convey here. But note that her insight with its accompanying burst of emotion does not commit her to remaining in that newly discovered or re-discovered world. She must choose to remain there. ("*If* I live according to that law," she says).

And what does that choice entail? It calls for dedication. She must do what she can to maintain such a world, to assist in its realization. In short, her faith in the unity of poetry and

apotheosis, if it really becomes a faith and does not remain an isolated insight, commits her to action. It cannot reside in words alone.

## II.

So much for the present from Stevens's pastoral nun. It is now time to bring teaching into the picture. Can that be done by our simply following the nun's lead? Need we only change a word or two to make the adaptation? Can we start, for example, with the formula: 'poetry and teaching are one' or even: 'teaching and art are one' and then shift abruptly, as did the nun, to the consequences of living according to one or the other of those "laws"? Alas, I fear not.

For despite all the talk there has been over the years about teaching being an art (and who among us can possibly have escaped such talk?), I suspect that the bare claim that such is the case does not prove to be very convincing. Some may even find it annoying. For when it comes from teachers themselves it sounds self-serving and when from some outsider, such as a convention speaker or a local school administrator, it sounds like insincere flattery.

When called upon to defend such assertions, the usual reply, from either teachers themselves or from those only aiming to flatter, is to say something like: "Well, teaching surely calls for a lot of creativity. No one can deny that." or "Teaching at its best is artfully performed. That much is clear." Instead of pausing here to dispute such vacuous claims, I will undermine them with the counter-claim which says that the alleged artfulness of teaching has little or nothing to do with the case at hand. The former claim, even if true, does not address the form of identity or resemblance spoken of in Stevens's poem.

What unites poetry and teaching or teaching and art in a Stevensian sense, as I see it, is not that they both have something to do with creativity or artful performance. Rather it is that they both constitute fields of social endeavor whose perceived goodness lies beyond question. They are treasured as ends sought by the culture at large. The challenge they present to individual practitioners is capable of engendering a degree

of sustained commitment and devotion worthy of becoming a chosen way of life.

Note the qualification in my "the challenge . . . is *capable* of engendering." I am not suggesting that every poet or every teacher feels deeply devoted to what he or she is doing. Many do not, goodness knows. Some poets, let's demote them by calling them versifiers, only toy with poetry, just as some teachers, also hardly worthy of the term, only teach perfunctorily, treating what they do as solely a source of income. But I am suggesting that those who *do* feel as positively as I have described, whether teachers or poets, resemble each other in a very profound way, no matter how disparate their activities may appear to be on the surface.

Here another quote from Dewey comes to mind. Speaking before an audience of art teachers in 1906, almost thirty years before he wrote *Art as Experience*, he said, "To feel the meaning of what one is doing and to rejoice in that meaning; to unite in one concurrent fact the unfolding of the inner life and the ordered development of material conditions—that is art."[6] Notice that he says nothing in that sentence about the doing of art as we commonly speak of it. Instead, he describes a condition that could befall anyone engaged in any of a number of different activities, from tending one's garden to tending a child, from writing a letter to writing a book. Whenever we are so engaged, Dewey wants us to understand, we are doing something worthy of being called "art."

Now back to teaching. When do teaching and art begin to converge? When do they show themselves as sharing "a tight resemblance?" They do so when we turn from art in the usual sense of the term and focus instead on what teaching is trying to achieve and on the satisfactions attendant upon that effort. "To unite in one concurrent fact the unfolding of the inner life and the ordered development of material conditions," that is certainly what teaching succeeds in accomplishing under the best of conditions. It is what the devoted teacher rejoices in doing and what makes teaching an art.

But something remains amiss. For surely the dedicated scientist, or philanthropist, or civil servant, or even the dutiful

parent is capable of feelings akin to those of the poet. They too, under the best of conditions, might be said to rejoice in the meaning of what they are doing. Why, then, make the basis of the comparison teaching and art rather than teaching and science, or teaching and philanthropy, or teaching and parenthood? Aren't they all equally alike in their capacity to engender dedication and devotion?

One reason for making art the standard of comparison is that historically it has come to epitomize the accomplishments and deep satisfactions associated with a wide range of other activities. That is what Dewey was trying to say in his 1906 definition. There are many ways in which one might garner that same set of satisfactions or something closely akin to them. Teaching, however, is surely one of them.

But if teaching is no closer to art in the generic sense than is science, let's say, or philanthropy or parenthood, if each is equally capable of serving as an inclusive final end and thus constitutes a worthy way of spending one's life, why call the resemblance between teaching and art "tight," which seems to imply that it is somehow uniquely close? Why is it any tighter than the relationship between art and any of those other activities? To address that final question we must return to Stevens's poem and to nun's own words.

As noted at the start, what the nun "finally" came to understand was something about the relationship between poetry and her deepest religious convictions, the essence, one might say, of her Christian faith. She saw that both were committed to the goal of exaltation, of glorifying and praising something (No, not "something," everything!) and of having both the object praised and the act of praising itself become a source of spiritual delight. She gave the name *apotheosis* to her side of that equation. She also saw, more clearly than before perhaps, what that similarity implied for living what remained of her own life. It meant taking an active part in the glorification of all that was worthy of being glorified, which for her became "everything."

Does that mean that she now must turn to poetry as a means of living her new life? Figuratively, yes. Literally, no. It

does not mean that she must begin to write poems in order to remain true to her new-found insight. But it does mean that if she chooses that way of life she is henceforth committed to trying to perceive her world poetically (or artistically, if you please), seeing it, that is, as Dewey was fond of saying, "in the light that never was on land or sea."[7] Perhaps, as has been said, that insight and even its accompanying sense of commitment is not all that new for this particular nun. Perhaps she has been trying to live like that for a long time, long before her having attained her insightful condition (her "present blessedness").

That could be. But the poem leaves little doubt that something unusual has happened to our pastoral nun, something quite worth sharing with others.[8] Recall now the first line of the poem: "Finally, in the last year of her age." We earlier wondered about the unusual use of the word *age* instead of *life* in that expression. This far along in our speculations, we are emboldened to venture a guess about the significance of that word choice. Our guess is that our nun is not in the last year of her life at all. She is not about to die. Instead, she has just stopped ageing. She has been re-born, rejuvenated. She is like a child again. Listen once more to the way she gushes, almost like a teenager, "If I live according to this law I live/ In an immense activity, in which/ Everything becomes morning, summer, the hero,/The enraptured woman, the sequestered night. . ." Caught up in the youthful spirit of that verbal outburst we can almost hear her continue, "Wow! Gosh! You should see what I see! Here, quick, put these on! Try my new glasses!"

The "tight resemblance" between poetry and apotheosis refers then, not to a superficial similarity between two modes of life but to a much deeper convergence at the level of fundamental outlook or unifying purpose. This, we might guess, is what makes the resemblance "tight" rather than simply "close." Each is rooted in the same soil, bound tightly to a common set of moral assumptions.

Is the nun's insight and the option it holds forth available to us all in one form or another? I dare say the poem's speaker believes it to be. His report of the nun's account, and therefore the poem as a whole, would make little sense

otherwise. Indeed, one might look upon the poem itself as an enactment in miniature of the nun's "law." Everyone listening in, teachers included, of course, are tacitly invited to follow suit.

Yet the nun (and by indirection, the poem's speaker) does not take leave of her listeners with a nod and a beatific smile, inviting them to follow. Instead, she ends rather cryptically, we will recall. Her closing words are, "Each matters only in that which it conceives." I earlier suggested that she there implies that we must each seek to realize (cause to "matter" and to become materially expressed) a set of convictions analogous to those the nun expresses yet ones that we at least partially come to ("conceive" is the word she uses) on our own. Those convictions, I further suggested are necessarily shared with others, for they constitute far-reaching, inclusive ideals, embodied in familiar activities such as science or education or parenthood, that are part of our cultural heritage. Yet to become true convictions those activities, together with their attendant roles and responsibilities, must be personally chosen and openly acknowledged. They must then be performed in a way that makes that conviction tangibly present to the person choosing it and recognizable as such by others. Only then is the promise of the nun's insight truly fulfilled. Only then might teaching and art come to share a tight resemblance.

Let me put it differently. Here is the bottom line. There *is* no tight resemblance of teaching and art, save as individual teachers and those looking on make it so. The same is true of science, philanthropy, parenthood, or any other worthy endeavor. Each practitioner must not only come to *see* that resemblance, and *announce* it (i.e., share it with others), as did the nun, but must then adopt it as a personal creed of some kind (an article of faith, let's say) and henceforth *act* upon it. But that three-step process of seeing, sharing, and acting may not be nearly as easy as it sounds.

Which brings me to one of the most puzzling aspects of Stevens's poem, a wrinkle whose revelation I have reserved for last. I'm inclined to call it the nun's secret. It resides in the tiny word "if," which occurs on line five, one-third of the way

through. "*If* I live according to this law," the nun says, and then proceeds to describe the miraculous changes that presumably would take place under such a circumstance. But why "*if* I live"? Why not "*when* I live"? Has she yet to take the plunge? Is she still only toying with the idea? That's what it sounds like. But then how does she know what will happen if she hasn't already tried it? Is she just guessing? That possibility doesn't seem likely, for it would greatly undermine the nun's credibility and thus weaken the poem. Perhaps she has tried to live that way but only for a time, not as a *way of life*. Or perhaps those two alternatives are not as incompatible as they initially appear.

The latter suggestion opens the door to a quite different line of thought. Could it be that one can only live *intermittently* as the nun describes? Might one manage it only for a few days at a time, let's say, or even a few hours a day? And this despite one's having sworn one's allegiance to a lifelong effort to do so? Is such dedication and insight something that comes and goes, even unpredictably perhaps?

I'm inclined to think that such may be the case. After all, even the most dedicated of poets goes through periods when his or her Muse remains silent and the world looks quite ordinary. The same must happen to nuns as well. They do not remain in a constant state of grace, not even those belonging to an order that aspires to a condition of perpetual adoration and worship. So we can excuse our nun for her lapses, despite her present blessedness. That still does not explain why she uses "if" rather than "when" in describing what happens when living according to her "law," but it at least makes the periodicity of such a condition understandable. If the same were true of teaching, as it doubtless must be, what would that mean?

It would mean that even for the most dedicated of teachers there would be times when the artfulness of teaching seemed vibrant and alive, resembling Dewey's description of how it feels to engage in art of any kind, and other times when such a vision paled and the demands of teaching became ordinary and mundane, perhaps even distasteful. The timing of those changes might vary considerably from one teacher to another. For some they might occur almost daily, alternating

from class to class perhaps, almost like being on a roller coaster. For others such ups and downs might take place over much longer periods of time, weeks perhaps or even months.

Given that intermittent quality, teachers might want to seek ways of sustaining the occurrence of those times when teaching seemed just the right thing to be doing. They might also want to experiment with ways of recovering that outlook when it seems to have lapsed. I suspect there are no foolproof ways of accomplishing either goal, but I know from personal experience and from the reports of other teachers with whom I have talked that such changes can be either aided or deterred by controllable circumstance. For some teachers, collegial and administrative support is of prime importance. For others personal reflection, buttressed by professional readings, has greater potency. For still others, immersion in one or more of the arts or in works of literature or poetry having little or nothing to do with teaching itself (witness the poem we are examining) may have a catalytic effect. Ceremonial events, such as those that take place at conventions and teacher institutes have also been known to help. What is crucial to keep in mind throughout all such attempts is how normal it is to undergo those fluctuations.

Finally, does the teacher's prior acknowledgment of the "tight resemblance" between teaching and art require her to have read Stevens's "Pastoral Nun"? Of course not. She need never have heard of such a poem. Nor need she ever explicitly acknowledge such a resemblance in precisely those terms. What, then, is she called upon to acknowledge and resolve to do?

She is called upon to acknowledge the potential contribution of her own teaching to teaching's ultimate purpose, which is that of helping others live more fruitful and enjoyable lives through becoming more knowledgeable and skillful and thereby more fully capable as human beings and citizens. There are numerous ways of formulating that aspiration, some more elaborately and deftly phrased than others.[9] What they all come down to, however, is a tacit acknowledgment of the tight resemblance of teaching and art, when the latter is understood in the way Dewey invites us to understand art's universality.

For the teacher who seeks to keep that ideal in mind, might everything in her world suddenly become "morning, summer, the hero, the enraptured woman" and so forth, as it did for Stevens's nun? Not likely. Although we must remember that the nun's enthusiastic description was simply her own way of expressing delight in the change that had taken place, her way of rejoicing in the meaning of what she was doing, as Dewey might say.

Every teacher who comes to revel in that kind of heightened awareness, and one would hope that all might do so on numerous occasions before taking leave of their chosen profession, is encouraged to follow the nun's example, no matter what year of age he or she might be when the truth of that insight strikes home (the sooner the better, of course). Each is then entitled to rejoice repeatedly in the deeper meaning of what he or she is doing as a teacher and to express that joy, both directly and indirectly, as often and as enthusiastically as befits a rejuvenated spirit.

### Notes

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[2] Revised version of an invited address delivered at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association in Chicago, April, 2003.

[3] *Webster's Third International Dictionary*, Springfield, MA: Merriam Webster, Inc., 1986.

[4] John Dewey, *Art as Experience*, New York: Capricorn Books, 1934.

[5] John Dewey, *A Common Faith*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1934.

[6] In John Dewey, Essays on the New Empiricism 1903-1906. *The Middle Works of John Dewey, Volume 3*, edited by Jo Ann Boydston, Carbondale, Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press, 1977. p. 292. Also see Philip W. Jackson, "Dewey's 1906 definition of art," *Teachers College Record*, *104*( 2), March 2002. Pp. 167-177.

[7.] The line likely comes from Wordsworth's poem "Elegiac Stanzas Suggested by a Picture of Peele Castle in a Storm, Painted by Sir George Beaumont," but it is actually a misquotation. The line in the poem reads, "The light that never was, on sea or land." (*The Norton Anthology of Poetry*, New York: W.W.Norton & Company, 1983. p. 558.)

[8.] As a quasi-humorous aside, does calling her a past-oral mean that she is now beyond speech? I wouldn't put it past Stevens to play with words like that.

[9.] See, for example, John Dewey, "My Pedagogical Creed," *The School Journal*, *54*(3), January 16, 1897. pp. 77-80.

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# Pink Flamingos and Picasso: Memes and the Evolutionary Struggle for Aesthetic Survival

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*Abstract*

*The question of why some aesthetic ideas survive or reoccur over time is examined with reference to Dawkins theory of memes as vehicle for cultural transmission. The application of Dawkins theory to aesthetic awareness and response provides a potential framework for understanding the evolution and aesthetic survival of both "high" and "low" forms of art, and the dynamics of art preferences. Theoretical ideas about the evolution of memes as they parallel Darwin's theory of the natural selection of genes are introduced, and some culturally durable "aesthetic memes" are proposed. Finally, the author suggests some implications for art education.*

Walk into any university union or shopping mall and you may witness the following; poster reproductions on sale, cell phones singing away, "muzak" blanketing the atmosphere, and people dressed in attire that may seem curious when considered in terms of utility. Look closer. There's Picasso's *Girl in A Mirror* on a poster and Van Gogh's *The Starry Night* on a tie. Uh-oh, is that Edvard Munch's *The Scream* on a credit card? Listen. The opening motif of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony is signaling an incoming call on someone's cell phone while you're humming along with that classic 60s tune that you can't seem to get out of your head. Look over there. The Home and Garden Store is having a 2-for-1 sale on pink plastic flamingos. Farther down the way is a kiosk selling paintings on black velvet. Just why are some aesthetic ideas so durable? Why do they continue to please us long after the newness has worn off? Why do they keep reappearing in slightly altered forms year after year?

In the book, *The Selfish Gene*, Richard Dawkins (1976) coined the term "memes" to identify units of cultural transmission. Like genes, the word it resembles, he envisioned memes as replicators whose survival depends upon their ability to reproduce and pass to successive generations. Modeling his concept of memes after Darwin's theory of the natural selection of genes, Dawkins conceived of some memes as better suited than others for survival, reproduction, and transmission. Ideas that spontaneously seem to leap from person to person becoming rapidly widespread, and ideas that endure over time are suspect as meme activity. Some material manifestations of memes cited by Dawkins include tunes, catch-phrases, fashions, fads and designs, including ways of making pots or building arches.

The element Dawkins believes sets humans apart from other life forms is "culture," a condition not exclusive to humankind, but by magnitudes more complex and numerous than examples so-far identified among other (animals) species. Thus far, the many theories that have sought to explain the growth, change, and transmission of human culture over time have focused on the combined mechanisms of intellect and biology, needs, traditions, and physical environment; that is, on nature and nurture. Dawkins' notion of memes proposes an alternate theory for understanding the phenomenon of cultural reproduction and evolution.

When Dawkins first proposed the notion of memes, it was to provoke speculation about the possibility that a replicator other than the gene might exist. It was a factor that he envisioned might behave like the "selfish" gene; a replicator with a singular drive toward continued existence that bypassed rational processes, and one that might function as both competition to and enhancement for the gene itself. Among other possibilities, it was a factor that could account for the extraordinary strangeness and diversity of culture humans impose upon the world, and for its many forms which seemingly have no direct relation to our survival as a species. Art, as an ever-changing facet of culture, is often cited as an example of what some would argue is one such superfluous human activity. This debate over art's role in human affairs is never-ending, and it will not be

settled here. For the purposes of my investigation, however, the realm of art provides a thoroughly documented area for examining cultural transmission from the perspective of Dawkins' theory of memes. Within art, there is a record of identifiable ideas and designs that have endured and often resurfaced in recognizable form through the ages.

The purpose of this paper is to argue that Dawkins (1976) theory of memes may provide a plausible framework for understanding the evolution and aesthetic survival of both the "low art" of popular culture, and the "high art" found in museums and galleries; that is, both pink flamingos and Picasso. As a result, I review theoretical ideas about the evolution of memes as they parallel Darwin's theory of the natural selection of genes. I will argue that the proposed role of memes in cultural transmission, especially in art, may provide an alternate lens for viewing and analyzing the proliferation of visual culture. The implications of this synthesis point toward a new awareness of the cognitive mechanisms of aesthetic response and cultural transmission, an area which art education is only just beginning to explore. By extension, these ideas also could form the basis for new theories that could expand our limited understandings of diverse types of art, the emergence of new forms and the persistence of old ones, and responses and preferences to certain forms. Dawkin's theory of memes, if it is proven, also may in time inform the study of how ideas evolve within art education itself. In introducing meme theory, I examine and propose some ideas about how the mind may "acquire" and copy certain memes while shedding others. Finally, I identify and trace the lineage of what I will argue may represent some culturally durable "aesthetic memes." The reader should keep in mind that because the existence of memes is, as yet, unproven, many of the ideas explored in this paper are purely speculative in nature.

## What is a Meme and How Does It Function?

Darwin's theory of genetic evolution and natural selection is widely accepted as accounting for our physical and biological corpus. But are genes the only replicators? When

Dawkins (1976) first proposed the notion of memes, he challenged readers to imagine that genes were not the only replicating unit subject to natural selection. The replicator that he conceived was, like the gene, securing survival through superior fitness.

> Just as genes propagate themselves in the gene pool by leaping from body to body via sperm or eggs, so memes propagate themselves in the meme pool by leaping from brain to brain via a process, which, in the broad sense, can be called imitation. (p. 206)

Dawkins (1976) then proposed that cultural evolution, in many ways, was analogous to genetic evolution. His colleague, N.K. Humphrey (1976) went even further to compare the hypothetical behavior of memes to that of living organisms:

> Memes should be regarded as living structures, not just metaphorically but technically. When you plant a fertile meme in my mind you literally parasitize my brain, turning it into a vehicle for the meme's propagation in just the way that a virus may parasitize the genetic mechanism of a host cell. (in Dawkins, 1976, p. 207)

At its most basic level, a meme is an idea. Every idea, however, is not a meme that is capable of hijacking your consciousness. Before Dawkins proposed the notion of the meme, the related concept of "contagion ideas"—a predecessor of the meme—had been proposed and explored by earlier writers (Baldwin, 1894; Tarde, 1903; Le Bon, 1895). A contagion idea or a "virus of the mind" (Brodie, 1996; Lynch, 1996) may be manifest as beliefs, fashions, and fads that rapidly spread from person to person through imitation. Now, through the concept of memes, the postmodernist notion of "thoughts that think us" takes on a curiously literal dimension.

Blackmore (1999) contends that memes are most correctly regarded as a form of information, just as genes are information written in DNA for building proteins. Evidence of meme activity such as arches, pot-shapes, or tunes are the

physical manifestations of ideas, not the memes themselves. Physical representation, however, is necessary for conveying memetic "coding" to other brains, the meme's ultimate objective. Brodie (1996) compares memes to contagious, opportunistic viruses of the mind that can be benign, beneficial, or harmful to its host. Those "copyable" memes that succeed in being most widely represented, most visible and pervasive, are those which can most rapidly "infect" the greatest number of brains.

Just how much information a meme may contain is speculative. While a single musical note does not constitute a meme, a distinctively copyable grouping of notes such as the first four notes of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony likely does. Expanding this notion into the area of visual perception, it is possible to begin proposing occurrences of design groupings—color harmonies, shape and pattern elements, proportional relationships, forms of balance—that suggest meme activity. Dawkins also envisioned some memes as replicating in a mutually assisting symbiosis, what he termed a "coadapted meme complex"—now shortened to "memeplex"— much as certain genes group together within chromosomes. He cites religions, chain letters, and pyramid schemes as examples of memeplexes.

Movements in art such as impressionism, pointillism, or abstract expressionism could be considered as possible manifestations of memeplexes. For art education, examining styles and movements through the lens of meme theory could yield new insights regarding their origins and transmission.


## Imitation and Replication

Unlike genes, memes do not contain instructions for making copies of themselves; instead, they rely on our extraordinary human capacity for imitation as the mechanism for their replication. This unique capacity for imitation—what Dennett (1991) terms a "Good Trick"—is what makes us, as human beings, the ideal meme vehicles. But because brain-space is not limitless, memes must compete to find space in a host

brain just as genes compete at the molecular level. The most successful memes are the most "copyable" memes.

Virtually any meme can replicate and spread over the short term. In our present environment memes have been compared to super-viruses, no longer depending upon mere human imitation alone. Through electronic and digital replication via television and the internet, a meme can now spread and mutate so rapidly that it is often difficult to determine its origin. The growing shift in art education toward what is being called visual culture increasingly manifests identity and cultural capital as imagery (Duncum, 2001), a plausibly effective vehicle for meme transport. In our present technological age through electronic replication, a single meme can access a multitude of brains at once. By comparison, the rate of movement for the spreading of genetic code is so slow as to appear "glacial"from our limited human perspective (Dennett, 1991).

Dennett theorizes a few basic rules applying to the behavior of memes; first, memes don't survive because they benefit you or me, their hosts but because they are good at producing copies of themselves. The successful meme may be one that, at times, may benefit the host but this is far from given. On the whole, memes for suicide, celibacy, and vendetta would appear to be about as successful as those for altruism, heroism or charity. As Dennett (1991) succinctly states, "there is no necessary connection between a meme's replicative power, its 'fitness' from its point of view, and its contribution to our fitness" (p. 203). Secondly, a meme must be seen or heard to spread to a new host. This means that the meme must be physically represented in some way: in pictures, books, electronic media, sayings, behavior, music, buildings, apparel, or the sundry of necessity. Invisible memes become extinct memes. Memes can transmit vertically like genes from parent down to child— or the reverse. But they have the additional capacity to transmit horizontally across the culture from person to person with the potential to spread exponentially. Dawkins (1976) summarizes the qualities of the successful meme as "longevity, fecundity, and copying-fidelity" (p. 208).

**Memes in art**

Given these criteria, if you encounter an idea or other meme-form — let's say, for example, a pot shape — that has been around for a long time, it appears fairly commonly, and seems to crop up in more or less the same form each time it appears, chances are, you have encountered a successful aesthetic meme. Here it is important to note that aesthetic success and what art critics may regard as art of significant aesthetic worth are not necessarily the same. If this were the case, we might never account for plastic flamingos, leisure suits, or for that matter, the entire decade of the seventies. The question is, if these are the memes that many of us love to hate, then why don't they just die out? But, once again, we must remember, memes are not here to make us better human beings, or to help our genes. Like the genes they may compete with, memes are here to selfishly survive.

## Is There Evidence of Aesthetic Memes?

### Identifying Aesthetic Memes

The tides of change in art as an expression of cultural identity are, if anything, even less predictable than cultural change as a whole. When is the last time anyone knew with any certainty what the next "big thing" would be? And yet, certain aesthetic ideas seem remarkably durable. But can this count as evidence? Let's take a look.

If we accept the theory that memes may exist, then my questions are; (a) Do aesthetic memes occur? (b) How can we identify the successful ones? and (c) If they occur, how do they function? Using Dawkins original criteria of "longevity, fecundity, and copying-fidelity," it is possible to select some candidates that may represent examples of successful aesthetic memes. For the purpose of this investigation, the question of whether these examples represent "high" or "low" forms of art is irrelevant. Reviewing art or aesthetic artifacts that have multiplied to achieve widespread popularity would seem to indicate "fecundity." The criteria of "longevity" are suggested

by art forms that have endured or reemerged over time. Those forms which reemerge generation after generation in more or less the same form exhibit "copying-fidelity." These criteria led me to select for further investigation pink flamingos, the golden section, the art of Picasso and of Thomas Kinkade, amphora and ginger-jar vase shapes, arches, and certain color harmonies.

### Receptiveness to Memes

Here you may wish to ask why the mind embraces some memes and not others? Most of us would like to believe that aesthetically successful memes are also aesthetically superior memes. This is why it is easy to make the mistake of believing that any meme that has been around for a long time embodies aesthetically desirable qualities. Not so. As seductive as it may be to believe that our brains copy and transfer certain memes simply because they embody truth or beauty or significant form or meaning, it may be that in many cases, our minds actually embrace what they find stimulating, pleasurable, easy-to-remember, or related to other important ideas or emotions. The types of art that one responds to may further relate to satisfying the needs of individual personality types; for example, a thrill-seeking personality might be attracted to novelty while more sedate personalities could seek out soothing or harmonious forms. Or vice-versa. It is also possible that individual brains may be biologically more receptive to certain memes than to others, and undoubtedly, there are numerous additional factors at play. Within this array of variables, the successful meme may represent a particularly "good fit" for certain brains, but a reciprocal element is theoretically the aggressive vigor of the meme itself. The tune that you can't get out of your head, the colors or patterns that are unconsciously and repeatedly selected, a general preference for certain proportional relationships, or for symmetry in design may all represent some aggressive "good fits."

Further questions of how memes adapt to specific environments are suggested by the diverse appearance of art in different cultures that exhibit localized aesthetic preferences.

One can easily imagine that a meme successful in Western cultures might become rapidly extinct among Mongolian tribesmen or the Masai of Kenya. Dennett (1991) has suggested that the relationship between meme and mind may be one of reciprocal adaptation:

> [A] human mind is itself an artifact created when memes restructure a human brain in order to make it a better habitat for memes. The avenues for entry and departure are modified to suit local conditions, and strengthened by various artificial devices that enhance fidelity and prolixity of replication: native Chinese minds differ dramatically from native French minds, and literate minds differ from illiterate minds (p. 207).

## Cognitive Responses: What the brain likes about art

Human response to visual stimuli is a cognitively complex recursive process that most of us take for granted. The interaction of visual perception with memory and emotion within the mind are all a part of the human response to art. Ramachandran (1999) has suggested that stimulation of the limbic system in the brain (associated with emotion and pleasure) is a key component in responses to art. He also suggests that "artists either consciously or unconsciously deploy certain rules or principles... to titillate the visual areas of the brain." He further theorizes, "what the artist tries to do...is not only capture the essence of something but also to amplify it in order to more powerfully activate the same neural mechanisms that would be activated by the original object" (p. 17). Zeki (1999) has additionally suggested that "as art developed more and more in the modern era, much of it became better and better tailored to the physiology of the parallel processing perceptual systems and the visual areas" (p. 88). In other words, through intuitive experimentation, artists may produce works that provoke stimulation, pleasure, and emotional satisfaction.

Although much study has been devoted to identifying

art preferences, we have very little idea why those preferences exist. The collaborative work of Komar and Melamid (1998), originally intended, in part, as postmodern satire, seems to reveal a group consensus of certain aesthetic preferences that strongly suggests evidence of aesthetically successful memes. Through broad-spectrum surveys that asked subjects about genre, subject matter, and color preferences, they synthesized the "world's most wanted (and least wanted) paintings." Their conclusions suggested that in paintings, representations of landscapes with water and a lot of blue evoke positive responses across many cultures. Indeed, Rapaport's (1984) independent studies of color preferences in the USA have indicated that the over-all most popular color was blue, followed by green, red, pink, yellow, purple, and orange. In the same study, a comparison of the sexes showed that males more commonly chose green, while females were more likely to choose purple and pink. The investigators in this study also speculated that "the harmonic relations between colors are internalized at an early age and are constantly modified by emotional experiences connected with colors and other personal associations that contribute to the large inter-personal variability in color preferences."

## A Closer Look at Some Aesthetic Memes in Art

First, let's turn to pink flamingos. They were designed by a young sculptor, Don Featherstone, for Union Products in 1957. It would be hard to find a neighborhood anywhere in the country without one or two. These enduring little lawn ornaments have become an icon of American kitsch. And yet, is a taste for kitsch the only reason for their appeal? Ramachandran (1999) has proposed that the peak shift effect, a well-known principle in animal discrimination learning, might also be a factor in aesthetic response. The peak shift effect states that when an animal responds to one visual stimulus, then often a second stimulus, which exaggerates the qualities of the first stimulus, will produce an even stronger response. For example, a rat that is trained to recognize a rectangle will show an even greater response to a longer, skinnier rectangle. As

Ramachandran might suggest, these mass-produced plastic birds do, in some way, capture and even exaggerate the flamingo's essence: the sinuous curve of the neck, the ungainly stilt-like legs, the bright, warm color. Also, these may be a combination of elements—serpentine curves, vibrant color— that capture our attention at an unconscious level by evoking primitive brain responses ("S"= watch out for snakes; bright color=ripe fruit). If the pink flamingo is an aesthetic meme, it is one that satisfies Dawkins criteria for "fecundity," and, one that we may speculate succeeds for a variety of other reasons. Whether pink flamingos will attain true "longevity" is yet to be determined, although by today's standards, perhaps they have already done so.

A number of cognitive principles that seem to engage aesthetic perception may play varying roles in our susceptibility to aesthetic memes. For example, there is the principle of binding that is related to our ability to delineate objects in the vision field. Discrete parts of an object are mentally grouped (or bound) together separating them from surrounding background "noise." Ramachandran (1999) theorizes that this binding activity, in and of itself, produces pleasurable sensations—cognitive"rewards"— in the limbic region of the brain (p. 22). Binding is also related to the ability to isolate and to focus attentional resources on a single visual module, once again activating limbic "rewards." These principles along with peak shift are thought to play a major role in reinforcing some aesthetic responses. For example, why we often find a line drawing—which may eliminate many visual cues— more pleasing than a color photograph (p. 24).

In the realm of architecture, two recurring aesthetic meme-candidates are the arch and the golden section. Let's first consider the arch suggested by Dawkins (1976). The round arch used by the Romans remains a staple of architectural design, as well as arch variations that have emerged in different times and cultures (e.g. gothic, catenary, Islamic).  It was used by the ancient peoples of Mesopotamia several centuries before the Romans adopted and later perfected the form in the 2nd century BCE. Arches permitted architects to open up relatively large spaces in walls without compromising structural soundness;

they also provided a way to admit light, and to save materials. Clearly, this was an idea with practical value as well as aesthetic merit. Its use, however, continued even after the introduction of alternate structural systems that could effect the same practical results. The use of arches as structural components thus became an aesthetic decision, and perhaps an aesthetic meme. The arch-meme's robust physical representation through Roman enterprise mediated its successful transmission initially. It continues to thrive in architecture, and also can be recognized in designs such as the McDonald's logo.

The ancient Greeks gave us the formula for the "ideally" proportioned rectangle that we call the golden section about the 5th century BCE. Evidence of actual use of the 1:1.618 proportion rectangle defined by the Greeks was found far earlier at Stonehenge. It also exists in the natural world in human, animal, and insect proportions, plant growth patterns, and seashells. Gustav Fecher, a nineteenth century German psychologist, investigated human response to the golden section rectangle by measuring and comparing thousands of manufactured rectangular objects such as books, boxes, buildings, newspapers, etc. He found that the average rectangle ratio of these items was close to that of the golden section. He also found that a majority of people prefer a rectangle whose proportions are close to this ratio (Elam, 2001). Subsequent studies have produced results very similar to Fecher's original investigation. Whether we are imprinted with a preference for this proportional ratio at an early age or some other mechanism is at work, the golden section is a meme that seems deeply inscribed in many cultures. Artists have long applied this proportioning principle both unconsciously and intentionally in design and composition. The success of these two memes—the arch and the golden section—suggests that our brains may find certain shapes and proportions more "copyable" than others.

Pottery has satisfied a dual utilitarian and aesthetic function since ancient peoples first began producing it. As vessels, pots were indispensable to early cultures, but many people today still find pottery pleasing in ways that we can't account for purely in terms of utility. Certain identifiable pot

shapes—for example, the amphora vase shape from the Greeks or the ginger jar shape from the Far East—are still being reproduced by artist-potters today. That most people prefer more natural, curvilinear shapes over geometric ones may suggest one reason for this. However, a more compelling reason may lie in the vertical bi-lateral symmetry of many wheel-thrown and coil-built vessels. As creatures of bilateral symmetry ourselves, attunement to this characteristic was an essential survival advantage for early humans in distinguishing a predator, prey, or mate (Pinker, 1997; Ramachandran, 1999). It may also, in part, explain our attraction to vertically symmetrical pottery and designs. In addition, these "long-lived" amphora and ginger jar shapes, when analyzed in terms of the golden section, reveal an average width-to-height ratio that is close to 1:1.618. I would like to propose that very often it may be a certain combination of elements—elements to which we may be especially receptive—which gives an individual aesthetic meme its "edge" or "good fit."

The art of Picasso can be elusive. The many periods and styles of his 60-year career produced an enormous and diverse body of work. Without doubt, the style most universally associated with him is the abstraction of cubism. In Picasso's Girl in a Mirror, peak shift effect exaggeration of "essential" feminine characteristics—the roundness of the belly and breasts—is played off the shape binding and isolation operations the viewer must perform to group the figural elements and to separate them from the decorative patterning of the background. Another cognitive switch often triggered by art is the response to visual metaphor. Our ability to recognize a hidden similarity between two concepts that appear unrelated on the surface is almost certainly another vital survival trait. That the limbic system of the brain seems stimulated by discerning these hidden connections only reinforces our engagement with visual puns (Ramachandran, 1999). In this painting, the complex psychological interaction of the woman with her own dark reflection alludes to the human intrigue with the inner self. As any successful painting must, this one works effectively on multiple levels. Picasso's genius was that he seemed able to intuitively access so many levels at once in his work.

In the case of nonrepresentational art, the artist attempts to bypass reference to specific objects to directly activate perceptual responses to lines, colors, shapes, and so forth. What I suggest, is that by recombining aesthetic memes again and again through transfer and replication, evolutionary selection produces an ever-changing array of visual memeplexes. Average or weak—forgettable—memes may have a short-lived success, eventually disappearing. Gabora (1997) theorizes the role of social creativity in generating new and novel memes: "The ideas and inventions an individual produces build on the ideas and inventions of others (the ratchet effect). Which memes spread and which ones die off reflects the dynamics of the entire society of individuals hosting them" (p. 5). More vigorous or occasional super-memes replicate and thrive to reenter the aesthetic memepool. Their growth and migration in the world of art leaves a visible path.

The simultaneous commercial success and critical panning of Thomas Kinkade's paintings, if anything, confirms the notion that art need not be judged aesthetically superior to be found aesthetically pleasing. Kinkade's saccharine representations of intimate, little cottages succeed brilliantly on a psychological level by suggesting security and the warmth of home and family, and by evoking pleasant nostalgia for a time that never was. His palette runs to liberal blues appealing to a majority color preference. Noticeable tinges of purples and pinks in the paintings may be specifically directed toward women who often make home decorating decisions. His savvy marketing strategies are calculated to expose his work to the widest possible audience. When compared to the survey-generated "most wanted paintings" of Komar and Melamid, the resemblance of Kinkade's work is remarkably similar.

### Do We Need a Theory of Memes?

It is tempting, as some have, to dismiss the notion of memes as merely a clever metaphor for explaining cultural change. After all, to date, there has been no instrumentally detectable presence, or chemically measurable imprint to verify their existence. Yet empirical evidence was also unavailable

when Darwin proposed his theory of natural selection. Still, because Darwin's theory provided such a comprehensive, overarching framework for understanding evolutionary change, it demanded further investigation. Dawkin's (1976) concept of memes is just over twenty-five years old, but from the beginning, many biologists, sociologists, psychologists and philosophers viewed it as a revolutionary framework for thinking about cultural construction and change. Dawkin's theory has spawned the emerging field of memetics that shares with cognitive studies and the social sciences an interest in defining the driving forces of cultural evolution.

The theory of memes, in parallel with that of evolution, proposes a single, elegant solution to many troublesome questions at once. Blackmore (1999) sees memes as a theory that might account for the development of complex language, a huge field of study in itself. Memes could also account for the emergence of art, music, poetry, juggling, mimes and countless other activities that require a biologically absurd expenditure of energy while contributing nothing of physical substance to our survival as a species. Some would argue that the existence of memes could potentially explain behaviors that run counter to the welfare of our genes (Blackmore, 1999; Brodie, 1996; Lynch, 1996; Dawkins,1976; Dennett, 1991). This is a question never sufficiently answered by the complex circular logic that always tries to prove how suicide, celibacy, or bungy-jumping really does benefit the gene pool after all. Finally, Blackmore (1999) has even suggested that the coevolution of genes and memes rather than genes theory alone can better account for the mysterious increase in human brain size that began roughly 2.5 million years ago. If the existence of memes can provide an answer to all of these questions, then can they not also explain the enduring popularity of both pink flamingos and Picasso?

**Implications for Art Education**

As Blackmore (1999) has noted, memetic theory may seem less applicable in explaining the success of ideas that may appear logical or pragmatic; however, memetic theory may prove useful in understanding the persistence of those ideas

that seem to defy reason. It is uncertain where the search for evidence of memes will lead, but the theory postulating their existence is intriguing. In an era of electronic globalization, the reproduction, transmission, and evolution of cultures will increasingly affect every life. If the sheer numbers of people who believe a particular idea—for example, the ideas of memes or of angels—were reflective of validity, then the existence of memes or angels would not be subject to question. This, of course, is not the case. Some researchers, however, predict that biological evidence of the cognitive replication of memes within the brain will be confirmed within the next five to ten years (Aunger, 1999). For now though, the meme remains a theory. Still, if the theory of memes is plausible, then it is no less reasonable to theorize the existence of memes specifically targeting aesthetic perception.

Memetic theory—and here I emphasize theory, *if proven*—would effect nothing less than a paradigm shift in cultural and cognitive theories that have been foundational to art education and curriculum theory. Memetic theory as it is currently conceived, simultaneously stands to significantly inform and to challenge existing critical theory concepts including those that address issues of race, gender, and socioeconomic status. As a potentially revolutionary cultural framework, it will doubtless continue to generate skepticism and resistance to what some may regard as its deterministic implications. What I cannot imagine is that memetic theory will in any way alter the goals of art education to address the formal and critical concepts of art, or the commitment of art educators to afford all students rich opportunities to make, experience, and understand art in multiple ways.

Undeniably, we live in an age of images. Brent Wilson (1994) has voiced concern that an area where art education seems least effective is in helping students to connect art with meaningful themes within their own lives. Wilson and Wilson (1977) established the powerful influence of popular culture and peers upon the forms students employ in their own art expressions. A growing number of art educators have suggested that the study of art should include the contextual analysis of images and objects from popular culture as well as

contemporary and historical art (Congdon & Blandy, 2001; Duncum, 2002; Erickson, 1983; Freedman, 2003; Lanier, 1986; Wilson & Wilson, 1977).

We must remember that the deluge of competing ideologies in visual culture bombarding students through television, computers, the internet, film, video games, and print media do not exist to encourage reflection or analysis. Rather, they create an environment in which total immersion becomes the most natural pathway and individual response is overwhelmed by a constantly shifting whole. It is a world filled with dizzying layers of imagery, the only world that most of our students have ever known—and it does not come with an instruction manual. However, as Duncum (1999) notes, art education may be uniquely situated to help students navigate and make sense of the everyday visual culture they experience.

Finding multiple ways to help students see the linkages among ideas and their dynamics over time, is another task for which art education seems exceptionally well suited, and which proponents of Visual Culture Art Education (VCAE) seek to facilitate. Within the conceptual framework of VCAE, memetic theory might constitute a pragmatic lens for examination of the evolution and migration of ideas. Consider as a pedagogical example, this approach to the analysis of Hip-Hop graffiti: by helping students move conceptually away from graffiti's present Hip-Hop manifestations and toward its origins, could those students learn and identify visual and conceptual elements— copyable memes—that may have shaped its present forms? As Wilson might suggest, it is important for students to recognize that art can be ideas connected with their own lives, ideas that may be selected, abandoned, conveyed, or re-processed into other ideas. Students may also recognize that ideas can be compelling entities in their own right.

Also, Duncum (1999) has suggested that our complex and dynamic visual environment is changing the fundamental ways in which students think and learn, a notion, which may in time be linked to Dennett's (1991) theory that meme activity alters brain structure. However, we are reminded that attempts to link "hardwired" cognitive responses and the formation of

neural pathways with philosophical, ethical, and aesthetic consciousness, to date has been an area beyond the technical capacity of science to prove or to disprove.

As the boundaries between "high" and "low" art become increasingly blurred in contemporary life, the questions "what is art?" and "where does art come from?" continue to probe at complex issues of culture, identity and meaning. These are perennial questions, but ones that each art educator and her students must confront anew daily within the contexts of postmodern thought, the machinations of globalization, and ongoing commitments to cultural plurality. Meme theory is a potential framework—admittedly, one among many—that may be deployed for a better understanding of the proliferation of ideas and imagery that surround us, our responses to them, and even to understanding how ideas within our own field evolve.

McRorie's (1996) intriguing speculation on meme-ideas in art education, for example, the notion of children's self-expression, that have persisted and evolved in myriad ways, points to another potential application of meme theory. As McRorie reminds us, it is only in looking backwards in history and across cultures that the patterns and migration of ideas are revealed. Witness the nineteenth century idea of aesthetic education revitalized during the 1960s at the Penn State conference, and its evolution into several iterations of DBAE through the 80s and 90s, and now its emergence in VCAE. What might art education history and practice reveal when viewed through an "as-if" lens of memetic theory?

There has been no shortage of research on the subjects of aesthetic theory and response. Art that has withstood the test of time is a matter of record, as is art that enjoys popular favor. Many ordinary people along with artists, have very specific ideas about why an artwork might be good or lasting, and many might agree what constitutes "high" or "low" art. Yet, in spite of this, there has been little study regarding why some visual ideas of both types seem to persist, and with seemingly equal vigor. Attributing such differences to " a matter of taste" is in effect, a way of dismissing the question without really examining it. The synthesis of aesthetic inquiry with meme

theory provides a potential framework for better understanding both types of art, that is, why Picasso and pink flamingos continue to flourish.

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# Folklore Dance Groups as Learning Environments: A Mexican American *Folklorico* Example

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*Abstract*

*This study explores how "folklore dance groups," performing groups that present staged presentations of the traditional dances of their cultural communities, provide educational experiences to the young people who participate in them. The work of El Folklorico, a Mexican American dance company in Chicago, serves as a rich example of such groups as community-based arts schools that embody both explicit and implicit curricula. I argue that such groups and the leaders, parents and young people who participate in them, are important reservoirs of marginalized cultural knowledge. For students from low-income/communities of color that still do not have equal access to excellent educational opportunities, it is especially important for schools to validate what students and their communities do know. The arts in education, as well as other aspects of schooling, can make community knowledge visible, providing a way for students to see themselves as legitimate members of the school community.*

## Introducing.....El Folklorico!

To the stirring sounds of violins, trumpets, guitars, *vihuela* and *guitarron*, six little girls and four little boys confidently enter the stage, heels stamping in time to the mariachi band arrayed behind them. The dancers see only the blinding footlights, but they feel the wave of applause and cries/ *gritos* signaling affection from the mostly Mexican-American crowd. The wooden floor vibrates beneath their feet as ten heels hit the stage. Couples twirl together and separate, boys with

hands behind ramrod backs, girls' skirts spreading like wings.

Months of practice and unrelenting rehearsals where the dancers hone each piece to presentation level pay off in the excitement of performance. They thrive on appearing before hundreds, sometimes thousands of people, in venues that range from state fairs to parades to top-rank concert halls, traveling around the Midwest (once even to Mexico) and being with their friends. As nine-year-old Hugo Torres laconically comments, back home in Chicago, "I'd rather be there than here."

In one of the young dancers' most crowd-pleasing pieces, *El pescado/The fish,* Hugo Torres is "the fish." He manipulates a shimmering costume that covers him completely, rippling like scales. The other dancers throw a huge net that surrounds the fish; he is caught and cannot escape; the applause swells. Later Hugo watches from the wings as his uncle Roberto, balancing a tall feather headdress, leads an indigenous dance re-envisioned from pre-Columbian times. The two-hour performance ranges through the dances of Mexico's regions and history. Both dancers and audience are immersed in a carefully-constructed vision of "Mexico" and its constituent parts. When the time comes for the show's peak moments, Hugo sees his mother and father, the company's directors, enter the stage for a virtuoso, "show-off" couple dance. A harpist joins the mariachi musicians (a violin and strings ensemble) for a suite from the state of Veracruz. Isabel and Alejandro perform a choreography of the dance *La Bamba*; using only their feet they tie a giant red ribbon into a bow.

The 60-member Mexican dance company, "El Folklorico,"[1] left Chicago early that morning, one day in the mid-1990s, to reach a nearby Midwestern city where they would perform twice in a world-class theater. The bus was overflowing with dancers, costumes and props; Hugo and two friends shared a double seat. A few parents followed in their cars to help with dressing, videotaping the performance, and running the sound. Like all the dancers, Hugo came prepared for complicated costume changes for at least eight separate dance suites; the right pants, shirt, scarf, hat and shoes all carefully packed together. In order to become proficient in this form of dance

and appear in the performances, Hugo and the other young dancers attend demanding rehearsals two or three times a week. The company performs throughout the year, sometimes as often as once or twice a weekend. To fulfill such a commitment, which for many of the dancers may last five to ten years or more, they must share Hugo's feeling: "I'd rather be there than here."

### Introduction: Folkloric Dance as an Overlooked Site of Arts and Learning

In this article I suggest that folkloric dance companies are sites of arts and learning. The heart of this piece is a discussion of the structure of El Folklorico, the group introduced in the vignette above, and the family that runs it. A second, extended vignette describing a rehearsal illustrates and embodies the concepts discussed. Finally I suggest implications for schools and for future research.

The Mexican American folkloric dance group El Folklorico is part of a global twentieth-century phenomenon. All peoples have some form of dance, used for religious and / or social purposes. Emerging nations on all continents collected dances throughout their geographic territories, usually from rural villages, and created versions of them suitable for the stage. These staged choreographies came to be known as "folkloric dance." Professional and amateur ensembles performed choreographed versions of the traditional dances as a way to bring together diverse citizenries and establish a sense of national unity. Beginning in the 1930s, thousands have enjoyed such performances at the local, national and international levels. Thousands more of all ages have participated in the groups.

In the United States, as Najera Ramirez (1989) suggests for *folklorico* dance ensembles, the activities and curriculum of the groups are symbolic forms that express cultural identity. Urban areas such as Chicago have many. In the early 1980s, over 60 folklore dance groups (from, for example, communities of Mexican, Polish, Japanese and African descent) were listed in a "directory of ethnic performers of Chicagoland" (Migala, 1982);

in the mid-1990s, there were at least 60 Mexican American *folklorico* groups alone in metropolitan Chicago area. The current on-line membership directory of ANGF (National Association of *Folklorico* Groups) lists 339 *folklorico* companies in 34 U.S. states.

The ensembles are often well known outside their own cultural communities through appearances at multicultural festivals and parades. Schools also invite folkloric dance groups to perform at "International Days" or "Heritage Months," especially where the school population is related to the cultural group (e.g. El Folklorico is often invited to perform for schools where a significant portion of the student population is Latino). In a new development perhaps facilitated by 1990s interest in world music, the show *Riverdance,* created in part by native Chicagoan and charismatic dancer Michael Flatley, catapulted Irish dancing from community-oriented performance and competition into the international spotlight (McNamara, 1996).

Yet in spite of their global presence, folkloric dance groups have rarely been explored as dance or educational phenomena. The first book-length work on these groups was published as recently as 2002 (Shay). The ensembles share the position of dance as a marginalized art form (Hanna, 1999; Wagner, 1997), a claim supported by findings of the National Assessment of Educational Progress: while "most students have some exposure to music and visual arts, few students receive in-school instruction in dance or theatre" (NAEP, para. 3). However, Hanna notes that the current wave of school reform efforts offers opportunities to revitalize arts education, including dance.[2]

I argue that folkloric dance is a particularly marginalized dance form in the U.S. because it is rooted in "minoritized"[3] communities. Elite arts such as ballet and modern dance are often seen as "universal" (perhaps in part because they have, like western languages, been adopted by members of many other societies). In contrast, arts based in minoritized cultural communities have been largely dismissed as timeless, amorphous entities representing "cultural heritage" rather than taken seriously as "art." Newspapers usually report

on performances, or perhaps contextualize the ensembles' work; critics are rarely able to critique them.

Folkloric dance groups are an overlooked resource that can illuminate our thinking about arts and learning in two major ways. First, arts organizations based in cultural communities, that offer formal school-like instruction and performance opportunities, are often important sites of teaching and learning in the arts. In addition, these institutions may help young people to negotiate the challenges of growing up in marginalized and minoritized communities. I suggest that folkloric dance groups, as reservoirs of community knowledge, can help schools to connect more powerfully to students from these communities.

## Theoretical Perspectives

I build the notion of folklore dance groups as community arts "schools" on a national study of community-based language and heritage schools  (Bradunas & Topping, 1988) that was sponsored by the American Folklife Center in the Library of Congress.  The project drew on Fishman's (1978) work on these community schools.  As a project fieldworker in Chicago, I conducted research with Polish Saturday Schools (McClain, 1988), exploring their structures, purposes, curricula and instructional strategies as well as the stakeholders—educators, students, families and community organizations—that made them possible. Subsequently, as I worked with El Folklorico over a period of ten years, I came to see its purposes and work paralleling those of the language schools.

To better understand El Folklorico as a community arts "school," I build on Schubert's (1981) call for curriculum studies that explore "out-of-school curricula," a gap that still exists in this field. Curriculum studies provide tools for understanding the process of teaching and learning, but tend to focus on K-12 schools. Discussions by Schubert (1986) and Eisner (1994) of manifest or explicit curriculum, and implicit or hidden curriculum also inform this work. El Folklorico is an out-of-school learning environment that has, like "formal" schools, both kinds of curricula. The study explores El Folklorico's

explicit or manifest curriculum of dance, movement and performance, examining its structures, purposes, curricula and instructional strategies. It also examines how the group creates an implicit or hidden curriculum of Mexican American identity by building Mexican cultural values and traditions into the organization's structure.

## Methodology

This study reports on one section of a yearlong intensive educational ethnography that I conducted for my dissertation. The larger project focused on the three children of the Torres family, exploring their learning experiences at home, at school and in the community. I spent approximately 100 days over the year with members of the family. I grew close to the family and developed a deep respect for them. We remain friends.

El Folklorico was the study's primary "community" site. Using anthropological perspectives situating dance as part of multiple social contexts and as symbolic or expressive behavior (e.g. Royce, 1977; Hanna, 1979; Frosch, 1999) I collected observational, interview and document data. I observed rehearsals weekly, attended key performances and the annual company banquet, and conducted several in-depth interviews with the company directors. Informal discussions with the dancers (and their parents) illuminated their experiences of performing with the group. The company directors reviewed and extensively discussed all of my interpretations. Data included fieldnotes, field journals, photographs, audiotapes and transcriptions, as well as programs and curriculum materials.

This project brings together several strands of my research and reflects my personal and professional autobiography. I began to study dance and music as a young child, continuing to perform until I started to raise a family. I first encountered folklore dance groups as an undergraduate exchange student in the former Yugoslavia (1971-1973). Government-sponsored "Cultural Artistic Societies" were popular, and included amateur "folklore" dance groups, orchestras, and choruses (I sang in two). In addition, for three

summers I attended dance seminars for amateur folklore dance ensembles where I learned the dances as well as the history and contemporary context of the phenomenon in that country.

With a BA in anthropology, I went immediately into a master's program in Folklore at UCLA. There I specialized in Dance Ethnology and became a member of the UCLA Department of Dance's Yugoslav Dance Performing Group. At community performances, we met many other ensembles from various ethnic communities, each powered by the time, energy, commitment, loyalty and expertise of many adults and young dancers. As a performer, I experienced the demands of such a group on the dancers, and came to understand the time and work that the administrators and teachers had to devote to the project.

I moved on to Chicago where I worked for 15 years in multicultural arts education. There I had the opportunity to collaborate with El Folklorico (as well as dancers, musicians, and visual artists from more than thirty cultural communities in the metropolitan area) on arts-in-education projects including concerts and workshops for schools. That working relationship evolved into the study reported on here.

## *Folklorico* Groups in Historical Perspective

One of the first folkloric dance groups, and perhaps the most influential, was the Soviet dance company of Igor Moiseyev (Shay, 2002). The company was formed in the 1930s, but did not really take off until after World War II. In Mexico, the movement also began in the 1930s, when *Misiones culturales* or "Cultural missions" were sent out to "collect" social and religious dances performed in villages around the country.  The dances were then taught to teachers for use in schools as a way to help young people identify with Mexico as a nation (Secretaria de Educación Publica, 1988). Beginning in the 1950s, the dancer Amalia Hernandez developed the now world-famous *Ballet Folklorico de Mexico de Amalia Hernandez* as the preeminent force in Mexican *folklorico* dance. She is widely acknowledged to have been key in transforming social and religious dances as

practiced in Mexican villages into more "spectacular" theatrical versions that with broad audience appeal. Shay (2002) contends that her company's tours to the United States in the 1960s helped to spark widespread interest in *folklorico* throughout Mexican American communities.

Today's *folklorico* companies continue to present choreographed, staged versions of suites of dances that originated in the villages of Mexican states and regions (e.g. Tamaulipas, Durango). Movement and costumes depict influences from Spain and indigenous roots. Each concert ranges throughout Mexico, from the polkas of the *mestizo* north, where local Indian peoples mixed blood and cultures with Spanish, German and other Europeans, to the dances of Zapotec and Mayan peoples from Oaxaca and Chiapas. Some choreographies represent historical periods. One re-envisions pre-Columbian "Aztec" religious dances; more recent history is featured in the popular "Mexican Revolution" suite. Images from these choreographies are familiar throughout Mexico, and *folklorico* dance classes are available in many Mexican schools, as well as taught in after school programs.

As *folklorico* grew in Mexico, new kinds of organizational structures evolved to support its teaching, learning, and presentation. Professional folkloric dance groups exist in several major Mexico cities and tour abroad. In Mexico City, three government-supported schools prepare folkloric dance teachers for the public schools.[4] Institutes and workshops are available for the directors of companies such as El Folklorico, both in Mexico and in the U.S. There is a great deal of interaction between the *folklorico* communities on both sides of the border.

### El Folklorico and Its Structure

El Folklorico was established in 1982, and has served hundreds of young dancers during the more than twenty years since. At the time of my study, in the mid-1990s, El Folklorico usually had around 60 members, ranging in age from 6 to young adult,[5] and was divided into three groups: Group 1 (age 6 to grade 6 or 7), Group 2 (school grades 7-8) and the Senior Group

(high school and up). The two younger groups each rehearsed two nights per week, and the Senior Group had three rehearsals.

During their "performance season" the company frequently performed at least once, sometimes twice a week. Within the community, El Folklorico appeared at festivals and events such as Mexican Independence Day Parades. Other performances took place in important mainstream theaters or major sports events (such as their performance at the soccer World Cup in Chicago in 1994), as well as in local schools.

El Folklorico was incorporated as a nonprofit, tax-exempt (501(c) (3) organization, and regularly received local and state arts grants. Small stipends (though not full-time salaries) were paid to the directors. Instruction was free, in order to make participation widely accessible to members of an immigrant community where many families were struggling to survive. It was not, however, limited to Mexican American young people; anyone was welcome to learn.

## At the heart of El Folklorico: The Torres Family

· *Alejandro Torres* (about age 35) – Artistic Director∕ Choreographer of El Folklorico

· *Isabel Torres* (about age 35) – Director of Group One; costume mistress

Artistic directors of the company & married couple; directors of El Folklorico

· *Hugo* – the Torres' son, age 9; danced in El Folklorico

· *Paco & Pedro* – the Torres' sons, both age 4

· *Roberto* – Alejandro's half-brother, age 20; dancer and costume designer

· *Doña Elena* – mother of Alejandro & Roberto; costume designer and seamstress

· *Sr. Vasquez* – executive director of the company and Hugo's godfather

Alejandro and Isabel Torres and their extended family were (and continue to be) the heart of El Folklorico, which was founded in the early 1980s. Alejandro and Isabel had deep experience as dancers and *folklorico* instructors. Both began dancing while attending *secundaria* (junior high equivalent) in their Mexican hometowns. Both came to Chicago in the 1970s as young teens with family members, where they met as dancers in a *folklorico* group. Dancing together became the basis of a strong marriage. Over the years, Alejandro and Isabel both attended advanced workshops for *folklorico* instructors in Mexico and US. During the time of this research, they combined the challenges of raising a family and running an active dance company.

Alejandro served as artistic director and choreographer of the company, and taught Groups 2 and 3. Isabel taught Group 1 and acted as the company's costume mistress. Sr. Vasquez, Hugo's *padrino* or godfather, was in charge of business matters and a central figure in the ensemble's work. Alejandro's mother Doña Elena, a fine seamstress, was responsible for creating many of the costumes, which his brother, Roberto, sometimes designed. The Torreses' nine-year-old son Hugo danced in Group 1, while four-year-old twins Paco and Pedro attended rehearsals and performances. The boys were growing up in a household packed with costumes, recordings, videotapes, performance schedules, and the hectic schedules of dancers raising an active family.

### Teaching, Learning and the Curriculum of Movement in El Folklorico

Alejandro and Isabel organized the company in developmental levels. In Group 1, skills included basics such as the *zapateados* and spotting turns, a ballet technique, which keeps a dancer from getting dizzy during fast turns. They learned the choreographies that their group performed, and how to perform in the appropriate clothing for each suite of dances. The children moved from Group 1 to Group 2 when they went into puberty. If a young adolescent beginner joined the group,

the dancer was placed by age, not by level of dance skill.

The "rehearsals" functioned as classes, as well as preparation for performances, and dancers could not perform until they mastered technique and choreographies at a performance level. Performance placed another level of artistic demands on the dancers. The company's two-hour shows included as many as sixteen dance "suites," often with eight costume changes for each dancer, the little ones included. Entrances were not always on the same side of the stage where a dancer last exited. There was no leeway for missed cues or dancers who could not change quickly.

In order to participate in the exciting performances that made it all worthwhile, the young dancers committed to a rigorous rehearsal schedule: two 1-1/2 hour rehearsals each week for Groups 1 and 2; three for Group 3. Girls were required to have their hair neatly in a bun or pulled back out of their faces. Dance shoes were purchased or ordered at a Mexican chain of shoe stores with outlets in Chicago, or tap shoes were adapted by driving nails into the heels and toes.

### Vignette: The Rehearsal

At 6:00 PM each Tuesday and Thursday, the children of Group 1 gather in the Community Cultural Center. The cold, echo-y room begins to fill as young people straggle in through the large double doors. It is an impressive space. The ceiling towers to an arc punctuating the unmistakable architecture of the room, once a church sanctuary. Underneath the stained glass windows inscriptions honor the donors, the Lithuanian names telling of the parish's history. The pews are gone without a trace. Underneath the dome, where the altar once stood, is now a wooden dance floor raised a couple of steps from the main floor. Through a door stage left, in a small room that once housed priests' vestments, the cupboards and wide, flat drawers are now full of costume pieces. At the back of the hall, a couple of confessionals stand empty and decaying. Pieces of linoleum tile, torn up to reveal a hardwood floor perfect for dancing, lie in a heap in the corner next to the little organ. A small tape system

with large speakers sits on the stage, surrounded by a litter of tapes. A few unmatched hard wooden chairs are scattered around the edges of the room. In the winter, a few radiators hiss valiantly but do little to warm the parents and older siblings *in loco parentis*, often with younger ones in tow, who attend the rehearsals with the dancers.

Tonight Group 1 is practicing the *Jarabe Tapatío* (ha-rá-be ta-pa-tí-o), perhaps the best-known of Mexico's dances. The name literally means *Jarabe* (a dance form) from the state of Jalisco. The dances, fast and fun to do and to watch, are usually the grand finale of the group's performances and include the entire company. Generations of American schoolchildren have learned this as the "Mexican hat dance," usually taught in a much-abbreviated and stereotyped form. Performed by expert dancers, this *Jarabe* is a far cry from the schoolchildren's version. The men wear tight black pants with silver decorations down the legs, and short bolero jacket, edged with the same silver. These are the dress-up clothes of the Mexican *charro*, the cowboy of the state of Jalisco, still worn for formal occasions. Black boots, white shirt with string tie, and a large felt sombrero with intricate embroidery complete the ensemble. The women expertly swirl vari-colored skirts, the many petticoats flashing, as they whirl through the dances. Staccato *zapateados*, intricate couple work and the up-tempo music of a live mariachi band will bring a Mexican American audience to its feet, wild with enthusiasm, clapping and offering the approving, high-pitched yells called *gritos*.

Isabel stands at the front of the room, dressed in black pants, boots, and red hooded sweatshirt, her hair in a ponytail. She has to shout to be heard in the large hall. I can barely hear her at all, and it is difficult for me to follow her rapid Spanish. Occasionally she throws in an English word, or says a command in Spanish, then English in rapid succession.

Hugo Torres plays around with the steps while he waits for rehearsal to get underway. He does a high kick from the Jarabe Tapatío. Near Hugo, a little girl practices a fast, clean series of *zapateados*, the heel stamps found in dances throughout Mexico. Isabel wants to get started. The children come to order.

"*Listos/* ready! Go!" she calls.

For Jarabe Tapatío and many other dances, the boys must keep their backs straight and clasp their hands together in the small of their backs. The girls are learning to handle voluminous skirts made from a complete circle of ten yards of cloth. Isabel goes to individual children, counting out the steps and dancing along with the group. Beginner girls in the back running around, partnering each other, act as a useful "yardstick" to measure how far the more experienced dancers have come. The beginners don't stand up straight, flounder with their skirts, can't follow the steps.

Two little boys not dancing at the moment get noisy. Isabel speaks loudly (to be heard in the echo-y room), calmly asking their cooperation. The little girls, their backs held very straight, confidently perform the basic steps. Tonight they're working on transitions. At the moment Isabel is working on the ending position of this couple dance. The boy kneels down, while the girl places a foot on her partner's knee. The children hold their positions while Isabel goes to check each one and correct them. Satisfied for the moment, she starts the music, then stops and corrects a couple's position. She starts the music again "*del principio*," from the beginning.

The Jarabe Tapatío is tricky. Near the end, the boy must swing his leg over his partner's head as she crouches before him, the boy's large sombrero on the floor between them. Performed by adult dancers, it's a beautiful and elegant move. The men swing their long legs surely over their partners' heads into a smooth turn, and the group comes together for a rousing sequence of *zapateados*, the girls flourishing the boys' sombreros in the air. It requires the men to be able to execute high kicks, while maintaining straight backs as well as their balance. Tonight, the little boys struggle to clear their partners' heads, bending hard at the waist in order to make the high sweep over the partner's head. Hugo loses his balance on the final turn out of the leg sweep, and has to double-step back to regain his balance. In performance, I later noticed, this move is changed, so that the boys swing their legs over the hats on the floor, rather

than over the girls' heads.

At rehearsal, 7:30 arrives. Families begin to filter back into the church. Finally ready to call it a night, Isabel reminds them, "Tomorrow at 6 o'clock!" The dancers change out of practice clothes; parents crowd around Isabel with questions about the upcoming performance. By 9 o'clock, Isabel finishes with all the questions, gathers herself and her son, and locks the door.

## Vignette: Discussion

In Isabel's rehearsal "classroom" the young students learned to focus all their attention and effort and closely follow the directions of the teacher. They had to listen to the music for their cues throughout each piece, gradually mastering steps, transitions and the choreographies that the group performs. Eight or more couples had to start together and coordinate their movements with a partner and the group. Countless repetitions are necessary in order to build the muscle skills and body memory that will make these movements second nature, providing a base for interpretation in performance.

This learning environment also used "performance assessment" in the root meaning of the phrase. Dance teachers by necessity feel very much at home with the notion of "learning by doing" and instruction through demonstration and imitation. Showing a step is much clearer and more direct than a verbal explanation, and the only real assessment is through performance. El *Folklorico* dancers knew they were "doing it right" simply when they are allowed to perform, or given a more prominent role in a choreography.

## The Informal Curricula of El Folklorico

El Folklorico also provided an informal or hidden curriculum of Mexican American identity that was embodied in the company's rules and in its performance contexts. The Mexican ideal of *la familia* or extended family obligations as the

functional structure of society was integral to the company's organization. In addition, in public appearances El Folklorico often served as a goodwill ambassador of Mexican American identity both to its own community and to the larger society.

**El Folklorico as *la familia***. In the Mexican American community, extended family is the bedrock social unit. The dancers and their families were almost all themselves immigrants who spoke Spanish at home. Spanish was the main language of rehearsals. As the vignette above describes, families were welcome; they also formed a significant part of the company's resources. Beyond simply committing to regular rehearsal attendance, mothers and grandmothers made or altered costumes, which were recycled many times. Some also volunteered to come to performances and help the little ones dress, while fathers ran the sound, took photographs, and videotaped performances.

Furthermore, Alejandro found that in order for the company to succeed it needed to be more than "family friendly." He pointed out that Mexican values limit male-female interaction before marriage to the extended family. Since almost all the dances are partner dances, "the girls and boys must become family. Rule number one, [new dancers] have to learn to look each other in the eye. That will make them friends at that stage and they won't be ashamed [i.e. embarrassed] of dancing with each other." This was important in other ways, as well. Performance spaces often did not have dressing rooms, and dancers needed to change in less-than-private conditions. So thinking of each other as "family" allowed dancers to look at each other and touch each other in the dances, as well as associate closely, even change clothing nearby, without focusing on sexuality.

To make the company a family, Alejandro enforced a strict rule: "No romances inside the company." If a couple formed within the group, one of them had to leave. This at times created strains, but Alejandro believed it also saved the group over the long run. The older dancers agreed. "It's like a second family," claimed Roberto. "All my friends are there." That members often performed with the group for ten years or more,

essentially growing up together, reinforced this experience.[6]

*Folklorico* **as Mexican American identity**. Participating in El Folklorico also immersed the dancers in a positive experience of being Mexican American. This did not necessarily mean that the dancers learned about the historical or social content of the dances and choreographies. Alejandro reported that it is usually only in college that some of the dancers begin to take a more serious look at the connections between their dance experience and Mexican culture and history. Rather, appearing on stage, wearing beautiful costumes and performing challenging dances, hearing the applause and *gritos* of an appreciative audience, was an unforgettable experience for the performers. As they performed varied regional dances for their own community, the company honored Mexican heritages and Mexican Americans with roots in particular places. Dancers reported that they loved the enthusiastic responses of the Mexican American audiences.

Performances for the general public in a wide range of settings also provided an opportunity for the dancers to see themselves as community ambassadors, presenting "who we are" to the larger society, although they sometimes interpreted the polite silence of mainstream spectators as unappreciative. Participation in these events helped the dancers see their community and their own skills as valued and publicly acknowledged within a multicultural society.

For all of these reasons, the company was a place where dancers could develop as individuals and as artists. Thoughtfully-constructed pedagogy and learning environments provided the opportunities for the young people to develop self-discipline, engagement, and commitment. There is no way to make someone dance, much less make them dance well. Dancers reported that they stayed because they loved to dance, enjoyed participating in an exciting group project that provided opportunity for travel and being in the spotlight, and because the group became like a family. The longevity of the group, its large circle of alumni and loyal dancers, families and other supporters, spoke to the success of its efforts in arts teaching and performance.

# Implications

## For schools

Immigrant students and families often receive negative messages from schools (e.g. Valdés, 1996; Valenzuela, 1999) that their language, their culture, and even they themselves are "second class." For students from low-income/communities of color that still do not have equal access to excellent educational opportunities, it is especially important that schools validate what students and their communities know. El Folklorico exemplifies the kinds of knowledge and skill that exist in many communities. Its existence and work challenge and refute assumptions of deficiency. Understanding the complexity and richness of organizations such as El Folklorico can help schools better see immigrant communities as having strengths and resources. Making community knowledge visible in school is one way for students to see themselves as legitimate members of the school community. The adults associated with El Folklorico and similar endeavors also represent rich sources of community knowledge that could support schools in many ways, whether assisting with school events, providing arts experiences to students, or showing schools effective ways to work with parents from the community.

The accomplishments of the young dancers themselves also challenge deficit beliefs about their community by demonstrating that Mexican American school-age children and young people are capable of self-discipline, hard work and achievement. Schools that use pedagogical practices that build on students' prior knowledge (Dewey, 1902) can learn much about what their students know from the work of El Folklorico. Educational researchers (e.g. McIntyre, Rosebery and Gonzalez, 2001; Moll *et al.* 1992), and classroom practitioners (e.g. Igoa, 1995) offer many examples of how to apply these principles.

## For research

I suggest that broadening the focus of educational research on arts and learning beyond schools can help to

illuminate the importance of non-school institutions and the multiple locations of teaching and learning in children's lives. This narrative of El Folklorico provides an example of the rich possibilities that await future studies that explore arts instruction offered in cultural communities.

Like all work in the arts, El Folklorico offers young dancers the opportunity to learn an art that remains a constant challenge no matter how good a performer one becomes. When Hugo asserted, "I'd rather be there than here," he meant, "I'd rather be performing." This is central to the company's importance as an active institution in the field of arts and learning. Arts learning as a motivating, energizing force has been a key element of the argument for arts in the lives of young people. Looking at arts education wherever it is taking place, recognizing the knowledge of adult artists who share these skills with young people, and engaging these resources with schools and other institutions that serve young people, offer new possibilities for preparing our young people for the challenges that await them.

### Notes

[1] The name of the group and all persons mentioned are pseudonyms.

[2] For a more complete discussion of the barriers to arts education, and dance in particular, in public schools, see Hanna, *Partnering Dance and Education*, 1999.

[3] McCarty (2002) suggests the term "minoritized," rather than "minority." This indicate a group's subordinate status in relationship to other groups within a society, rather than a simple numerical relationship.

[4] I would like to thank Carmen Ochoa and her faculty colleagues at La Escuela Nacional de Danza "Gloria y Nellie Campobello", and Ruth Canseco, director of La Escuela Nacional de Danza Folklórica, for their assistance.

[5] This study reports on the group as it was in the mid-1990s. As of this publication, the company has grown in sophistication but Alejandro has reduced the membership to 30 because it was difficult to manage such a large group.

[6] By 2003, this rule has changed somewhat. In order to keep good older dancers, Alejandro allowed romances, but *not* displays of affection between dancers, in order to reduce tensions around these issues. At publication time, at least one married couple and their children were performing with the company.

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# Interpreting Children's Invented Graphic Notation

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*Abstract*

*This study investigated children's graphic notations as a representation of their musical perception. A total of 112 Israeli children (aged 7.0-8.5), unschooled in Western Standard Notation (WSN) graphically represented various musical stimuli and 1271 notations were collected and analyzed. For the interpretation of children's notations, a method titled MSC (Morphological, Structural, Conceptual analysis) was developed and implemented. The interpretation of the children's notations was supported by their verbal explanations of their drawings. The results of the Morphological and Structural analysis showed no inclination towards prototypical patterns and organizational rules, respectively. The results of the Conceptual analysis showed that the reaction to musical parameters in their chronological succession was characteristic to the largest number of subjects.*

Over forty years ago, the Austrian avant-garde composer, Roman Haubenstock-Ramati (1919-1994) suggested the use of drawings as musical notations: "I am personally astounded that even today one does not play Kandinsky or Miro, even though it would be so simple and easy to do so"[1] (Boretz & Cone, 1976, p. 97). Such a suggestion implies a strong connection between music and visual art. According to Cohen, cross-relationships among visual phenomena and sounds[2] as well as mutual terminology[3], imply cognitive interconnections among the auditory and visual arts (Cohen, 1990).

The term "Phonography", suggested by Dwyer (New

York, 1868) as a synonym for "musical notation" (Read, 1987, p. 166), reflects the integration between music and the act of presenting sounds graphically. Vygotsky asserts, "The potential for complex sign operations is embedded in the earliest stages of individual development" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 46). Gardner states that the "natural" gravitation of humans toward embodiment in a symbolic system is a primary characteristic of intelligence (Gardner, 1982, p. 66). Bamberger remarks: "What the hearer seems simply to find in the music is actually a process of perceptual problem solving" (Bamberger, 1991, p. 8). We may conclude that a phonographic system is a product of a uniquely human intellectual activity related to the process of problem solving.

### Theory

Inspired by the awakening of interest in children's drawing as a means of investigation in the field of cognitive and developmental psychology (e.g., Eng, 1959; Lindstrom, 1957; Piaget & Inhelder, 1956, 1969, 1973), musicians during the last three decades have increased their attempts to examine children's invented notation as a representation of their musical perception (e.g., Bamberger, 1991; Barrett, 1997; Davidson & Scripp, 1988; Demorest & Serlin, 1995; Goodnow, 1971, 1972; Gromko, 1994; Hargreaves, 1992; Sloboda, 1988; Smith, 1994; Stambak, 1951; Upitis, 1985). Studies showed that children's invented notations provide a valid assessment of musical understanding and shed light on musical development (e.g., Bamberger, 1991; Davidson & Scripp, 1988).

However, the need for alternative methodological approaches in "reading" children's notations has been suggested by music psychologists (e.g., Hargreaves, 1992). Hargreaves pointed out the danger of relying on subjective interpretation based on the researcher's perspectives and ingrained musical literacy. He claimed that certain phonographic studies had been based on the subjective interpretation of children's finished products (p.100).

## Aims

The main purpose of this study was to investigate children's graphic notations as a representation of their musical perception not from a cognitive-developmental but rather from a phenomenological approach.

By developing a method of graphic analysis, and implementing procedures admissible in graphology and child art analysis for the interpretation of children's notations (e.g., Arnheim, 1974; Eng, 1959; Golomb, 1994; Lindstrom, 1957; Oron, 1997; Rimerman, 1990), the study aimed to correct technical and methodological shortcomings, which seemed to appear in some earlier studies (Hargreaves, 1992).

In developing a method of graphic analysis, four basic problems were considered:

1. How to ascribe meaning to notational symbols;

2. How to follow the direction across a path;

3. How to ascribe meaning to the spacing out of notational symbols; and

4. How to interpret size differentiation.

**1. How to ascribe meaning to notational symbols.** In some former studies (i.e. Bamberger, 1991) a geometric shape, such as a circle, is always read as a single sound in the notations of schoolchildren (p. 24). Bamberger found that 4-5 year-old children transcribe either their motions in clapping rhythms (by scribbles and dots) or "a picture of what did the job (hands)"; whereas schoolchildren reflect on the rhythm and graphically represent individual sounds by geometric shapes such as circles (pp. 46-52).

The notion that a circle stands for a sound draws on a basic convention of Western Standard Notation (WSN) in which a circular note-head usually stands for a single sound event (Hindemith, 1946). However, one may wonder why a child, lacking the knowledge of WSN, would adhere to this convention? Could it be that a circle, or any other shape in a

child's notation, represents a number of sounds? Would many circles represent a single sound? Does a circle represent other factors as in various systems of notation?[4]

**2. How to follow the direction across a path.** A graphic path in a notation is interpreted as the analogue of the passage of music. In some earlier studies, the parts included in the path are read linearly from the left to the right hand-side of the paper (e.g., Bamberger, 1991; Goodnow, cited in Arnheim, 1974, p. 182). Bamberger found that schoolchildren draw lines of discrete shapes with "time moving 'straight ahead' from left to right across the page" (p. 51).

This convention seems to be based on the premise that the direction of a musical path tends to follow the prevailing direction of writing for the language of the country (see Graphic signs, Grove, 1980). Since Western alphabetical and staff notations are all written horizontally from left to right, children's ideographic notations are consequently read in that direction.

However, in many cases the direction of musical notations does not follow the direction of writing for the language of a culture.[5] The Hebrew and Arabic languages are written horizontally from right to left, whereas the musical notation used in Israel and in some Arab countries is the WSN, which moves in the opposite direction. Could it be, therefore, that children utilize various options of directionality in their notations?

**3. How to ascribe meaning to the spacing out of notational symbols.** The interpretation of time in former studies was often based on the assumption that spaces between parts represent pauses between sounds, and that large and small spaces represent long and short time-intervals, respectively (e.g., Stambak, 1951, cited in Hargreaves, 1992, p. 95). However, other studies showed that young children tend to omit space-intervals as an analogue of time-intervals. Goodnow, for example, reports that, "When kindergarten children are asked to match a series of sounds with a series of dots, they draw the dots in a line from left to right but do not leave blank space on the paper to match the intervals between groups of sounds. Instead, they often use motor pauses. For them, this does justice to the sound

model even though the intervals do not show up on paper"
(Goodnow, cited in Arnheim, 1974, p. 182). Furthermore, time
indications in most notational systems do not relate to space
proportions.[6] This begs the question: Could it be that children
use space to form separation between bounded figures rather
than to represent time-intervals?

**4. How to interpret size differentiation.** The
interpretation of size differentiation in former studies relies on
the premise that large and small shapes represent a long and
short duration of sound, respectively (e.g., Bamberger, 1991;
Upitis, 1990).

Since size-differences in various notational systems may
indicate various musical parameters,[7] one may wonder about
the possible meanings of size differentiation in children's
notations. Furthermore, without spatial measures, it could be
hard to decide what is "big" or "small".

## The MSC Method of Analysis

For the analysis of children's notations, a method titled
MSC was developed and implemented. According to the
analytical method, children's drawings were examined
according to not only the impression of the viewer but also
according to spatial measures of line and space (e.g., Rimerman,
1990; Oron, 1997) and according to children's own explanations
of their drawings.

The MSC method of analysis is based on a procedure
progressing consistently in three phases:

> *Phase 1:* The *Morphological Analysis (M)*, which
> engages in material measures and descriptions
> of visual phenomenon (e.g., icons, geometrical
> shapes, pictorial items, colors, length of lines,
> measures of space, height and width);

> *Phase 2: The Structural Analysis (S),* which focuses
> on the examination of the drawing as a gestalt and
> the description of the interrelationships between

its parts (e.g., directionality, strategies of grouping, separation and division, symmetry, repetition of symbols, proximity, proportions);

*Phase 3: The Conceptual Analysis (C),* which defines the content of the drawing and the final evaluation of the subject's reaction. The final interpretation of a drawing is supported by the child's verbal explanation of his drawing.

Based on the *Conceptual Interpretation (C)* each drawing is classified under the following categories:

*(1) Category 0 (Zero)*: when the drawing represents an idiosyncratic reaction, which is totally detached from the experimental task (for example, if the drawing is prepared before the task is given);

*(2) Category A (Association):* when the drawing yields associative images, metaphors or story factors;

*(3) Category P (Pictogram):* when the drawing includes pictograms, namely a description of musical instruments that took part in the performance of the musical stimulus;

*(4) Category F (Formal Response):* when a chronological sequence of sound events is represented in the drawing;

*(5) Category G (Growth):* when the drawing yields features of grouping and division of the musical gestalt, for example, the division of a musical phrase into fragmental sub-units.

### Procedure

The participants in the study were 112 children, boys and girls, aged 7.0-8.5, from four 2nd-grade classes in two Jewish elementary schools in Israel. Fifty children came from a private

orthodox school while 62 children from an urban non-orthodox public school. Children in both schools were musically illiterate, namely they had never learned WSN (except for four children [4%] who received private piano lessons for about a year). Children received weekly by-rote singing lessons within the formal school curriculum by a staff music teacher.

Thirteen tasks were conducted during 48 meetings, in which children graphically responded to various musical stimuli. Seven tasks consisted of short musical fragments which students performed on percussion instruments.[8] Each meeting consisted of three parts: (a) children were presented with a musical stimulus and learned to perform it on percussion instruments; (b) children were provided with paper, pens, pencils and crayons and were asked to create a representation of the musical phrase: "Create in any way you like a representation of the musical phrase that you played". (c) Students explained their notation in private interviews, which were recorded. Open-ended questions such as, "What did you draw?", "What is in your picture?" were asked in order to gain information about each child's intentions and meanings. In all, 1271 drawings were collected and analyzed. Additionally, two independent judges inspected and classified the drawings.[9]

## Example of Data Sources

Seven selected drawings will demonstrate the use of the MSC method for data analysis and drawings classification.

The drawings represent a short musical phrase titled "Timbre", which consists of two crotchets, two quavers and a crotchet:[10]
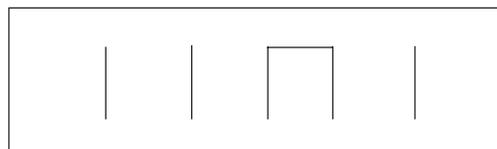


Figure 1.

Children learned to play the rhythm by distributing its sound-events among three different percussion instruments made of different materials: wood, metal and skin (hence the name "Timbre"), thus creating the following rhythmic pattern: "Wood, metal, skin, skin, skin".
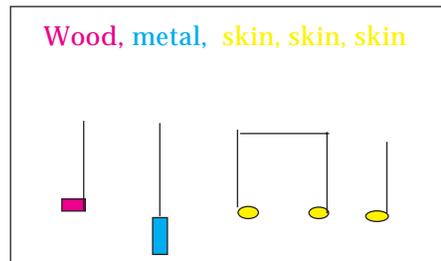


Figure 2

The term "timbre" was explored during this session: children learned to recognize the "timbre" of wooden and metallic idiophones and a membranophone instrument. Eventually, children were asked to graphically describe the rhythmic phrase in a drawing and privately explain their drawing.

Drawing 1: "Three percussion instruments"
by Tom (Category P)
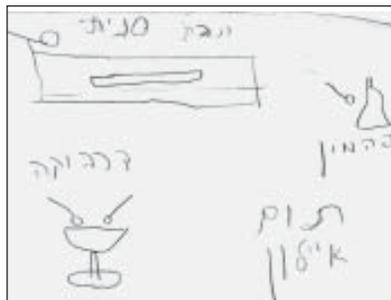


Figure 3

*(M)* Tom drew three percussion instruments with mallets labeled by their Hebrew names: "wooden block", "cowbell" and "Darbuka". *(S)* He spread his images all over the page beginning with the large wooden block at the top. *(C)* Tom's pictogram reflects his concern with the instruments, their names and construction. "I drew the instruments and the sticks…the wooden-block needs one stick… and next, the bell (it needs) one stick … and next, two sticks for the drum". Tom's drawing falls under category P.


Drawing 2: "Five cylinders" by Reuven (Category FG)
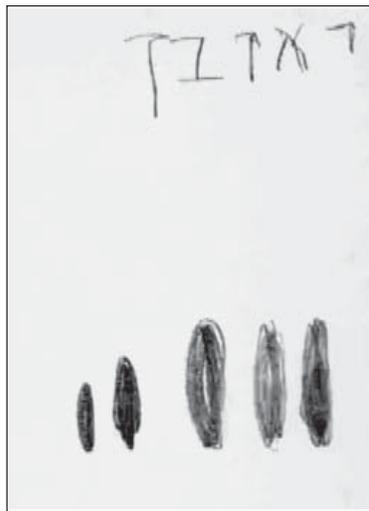


Figure 4

*(M)* Reuven drew five blackened cylinders of various sizes. *(S)* "These are the taps" he said and pointed from left to right. *(C)* "The drum is noisy", he added, "this is why I made it big" (this is why three cylinders were made big)". By five cylinders, Reuven represents five sound events (category F). By size differences, he represents the division of the musical phrase into 2+3 sounds according to loudness (category G). The drawing falls under categories FG.

Drawing 3: "Instruments and words"
by Liran (Category PF)



Figure 5

 

       *(M)* Liran drew a wooden-block, a cowbell and a Darbuka and labeled the Darbuka only: "Darbuka" and "Skin" (misspelled) at the top and bottom of the drum, respectively. The words "Wood Iron Skin Skin Skin" are written in Hebrew below. *(S)* The instruments are organized from left to right while words move from right to left as in Hebrew. *(C)* Liran represents the instruments by a pictogram. His remarks indicate his concern with the instruments: "I like the Darbuka best… my cousin Moshe plays the Darbuka well" (category P). The chronological sequence of sounds is represented by a series of words. "This is how we play (points to the words): Wood Iron Skin Skin Skin" (category F). The drawing falls under categories PF.

Drawing 4: "Five mallets"
by Lawrence (Category PFG)
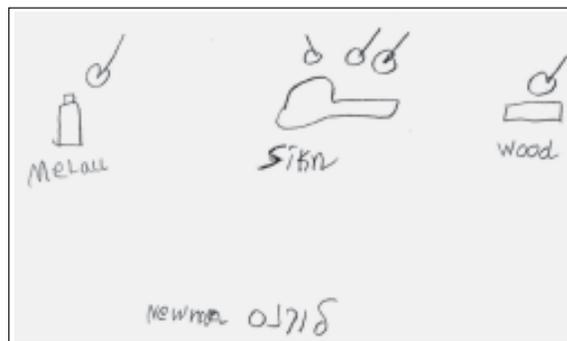


Figure 6

*(M)* Lawrence (an English speaking child) drew a wooden-block, a Darbuka and a cowbell, labeled respectively: "Wood", "Sikn" (Skin) and "Melall" (Metal). One mallet rests above the wooden-block, another above the cowbell, and three mallets cluster above the Darbuka. The objects are separated by a great deal of space.[11] *(S)* In his verbal explanation, Lawrence showed the direction of reading in a circular path: from right to left and then to the center. This circular flow was typical of Lawrence who recently immigrated to Israel and mixed his native tongue – English – with his new tongue – Hebrew. These two languages are written in opposite directions: left-to-right and right-to-left, respectively.[12] *(C)* Lawrence represents the instruments by a pictogram (category P), while five mallets represent the sequence of five sounds (category F). Clustering three mallets above the Darbuka represents the division of the rhythmic pattern into 1+1+3 sounds according to timbre ⁄ dynamic changes; Lawrence noted: "The drum goes like boo-boo-boo (laughs), it's, it's noisy…it's something else" (category G). The drawing falls under categories PFG.

Drawing 5: "Tree, horseshoe and sun"
by Re'ut (Category A)
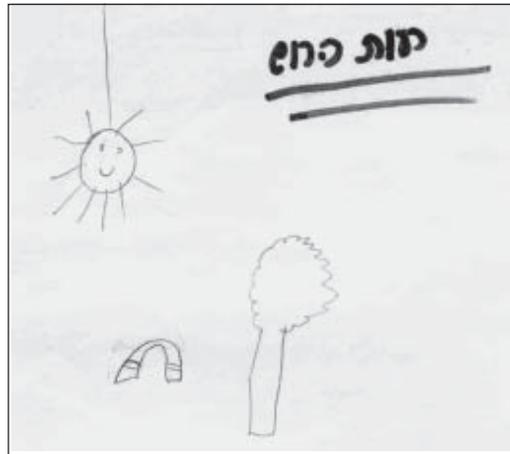


Figure 7

*(M)* Re'ut pointed out what she had done, "I drew a tree, for wood… and then a horseshoe - metal - and light… a sun". *(S)* Her 'naturalistic' images are organized as an 'air-gap' drawing: tree and horseshoe - on the ground and a smiling sun-face above. *(C)* The different materials and timbres of the percussion instruments aroused associations related to objects made of the same materials, respectively. Thus, a tree represents "wood"; "a horseshoe – metal" and the sun ("light") stands for a drum's skin. This last association stems from a linguistic connection: the Hebrew word "OR" means both SKIN and LIGHT (although spelled differently). For this reason, Re'ut, like many other children, made use of various glowing objects (lamps, torches, light bulbs, flames etc.) to represent the drum's skin. The drawing falls under category A.

Drawing 6: "Cypress – window – bulbs"
by Ma'ayan (Category AFG)



Figure 8

*(M)* Ma'ayan drew a colored air-gap drawing (made with brown, green, gray and yellow crayons) and pointed out, "This is a cypress-tree…because of the wooden-sound…this is a gray window with shutter and three small light bulbs". *(S)* The pictographic items move vertically from bottom to top following the logic of a schematic air-gap drawing: a large tree at the bottom page with the lower margin as ground; the shuttered window - in the center and three tiny light bulbs clustered at the top. *(C)* Instruments made of different materials arouse associations of objects, which are made of the same materials, respectively. Thus the cypress-tree represents "the wooden sound"; a metallic window-shutter - the metallic sound; and light bulbs - the skinned-drum sounds (for the above linguistic connection) (category A). Five objects represent the

chronological sequence of five sounds (category F). Coupling three light bulbs indicates the division of the phrase into 1+1+3 sounds according to the changes in timbre and duration. Ma'ayan noted, "the first and second sounds are big (long)… but the drum goes fast: OR-OR-OR" (category G). The drawing falls under categories AFG.

Drawing 7: "Instruments and sun"
by Ela (Category APFG)



Figure 9

*(M)* Ela's colorful drawing (made with brown, brownish, blue, black, yellow and orange crayons) includes a wooden-block with a mallet, a cowbell with a mallet and a shining sun with the number 3 in its center. *(S)* The objects are organized horizontally from left to right. *(C)* The wooden-block and the cowbell are represented by pictograms colored 'naturalistically'. Ela noted, "I made the bead (of the mallet) blue and the stick black like the real mallet" (category P). The shining sun represents the skinned drum (for the above linguistic connection) (category A). The objects represent a chronological sequence of the sound events (category F). Ela indicated the division of the phrase into 2+3 sounds according to changes in timbre and playing technique, "…first we strike the wooden-block and cow-bell with the stick and after that we beat the drum with the hand OR-OR-OR". Number "3" inside the sun concisely represents three drum-strokes as a musical sub-unit (category P). The drawing falls under categories APFG.

## Summary of seven "Timbre" drawings [Figure 10]

Drawings 1-4, in their formal aspects, reflect children's attention to the "absolutist" tendencies of the music, while drawings 5, in its descriptive aspects, reflect children's attention to the worlds of metaphor, namely the "programmatic", "referentialist" tendencies of the music. In this dichotomy of "absolutist/referentialist" aspects of music, drawings 6-7, in their formal/associative aspects, reflect a close correspondence between the formal points of reference and extrinsic worlds of referential thinking.
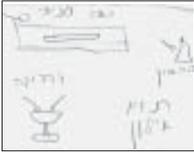
| "Absolute" notations | "Referential" notations | "Absolute/Referential" notations |
|---|---|---|
| 1. Tom | | |
| 2. Reuven | 5. Re'ut | 6. Ma'ayan |
| 3. Liran | | |
| 4. Lawrence | | 7. Ela |

Figure 10
Summary of seven "Timbre" drawings

Each drawing represents an individual response of selective musical information. "Three percussion instruments" by Tom [Drawing 1] reflects the child's concern with instruments alone; He makes a picture of what created the sound rather than the resulting sounds and their sub-divisions. On the other hand, "Five cylinders" by Reuven [Drawing 2] reflects the child's concern with the sounds only; the child here is distanced from the experience of actual playing and makes a picture of the correct number of sounds and their sub-division. Two of the "Absolute notations" - "Instruments & Words" by Liran [Drawing 3] and "Five mallets" by Lawrence [Drawing 4] - as well as one "Absolute/Referential notation" - "Instruments & Sun" by Ela [Drawing 7] - represent in diverse ways of synthesis children's concern with both the chronological sequence of sounds and its instrumental sources.

The Morphological analysis of the seven "Timbre" notations shows an abundance of shapes and images, although children may occasionally use common icons, such as a tree [Drawings 5 and 6] and a light object [Drawings 5 and 7]. The use of colors in some notations resembles the use of colors in spontaneous drawings at this age, in which a color represents a concept (Rimerman, 1990). The concept of light in the "Timbre" drawings is always represented by yellow, for instance a yellow sun [Drawing 7] and a yellow light bulb [Drawing 6]. Pictograms are sometimes colored 'naturalistically' [Drawing 7].

The Structural analysis shows that children utilize various options of directionality and a graphic path is not necessarily linear. Children may follow the logic of a vertical air-gap arrangement[13] [Drawings 5 and 6] or create a circular path [Drawing 4]. Horizontal paths [Drawings 2 and 7] do not necessarily follow the direction of writing for Hebrew and a child's notation may move from both left-to-right and right-to-left as two simultaneous dimensions [Drawing 3].

The Conceptual analysis shows that children do not necessarily draw a circle as a representation of an individual sound. A geometric shape, such as a circle or a cylinder, may represent an individual sound [Drawings 2 and 6], a group of sounds [Drawing 7], a musical instrument such as a bead of a

mallet [Drawings 1, 3 and 7] and/or a sound and an instrument united [Drawing 4]. Children use space to form separation between bounded figures [Drawings 4 and 6] rather than to represent time-intervals. Size differences in some notations may indicate various musical parameters such as dynamic changes [Drawings 2 and 4] and tempo variations [Drawing 6].

## Results

The Morphological Analysis results showed an abundance of graphic strategies in children's invented notations and no inclination towards prototypical patterns. The variety of shapes and images produced by young children in their notations were limitless and may have stemmed from auditory-visual as well as linguistic associations. In their morphological features, the notations of children age 7.0-8.5 often resembled spontaneous "schematic" drawings, such as "air-gap" drawings, characteristic of children at this stage of development (e.g., Lindstrom, 1957; Eng, 1959; Rimerman, 1990). The use of colors resembled the use of colors in spontaneous drawings at this age (Rimerman, 1990).

The Structural Analysis results showed an abundance of organizational strategies including free use of diversified directionalities, recurrent visual patterns and various forms of demonstrating grouping and separation. There was no prototypical inclination towards the right-to-left direction of the Hebrew language or the left-to-right direction of the WSN. These findings refute Bamberger's (1991) interpretations of schoolchildren's notations, which lean on a prototypical direction of "time moving 'straight ahead' from left to right across the page" (p. 51).

The Conceptual Analysis results showed that of all the categories of perception which were tested, the reaction to musical parameters in their chronological succession (category F) was characteristic to the largest number of subjects. For example, 65% of the "Timbre" drawings were classified under category F (whether this category was perceived as a single category or in combination with other categories) and only 51%,

49% and 32% of the drawings were classified under categories G, A and P, respectively. (See graph in Appendix I.)

## Conclusions and Discussion

The chronological succession of sounds (category F) prevailed in the majority of the notations. This means that in many cases an F-response, namely, the representation of a sequence of sounds, is natural to musically "illiterate" children at this stage of development.

Notations may reveal the means by which children produce sounds (category P), showing that the phonographic activity of schoolchildren is not distanced from the experience of actual playing the rhythm. This finding refutes Bamberger's (1991) assertion that schoolchildren are distanced from the experience of actual playing rhythms. (p. 50-52).

Although children spoke about instruments and were able to divide the musical stimulus into sub-units in performance, their drawings did not always include pictograms or features of grouping and division of the musical gestalt. This shows that a child's notation does not necessarily capture all that he knows about a sound model. Children see, hear and know more than they represent in their notation. This accords with Arnheim's assertion that "children unquestionably see [and hear] more than they draw" (Arnheim, 1974, p. 168). A child's notation projects all that attracts his attention in the musical stimulus at a given moment, but it does not necessarily capture all that he *knows* about the sound model. He may omit certain components in his notation not because he does not know anything about them; it is because he accents those features, which are important to him. Omissions and emphases reflect the child's subjective selections about the relevant features of the musical stimulus. Thus a child's invented notation is never an "objective product", it is an affective statement, which expresses in symbolic forms his subjectively felt values and interest in the musical stimulus. Two different notations, which represent the same musical model, present not only different ways of transcribing sounds but differences in musical

perception and phonographic focus.

## Educational Implications

A phonographic product, in its "absolute" components and "referential" content, represents the perception of the musical stimulus and the listener's skill of abstraction. A child's phonographic activity resembles the preparation of a transcription by the ethnomusicologist; in both cases, the phonographic product is a uniquely human intellectual activity related to the process of autonomous problem solving. Children's invented notations may become a valuable clue for music teachers and art teachers to understanding a child's individual musical perception and his or her attitudes toward the musical material.

However, teachers should not interpret children's signs through the eyes and senses of trained professionals. There is something other than technical knowledge that is involved in the freedom to invent graphic equivalents to music. Children's notations have their own justification, capacity for expression, and originality and should not to be regarded as "wrong" or something to be improved through "stages of growing ability" on the road to competent notation of a systematic reference. Children's explanations of their own drawings may become a valuable resource for music and art teachers in "reading" and studying their students' ideographic notations.

Learning to write notes at an early stage of development should be "cultivated" rather than "imposed"; that is to say, that teaching must not be narrowly conceived in practical terms as an arbitrary set of rules. Teachers should reject one-sided enthusiasm for the mechanics of writing. As Vygotsky asserts, "if the pupil only develops finger dexterity and learns to strike the keys while reading music, he is in no way involved in the essence of the music itself" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 105-6). By strict teaching of WSN children may achieve technical skills, but their product will lack the quality of the creator and will no longer be a means of self-expression and creative impulse. Furthermore, to insist on young children's mastering the abstractions of the WSN means to challenge them to use techniques, which are not necessarily at their own level of

conception. Art and music education should be based on the awareness that the child's phonographic conception is growing in accordance with principles of his own.

Liberating the creative activity from too much attention to the restricting rules of calligraphic laws and conventions would facilitate, to a large extent, the unrestricted flow of the child's phonographic expression. In turn, the sense of confidence and self-satisfaction that arises when a child's phonographic activity is uninhibited and encouraged might spread to other artistic situations.

### Notes

[1] A speech held at the opening of the "musical graphics" exhibition in Donauschingen, 1959.

[2] Such as, the "Synastesia" phenomenon, namely hearing colors. European composers, such as Messiaen, Scriabin and Georges Migot analyzed music in terms of colors (e.g., Interpretation des Oeuvres d'Olivier Messiaen", 1988); Books about "Synastesia" were published in European and non-European cultures; for example, "Ton und Farbe" (Germany – 1906: Schruder in: Read, 1987), "Farbige Noten" by Huth (Germany – 1889; Huth in: Read, 1987:176). In Chinese music, five tones of the pentatonic scale are represented by yellow, white, blue, red, and black, respectively (Chinese treatise from the second century BC in: Cohen 1990:54).

[3] Such as "tone", "color", "line", "texture", "structure", "contour", "ornament". The term "leading-tone", for example, is used as roots of tension and release both in music and painting analysis. Arnheim explains: "Just as in the key of C the B presses toward becoming C, so in the red-yellow scale, a red yellow presses toward yellow, and a yellow red toward red" (Arnheim 1974:354).

[4] In WSN, for example, a circle may represent a percussion instrument (i.e. gong, hand-drum) or certain gestures (i.e. applying a mute to the bellow of a wind instrument, ascending the piano pedal) (Burton, 1982).

[5] The Japanese languages, for example, have been written from top to bottom but the Japanese neumes (karifu meyasu) are written horizontally from right to left (Grove: Graphic signs); Tabulature notations, which have been in use in western European music since

at least the early 14th century and still in use in Jazz and Pop scores today, move in a two-dimensional netting, treating the length and the width of the path as two simultaneous dimensions (Grove: Tabulature).

[6] In WSN, for example, graphic marks (such as "Fermata" signs) verbal indications (such as "rit.", "acceler.") or numeric directives (such as Metronome indications) do not relate to space proportions.

[7] For example, the increasing and decreasing of a lying V shape in WSN indicates the increasing and decreasing of loudness, respectively ("crescendo" & "decrescendo").

[8] The other six tasks consisted of short classical compositions, which were played on tape. One goal of the study was to investigate the relation between children's phonographic response to short musical fragments and to classical compositions (Elkoshi, 2000, 2002). This latter aspect of the study is beyond the scope of the present paper.

[9] Dr. Avi Rimon, a psychologist and expert in graphology and drawing analysis (Tel-Aviv, Israel) and Mrs. Ana Lerman, a senior school music teacher (Herzelia, Israel).

[10] Based on the drawings of the same rhythmic pattern Bamberger developed a typology of "developmental progression" which follow closely with the "stages of development" described by Piaget and Vygotsky (Bamberger 1991:13, 21, 50).

[11] For example, the space between the Darbuka and the bell is 6.9 Cm.

[12] Notice that he writes his name in two languages: his first name in Hebrew and last name in English.)

[13] In which trees are always pulled down to the bottom of the page and suns are pulled up [Figures 5 and 6].

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**Appendix I**

Graph 1: The right columns (with the net design) show the number of subjects that were classified under a certain category in response to the fragment "Timbre", whether this category was perceived as a single category or in combination with other categories. (The other columns show the number of subjects that were classified under a certain category in response to other musical fragments, which are not discussed in this paper).

# "Yes, It's a Good Picture": Preschoolers' Evaluation of Their Pictures

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*Abstract*

*Preschool children's evaluation of their art work is a necessary and important part of their learning. Veroff's theory (1969), consistent with Piaget's, asserts that preschoolers use autonomous egocentric criteria to evaluate their work, although adult feedback is also influential. This study examined criteria preschool children use to evaluate their art in relation to picture quality and time spent in art. Forty-two children were observed in four preschool classrooms for activity choices during free choice time and were individually asked to draw a picture, evaluate their drawing, and describe their criteria. They were also asked about expected responses of teachers and classmates. Children most frequently used autonomous, egocentric criteria; older children were more likely to use correctness criteria than younger children. Children spent only an average of 7% of the 30 minutes they were observed doing art activities. There were few relationships between criteria use and drawing skill or time in art. All children expected positive evaluations of their art from teachers, while 45 % expected classmates to evaluate their work positively and 25% expected negative evaluations from peers.*

Whatever the purpose for art in preschool classrooms, whether it be creative expression or intellectual development, evaluation is always occurring. As children draw, they compare their intended picture with their evolving product, evaluating their progress and making corrections or adding elements as needed (Cocking, 1987). Classmates comment on one another's work. As Kindler (1995a, p.91) describes, children have a

"natural propensity towards appraisal of their own and other people's pictorial work." This is part of a fundamental drive for individuals to evaluate themselves, often using judgments of others as a basis for their assessments (Chafel, 1987). Such evaluation of work is part of the self-evaluation of competence that is related to thinking of oneself as more or less capable in a specific skill area.

Veroff (1969) describes preschool children as evaluating their work using autonomous standards, resulting from their own experience of mastery, based on their idea of what a successful accomplishment would be. Preschoolers also use adult feedback to assess their success; young children are thought to internalize social standards sometime after age 3, basing them on adult reactions. Only then do they reflect on and compare their outcomes to genuine internally represented standards rather than rely on their emotional reactions to accomplishments (Stipek, Recchia, & McClintic, 1992). As children reach early elementary school they begin to assess their work based on social comparison with the norm established by their classmates' achievements. Children's use of different kinds of evaluative criteria is influenced by both developmental and environmental factors (Crandall, 1967; Heckhausen, 1984; Schunk, 1986; Stipek et al., 1992; Veroff, 1969).

Veroff's theory is consistent with theories and research specifically directed at evaluation of art. Parsons's (1987) *Favoritism* stage of aesthetic response describes the young child as egocentric and intuitively appreciating paintings based on colors or favorite themes. Parsons includes students' favorable evaluation of paintings as based on personal associations with the subject or as "pretty" in this stage, saving the criteria of "beauty" for the more normative and less personalized conception of quality seen in elementary school students (p. 42). This second stage includes realism as a criterion.

Additional findings on criteria use suggest that not all children's evaluations are as advanced and systematic as those found by Parsons. A study which asked 3, 5, and 7-year olds to evaluate other children's drawings found that the quantity of images was the only criterion named by more than half of the

3-year-olds (Hart & Goldin-Meadow, 1984). Kindler (2000) asked adults and students aged 8, 11, and 14 to judge work done by others, and reported that her student judges often made quick assessments based on their "overall impression of quality rather than a sequential application of criteria" (p. 21).

Evaluative criteria and their application are important to children's motivation to engage in art-making activities. Believing that one is skilled in an area is related to working hard at tasks in that area (Pintrich & Schunk, 2002). Even though preschoolers are "difficult to discourage" in their unsupported high perceptions of their skills and achievements (Stipek & Greene, 2001, p.64), these perceptions are short-lived, and begin to decline even before students enter elementary school. As Rosenstiel and Gardner (1977) found when they asked students in grades 1, 3, 6, and 10 to evaluate their drawings, younger students almost always liked their drawings, while older students almost always disliked theirs. This is consistent with young children's assessment of their work in many areas. As Harter (1996, p. 210) states, "Most young children describe themselves as paragons of virtue, typically providing a litany of positive attributes and abilities." Although young children are typically enthusiastic artists, their zest for art often wanes as they begin to apply more stringent standards to their work (Flannery & Watson, 1991). Art is an important area for learning the skills of self-evaluation and self-regulation that extend throughout a child's life, contributing to children's success in many areas (Baum, Owen, & Oreck, 1997). The importance of evaluation to art motivation was illustrated in an experiment Gerhart (1986) conducted with 4th graders. Students who were told their art work would be evaluated by the teacher or by peer comparison were significantly less motivated to do additional art activities than students who were told they would self-evaluate.

## Art in Preschool Classrooms: Contexts for Evaluation

Art is typically an area of exploration and competence for preschoolers. Art centers are ubiquitous in preschool classrooms, and the educational value of art-making is widely

accepted. According to evaluation standards, preschool classrooms should provide materials for drawing, painting, three-dimensional art, and collage, and should include activities that encourage individual expression (Harms, Clifford, & Cryer, 1998).

The intensely social nature of art-making in preschools and in art classes for preschoolers is well-documented by observational studies which find that appraisal of art work by teachers, artists, and peers frequently occurs (Thompson, 2002; Thompson & Bales, 1991). The presence of peers is considered positive, with other children serving as "companions, models, audience, tutors, students, and collaborators," (Thompson, 2003, p. 139). Kindler (1995a) corroborates this in a study of 4 preschool classrooms, which examined videotapes and audiotapes to exhaustively classify the behaviors displayed by children during art activities. She found that students were thoughtful and supportive as they frequently described, analyzed, interpreted, and critically appraised their peers' work. Similarly, looking only at comparative comments in several preschool play settings, Chafel (1987, p.101) reported that only 9% of children's statements represented "besting" comparisons, in which one child asserts superiority over another.

Young children's evaluation of their work is influenced by teachers and other adults who provide models of art criticism as they respond to children's efforts and to other art works (e.g., Schiller, 1995). As Taunton (1987) noted in her study of teacher statements during elementary school art classes, teachers' interactions served to convey aesthetic standards as well as to clarify assignments, give technical information, and provide assurance and praise. Swann (1986) observed preschool children frequently initiating interactions with the teacher that would gain the teacher's interest and approval. Teacher response is largely approving; Makin, White, and Owen (1996) found that almost all (between 94% and 99%) of the evaluative messages they observed in art centers of four Australian early childhood classrooms were positive. Many scholars (e.g., Brophy, 1998; Makin, 1995; Schirrmacher, 1986;), complain that teachers too often reward conformity by giving automatic praise, rather than take the time to individualize their comments in ways that

would encourage more original achievement.

Despite the importance of self-evaluation and criteria use to young children's motivation to engage in art activities, little research has been conducted in this area. Psychological literature on the effect of meeting or not meeting standards on children's subsequent motivation has typically provided the standard for success or failure for the child, rather than letting the child judge whether the goal had been reached ( e.g., Barrett & Morgan, 1995; Stikpek et al., 1992). For example, Butler's (1990) investigation of how children assess their ability utilized an art task requiring children to use colored stickers to copy a drawing, with the criterion of accuracy provided by the researcher. The present study attempts to clarify the criteria preschool children use in a naturalistic setting and its relationship to their behavior.

## Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate the standards by which preschool children judge their drawings and clarify the relationships between these standards, the time they spend doing art in their classrooms, and the drawing skill they display. The specific objectives were to examine: 1) The criteria preschool children report they and others use to evaluate their art and the prevalence of these evaluations, 2) Whether the criteria and standards children use are associated with the time they spend engaging in art activities, and 3) Whether children who display greater skill in art report using more specific standards than those who display less skill. Naturalistic observation and interview measures were used to investigate these relationships, and additional issues related to the classroom context were also addressed.

## Method

## Participants

The participants were 42 (20 male, 22 female) children

who attended four classrooms in two full day preschool/ kindergarten/daycare programs in a southeastern city. Twenty-three of the children (12 Black, 11 White) were classified as eligible for free or reduced price lunch, and 19 (11 Black, 8 White) were not. Children's ages ranged from 42 to 79 months, with a median age of 60 months. One preschool is run by a school district while the other is associated with a university and is a private facility. Both schools are staffed by accredited teachers.

## Measures

*Time spent in art.* In order to determine how much time students chose to spend in the art center doing art activities, observers recorded students' activity choices in their classrooms for 30 one-minute segments per child on at least 20 separate days. Prior to each observation session the observer had prepared one recording sheet per child and randomly shuffled the sheets. Once in the classroom, the observer located the child whose name was on the top sheet and recorded that child's activities for one minute, and then moved on to the child named on the next sheet. Because of the limitations of using this paper and pencil method, no other information about the child's behaviors or social interactions could be reliably recorded. Observations were conducted during free choice "center time" segments. During this period of the day, children were free to choose to go to centers, areas of the classroom which had materials supporting specific activities, such as art, blocks, puzzles, books, and dramatic play. Inter-observer reliability was computed on five occasions according to the method described by Wright (1967), and was 91.4%.

The art centers in these classrooms consisted largely of painting easels for two children per room and a table with drawing paper and crayons and/or markers. Consistent with Seefeldt's (1999) description of common practice, teachers in these classrooms did not provide instruction. The classrooms did not meet the guidelines for developmentally appropriate art practice cited by Colbert (1995) in that, during the observations, teachers provided a narrow variety of art

materials, and did not engage the children in discussions of their art work. Some classrooms had prescribed activities such as those described by Bresler (2002, p.182) as "child craft." Time spent at these activities was not included in the number of minutes spent in art.

*Criteria for art achievement.* Because the observed children seldom spontaneously discussed achievement standards and criteria, a structured interview was designed to elicit the children's reports of the standards and criteria they used. Following the completion of all observations, each child was individually interviewed by an observer or assistant who had been in their classroom and were known to the children. Each child was asked to come to an unoccupied classroom or office to answer some questions, and all children willingly did so. During the interview, the children were first asked how they would decide how good a job they had done on a picture. Then, in order to provide a concrete focus for the child's response, each child was asked to draw a picture, indicate if it was a good picture, and say why they thought so. The children were then asked about the expected evaluations of teachers and peers, and how they would respond if these evaluations differed from their own. The interview gave the children many opportunities to describe the standards and criteria they used to judge their drawings.

*Development of Categories to Code Criteria and Coding.* Prior theory and research has indicated that preschool children would probably use criteria that were based on their own autonomous ideas of what constituted a good picture, with the responses of teachers, parents and classmates a secondary focus. In order to develop a category system grounded in the actual responses of the children , a method described by Strauss and Corbin, (1994) was used. Children's responses were analyzed in order to derive categories that fit their views, with other theories about the development of criteria (Parsons, 1987; Veroff, 1969) kept in mind. The children's criteria were coded into the categories a*utonomous* - unspecified personal vision of a successful accomplishment ( e.g., "'Cause I made it good."), a*esthetic* –appeal of drawing (e.g., "'Cause it's pretty."),

c*orrectness* – accuracy, realism, or inclusion of details (e.g., "You can see faces.") and a*dult response* – reference to adult approval (e.g. "'Cause my mama gonna like it"). It should be noted that while these criteria are not inconsistent with the literature reviewed earlier, they were derived from student statements rather than previously specified categorizations. All criteria expressed at any time within the interview were included, and recorded as *present* (1) or *not present* (0). Reliability of coding interview data for criteria, assessed by having two independent individuals code five randomly selected transcripts, was 88%, using methods described by Wright (1967).

*Ratings of Drawings*. Pictures drawn during the interview were evaluated using criteria adapted from those used by Project Zero (Chen, 1998). Pictures were rated on a scale from 1-3 for *representation* (shows recognizable symbols for objects, coordination of elements, and deliberate choice of color), *artistry* (conveys strong mood, includes embellishment; is colorful, balanced, rhythmic), and *exploration* (lines and shapes generate a variety of forms). Because of the age span, raters considered the children's ages as they rated. Reliability of ratings was established by having thirteen pictures rated independently by two raters; percentages of identical ratings were 84.6 for artistry, 92.3 for representation, and 92.3 for exploration.

## Results

Basic information on the occurrence of all measures is given on Table 1 (see Appendix). In addition, all children responded that they had drawn a good picture. Because younger (age 3-4) and older (age 5-6) children differed on several of these measures, results are given for each group. Only the categories of criteria given by more than 20% of students were included, eliminating the criterion of *Adult Response*, mentioned by only 5 children. Correlations among ratings of drawings and the other measures are given on Tables 2 and 3 (see Appendix), again separately for younger and older students. Results are organized below according to the objectives of the study.

## 1) What standards and criteria do preschool children report they and others use to evaluate pictures?

It should be noted that all children reported that they had made a good drawing. Most younger (91%) and older (85%) children mentioned autonomous, egocentric rationales for their own, their teachers' and peers' evaluations of pictures (e.g., "'Cause I just did.") (Table 1). Next most commonly used were aesthetic criteria, (e.g., "Because I draw a pretty color"). correctness ( e.g., "because it looks like a …") was the least often used of these criteria for evaluating pictures, and was used significantly more often by older than younger student ($t$=-2.61, $p$=.01).

Only 5 of the 42 children mentioned teacher or parent approval (e.g., knowing a picture is good "'Cause Teacher tells me"). No child spontaneously mentioned comparing their drawing with those of classmates as a way to assess quality; when asked specifically, only a few older children appeared to understand social comparison as providing useful evaluative information.

## 2)Are the kinds of criteria and standards children use associated with the time they choose to spend engaging in art activities?

Younger children whose drawings were rated higher for the exploration dimension (lines and shapes generate a variety of forms) spent more time in self-chosen art activities ($r$=.44, $p$=.04, see Table 2). There were no significant correlations between any measure of drawing quality and time spent in art for the older students (Table 3).

Table 1 indicates that children chose to spend only about 7% of their time in art activities, rather than other activities such as playing with blocks or dramatic play. The children in the sample spent from 0 to 8 minutes in art activities out of the 30 minutes they were observed, an average of 2.1 minutes. Consistent with prior research (Tomes, 1995), girls spent significantly ($F$ (2, 39) =7.1, $p$=.01) more minutes doing art

($M$=2.7 minutes, $SD$ = 1.6) than boys ($M$=1.4 minutes, $SD$ = 1.9). Interestingly, Black students spent significantly ($F$ (2, 39) =7.2, $p$=.01) more minutes in art ($M$=2.7 minutes, $SD$ = 1.9) than did White students ($M$=1.4 minutes, $SD$ = 1.6).

Such differences in time spent in art reflect the fact that, within classrooms, specific centers draw specific social groups. Classrooms often reflect the gender divergence between the cultures of boys and girls in their activity choices. Girls typically reject the more physical activities of boys as too rough and boys reject the more sedentary activities of girls as too dull (Maccoby, 1998). Children in these classrooms also displayed unexpected racial differences in choice of art as an activity, the only racial differences in art behaviors seen in this data.

There were sizeable but nonsignificant differences between classrooms in the amount of time children spent in art. This may be due to individual teacher influence, or it may be due to age or other differences between children in classrooms. One clue to children's choice of art activities is the positive correlation between minutes children spent in art and in their reporting during the interview that the teacher would make positive comments about their drawing ($R$=.29, p=.05). The possibility that this reflects a connection between teacher presence and time spent in art is supported by research which has found that teacher presence is likely to draw preschoolers to the art center (Kindler, 1995b; Tomes, 1995). Unfortunately, in the present study, data about teacher presence in the art center and teacher feedback given to students were not collected.

Particularly puzzling was the lack of relationship between time spent in art and the quality of the drawings children produced, because it would be expected that children who spend more time in art would produce better drawings. Also, children who draw well would be expected to find art activities especially gratifying and choose to do them more than would children who do not draw as well. However, it may be that some students have more opportunities to do art activities at home than others do, and that they have developed their skills out of school. Also, because the art activities provided at school were rather meager, it is possible that some children would have

ignored them.

### 3) Do children who display greater skill in art report using more specific criteria than those who display less skill?

The skill ratings in Table 1 indicate that most children's pictures were rated positively on representation, artistry, and exploration. Younger children's drawings were rated significantly higher on exploration that those of older children ($t$=3.04, $p$=.004).

Young children's skill in art was not significantly related to their use of any criterion. However, older children who mentioned aesthetic criteria produced drawings rated higher for representation ($r$=.46, $p$=.04), and artistry ($r$=.47, $p$ = .04).

The failure to find substantial correlations between children's display of drawing skill and their use of criteria is puzzling; as Stipek et al. ( 1992) assert, without standards it is impossible to evaluate one's work. Such evaluation would seem logically to be necessary to the improvement of one's skill. However, this finding may be explained by developmental characteristics of preschoolers, specifically their difficulty in communicating the criteria they may hold. Although older children's art is said to improve when they refine their focus and criteria in the course of creating verbal or written critiques of their work and the work of others (e.g., Barrett, 1997), this may not be true for preschool artists. Perhaps preschoolers construct their criteria as they create their art, and these first criteria are intuitive rather than explicit. An indication that young children use a global and fluid approach to evaluation is seen in a study in which preschoolers based their assessment of their classmates' academic skill on the child's sociability rather than on more relevant criteria (Stipek & Tannatt, 1984).

It may also be true that correctness criteria, which were used by 32% of younger children and 70% of older children but were not correlated with drawing quality measures, have little real value as an indicator of aspects of drawing that should be improved. In Butler's study of children's assessment of the accuracy with which they used colored stickers to copy

drawings that had been provided, she found that 5-year-olds were idiosyncratic in their use of social comparison criteria (comparing their drawing with that of another child who was also attempting to copy the model accurately). She said that these young children seemed to first decide that their own copies were excellent and then look for ways that those of their peers were inferior. This tendency to use even verbalized criteria to "justify their positive judgments, rather than to form them," (Butler, 1990, p. 207) may explain the failure of verbalized criteria to be associated with drawing skill.

It should be noted that almost all the preschoolers interviewed for the present study used autonomous criteria, resulting in the lack of variability in the use of this kind of criterion that would show up as a statistically significant correlation to ratings of their drawings. It appears that the egocentric and autonomous criteria almost all preschoolers use are sufficiently explicit to effectively support their development in art. Research on older children is required to examine the relationship of children's criteria to their art work in other developmental periods.

### Case Examples

An examination of the records of children with high-rated drawings and those with low-rated drawings illustrates these results. First, pairs of younger children (aged 3-4) in the same classroom, one of whom did a drawing that was rated highly and one of whom did a lower rated drawing, will be described. Next, two older children (aged 5-6) whose drawings were highly rated will be described, followed by a description of two older children whose drawings were not highly rated. Both children in each pair described attended the same classroom.

*Neala*                                    *Morgan*

First looking at younger children (ages 3 & 4), Neala and Morgan (all names are pseudonyms) were in the same classroom in a private preschool that served a university community. Neala's unnamed picture was more highly rated than Morgan's, which he told the interviewer was a fireplace. Both children (indeed all children in the study) said "yes" when asked if they had drawn a good picture. When asked how she knew, Neala gave an autonomous criterion, saying, "'Cause I like it." Earlier, when asked how she decides if she has done a good job on her pictures at school, she responded "'Cause the teacher told me." Morgan also justified his judgment that his picture was good with an autonomous criterion, "'Cause I just did. 'Cause I draw." Each said that the teacher would say they had done a good drawing, Morgan explaining, "'Cause I did a great drawing," and Neala giving as her reason, "'Cause I like it." Morgan had been observed spending 4 minutes in art activities (out of 30 one-minute segments on 20 separate days), and Neala had spent 2 minutes in art activities. Both relied on autonomous criteria as their major evaluative measure. Thus, both these children were similar except in the quality of their drawing.



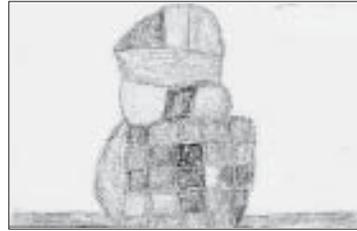*Kayla*                                    *Shantel*

Kayla and Shantel were both younger students in a public preschool that served children who were mostly from middle and lower income families. Kayla's imaginative non-representative art work contrasts with Shantel's simple tracing of her hand. Yet again, both children thought their pictures were good, Kayla giving the autonomous criteria, "Because I made 5, writing," and Shantel, looking to the opinion of an authority, "'Cause my mama gonna like it." Each girl had been observed spending 3 (out of 30) minutes at art activities, more than the average of 1.7 minutes in their classroom. Interestingly, while Neala and Morgan expected other children in their class to like their drawings too, Shantel thought her classmates would say hers was ugly (although she also said the teacher would say "pretty, pretty,"). Kayla said she didn't know what her classmates would think, but that she would "show it to mama." Three of these four younger children mentioned their mother or teacher as an evaluative authority.



*Dennis*

*Tammy*

Turning to older (ages 5 & 6) children, all of whom were students in the same class at the same public preschool as Kayla and Shantel, we see the use of more explicit criteria. Both Dennis and Tammy had highly rated drawings. Dennis drew quickly and intently, and talked about his drawing as he worked. When the examiner asked him if he was done with his detailed family portrait, he replied, "No, I got to color Daddy." He justified his positive evaluation of his picture by saying, "Because I made me and Mom and Daddy, write my name good, not scribble scrabble," later adding the he didn't "scribble scrabble like little kids." Tammy slowly and carefully drew her "blockhouse" in a deliberate and purposeful way. She said her picture was good because she "did it inside the lines," and said her teacher would

think her picture was good because it had "pretty colors." Both children had been observed doing art for only one minute, less than the average of nearly two minutes in their classroom.
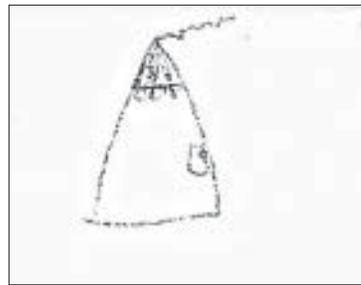


*Scott*                                    *Terica*

Scott and Terica, older children whose pictures were not as highly rated, were only a little different from Dennis and Tammy in their criteria and behavior. They were students in the same classroom as Kayla and Shantel. Scott drew his picture of a house quickly and intentionally, and justified his positive evaluation of his drawing by saying, "I can write good." He was one of several children who seemed to see writing as an element of drawing. He later said that if the teacher didn't like his picture, he would throw it away. Terica drew quickly, and said her mostly unadorned picture was good because of the details she had included: "'Cause I made a body; 'Cause I made a body and made shoes and feet and a happy face." Her statements illustrate a wish to include all details which is often seen in children aged five and older (Reith, 1997). Terica had been observed drawing for 3 minutes and Scott not at all. Three of the four children in this classroom expected that their classmates would say their pictures were "ugly" or "bad." Only Tammy named a friend who would say it was "pretty."

These examples illustrate the developmental progression in children's use of criteria that were seen in the statistical analysis, with older children more often using aesthetic and correctness criteria in addition to autonomous

criteria. However, as the analysis also indicated, use of these criteria was not highly related to the rated quality of the students' art work. Observations of time children spent in art also show few relationships to quality, except for Morgan's relatively high art participation and his drawing's relatively higher score in exploration. Although it might be possible to detect patterns of relationships of criteria and art quality if larger samples were used, these examples are reminders of the individuality of each child's art production and their thoughts about it. The examples also reveal differences in the classroom contexts provided for art, as they are reflected in the evaluations of their drawings that children expected from their classmates.

It is important to keep in mind that the measure of drawing quality used in this study was based on a single picture produced in response to the interviewer's request and may not reflect the children's usual drawing quality. These children were also influenced by immediate and specific factors in their lives and classroom environments. Neala, for example, is an extraordinarily bright and socially skilled three-year-old; when later asked why classmates would tell her she was good at something, she said, "Because they like me." In contrast, Morgan's parents had recently divorced, and he was occasionally observed behaving in ways that suggested he was angry or preoccupied. The observer noticed that teachers were consistently good-humored toward Neala (whose parents had divorced earlier in her life), but were restrictive and even punitive toward Morgan.

### Discussion and Interpretation

In summary, the evaluative climate for preschool art appears largely positive. Consistent with prior research on children's art, all of the children, when asked if they had done a good drawing, answered "yes." All children who mentioned teacher evaluative responses expected them to be positive. The one unpleasant possibility at the preschool art table appears to be the comments of other children. About 25% of children said that a peer would criticize their picture. Percentages of children

expecting peer criticism varied by classroom from 0% to 46%, indicating wide variation in classroom culture. This negative experience was partly offset by student expectations of peer praise for their art work, which was mentioned by 45% of the children, varying across rooms from 15% to 90%.

Several classrooms in this study clearly departed from the one observed by Kindler (1995a) in which students were supportive of one another and no ridicule was observed. Others have also observed peer criticism, as is reflected in the title of Thompson and Bales (1991) article, "Michael doesn't like my dinosaurs: Conversations in a preschool art class." However, it is disturbing that so many children in this study expected negative responses from classmates, especially in light of research which indicates that children's perceptions of academic self-efficacy is highly influenced by their classmates' evaluative statements (Altermatt, Pomerantz, Ruble, Frey, & Greulich, 2002.) The influence of development on the occurrence of such negative comments is described by observational research which finds that the boasting and overt criticism of young children diminishes as children's social cognitive abilities increase and they learn about social conventions regarding self-promotion and making comments that might hurt others' feelings (Altermatt et al., 2002; Frey & Ruble, 1985).

These findings suggest that many children in center-based preschools spend little time in art activities, laying a slim foundation for their artistic development. Although causal influences cannot be inferred from correlational data, the value of art may be reflected in the correlation between time younger children spent doing artwork and the exploration ratings of drawings they produced.

Older preschoolers were found to be significantly more likely than younger students to apply correctness criteria to art, and teachers may need to address children's tendency to see it increasingly important to do things "right." It is noteworthy that older children who applied aesthetic criteria to art were likely to draw pictures rated higher in artistry and representation, indicating that criteria do appear to have some relationship to older preschoolers' development of artistic skill.

However, little is known about how teachers should teach about criteria and evaluations so that children can construct evaluations that will challenge and support rather than discourage their efforts in art. Teachers customarily praise children's art work, undoubtedly to encourage their efforts. Although, as Schunk (1986) notes, adult praise and criticism is a powerful influence on young children's behavior, it has been widely observed that teacher praise in art classrooms can have negative as well as positive effects. Both Kindler (1995a) and Makin et al. (1996) have observed teachers' praise of their preschool students intruding on their art-making rather than supporting it. And as Gerhart (1986) found, 4th graders who evaluated their own art performance were the most motivated.

Several aspects of this study suggest the need for additional research. Longitudinal investigation would enable us to view the developmental course of criteria in relation to the development of art skills in individual children. Additional data on the influence of environmental factors such as the nature of activities that compete with art for children's class time, the actual responses of teachers, peers, and parents to children's art production, the kinds of art materials provided at the art center, and on children's history of participation in art activities outside of school, could provide a fuller understanding of influences on children's participation in art, on the quality of their products, and on how they actually use criteria. It may be, that like Butler's five-year-olds, these children are merely reciting the criteria they have heard, and using them not to assess the quality of their work but rather to justify their own taken for granted positive evaluations of their work (1990).

The present study has provided information on the nature of criteria preschool children find useful in evaluating and improving their art. For example, these children, all in Parsons's (1987) earliest *Favoritism* stage of aesthetic development, expressed personal criteria of realism or correctness and of aesthetic quality. This information and that from future research in this area should be useful in suggesting how we should respond to children's art production. Such research should provide data that will help us answer the following questions: How should we respond to preschoolers'

art work? Do young children benefit from clearly articulated criteria such as those found in grading rubrics used in elementary school? Is correctness or realism a criterion that preschoolers actually use, or is it merely a justification for the high quality of their work? How do stages of cognitive development actually appear in preschoolers' aesthetic appreciation and how can we use these criteria to help them to expand their artistic repertoires and skills?

Children's motivation to engage in art activities requires that they have a positive view of their possibilities as artists and an interest in exploring those possibilities. The infrequency of most children's choice of art as an activity suggests that art educators need to learn more about how to engage children in art activities and to diminish obstacles to their engagement. In addition, recent research studies on children's perspectives on art (Mulcahey, 2000) and engagement in music activities (Custodero, 2003) provide promising methodological approaches that consider the individual perceptions and behaviors of students. The salience of evaluation to art education requires that teachers consider the evaluation processes that occur in their classrooms. Further research is needed to examine evaluation processes in many kinds of learners in order to best plan for this important aspect of art activity.

# Appendix

## Table 1

**Group Differences for Drawing Quality Rating, Minutes Spent
in Activities, and Criteria used by
Younger (Age 3-4 years. n=22) and Older (Age 5-6 years, n=20) Children**

| Variables | Younger Children | | Older Children | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | M | SD | M | SD | t (40) |
| Representation rating of drawing (1-3) | 2.18 | .79 | 2.10 | .64 | .36 |
| Artistry rating of drawing (1-3) | 2.32 | .78 | 2.05 | .82 | 1.08 |
| Exploration rating of drawing (1-3) | 2.23 | .68 | 1.55 | .76 | 3.04* |
| Minutes (out of 30) spent in art | 2.27 | 2.16 | 1.95 | 1.57 | .55 |
| Autonomous (egocentric) criterion used (% who used) | .91 | .29 | .85 | .37 | .58 |
| Aesthetic criterion used (% who used) | .59 | .50 | .75 | .44 | -1.09 |
| Correctness criterion used (% who used) | .32 | .48 | .70 | .47 | -2.61* |

*p<.05

## Table 2

**Correlations Between Rating of Drawing and Other Measures for Younger (Age 3-4 years, n=22) Children**

|  | Representation rating of drawing | Artistry rating of drawing | Exploration rating of drawing |
|---|---|---|---|
| Minutes spent in art | .08 | .20 | .44* |
| Autonomous (egocentric) criterion used | -.13 | -.07 | .11 |
| Aesthetic criterion used | .07 | .10 | .28 |
| Correctness criterion used | -.03 | -.03 | .06 |

*p<.05

## Table 3

**Correlations Between Rating of Drawings and Other Measures for Older (Age 5-6 years, n=20) Children**

|  | Representation rating of drawing | Artistry rating of drawing | Exploration rating of drawing |
|---|---|---|---|
| Minutes spent in art | .21 | .12 | -.02 |
| Autonomous (egocentric) criterion used | .07 | .03 | -.07 |
| Aesthetic criterion used | .46* | .47* | .43 |
| Correctness criterion used | .28 | .31 | .19 |

*p<.05

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# Acquaintance Knowledge of Musical Works in the Secondary Choral Music Classroom

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*Abstract*

*High school choral singers learn musical works in preparation for performances. One of the various forms of knowledge these students can gain through this process is acquaintance knowledge, or knowledge through direct perception of a specific entity. Philosophical characterizations of knowledge and psychological studies of close relationships provide the framework for conceptualizing the ways in which choral singers relate to the musical works they learn to perform in secondary schools. This paper reports on findings from a qualitative study that probed how three high school choral singers came to know three musical works over a five-month period.*

## Introduction

Musical works constitute the essential content of the choral learner's experience in the music performance classes commonly offered in secondary schools. During the months devoted to preparing these works for performance, students have the opportunity to develop significant personal associations with these compositions. However, students and teachers may not take full advantage of the potential for achieving such meaningful connections. The intent of this study was to better understand how students come to know musical works.

Choral music education research has largely been

devoted to the examination of various rehearsal techniques and teaching styles and their effectiveness in training students to sing well. Many studies focus on details of the choral curriculum, such as selecting choral literature and the development of sight-singing skills (Grant & Norris, 1998). Such research emphasizes the teacher's fundamental role in the process of choral music education with the choir implicitly characterized as the director's instrument. Although each singer encounters the music on a distinctly personal level, choral music educators can easily operate under false assumptions about what the singers find meaningful in the experience of learning and performing musical works. In order to understand the choral singer's experience with musical works, it is important to consult singers directly and invite them to articulate their perspectives and perceptions. This study explored the nature of choral singers' learning experiences in terms of the evolution and cultivation of their relationship with specific musical works in an ensemble setting.

I propose that a similarity exists between the way a singer comes to know a musical work intended for performance and the way one person comes to know another person. This experience goes beyond digesting detailed information about a work and involves more than the acquisition of the skills necessary to perform a work. Over time, a performer can come to know a work experientially, personally, and intimately. As art philosopher John Armstrong (2003) notes, "we are sometimes tempted to speak of works of art in terms usually reserved for relations with people – using the language of affection" (p. 3). In a research project exploring adult choral singer's experiences (Silvey, 2002), one respondent referred to a musical work she recalled singing as "an old friend," a title of endearment that suggested something significant about the way she had come to know the work over time.

Further evidence of this kind of relationship appeared in the program notes for a recent high school choral performance. The teacher reprinted an unsolicited letter she had received from her student regarding Aaron Copland's arrangement of the American folk song *Long Time Ago*. The student wrote:

> I need to express to you how much "Long Time Ago" has touched me. It embodies all that I could ask for from a song. The words alone could move me to tears, but they grow even more meaningful when put to song. I know that simply hearing the song would make a mark on how I listen to music, but I feel so blessed to have the opportunity to know it intimately through learning all its hidden intricacies. I find a new meaning every time we sing it.

This student's description of her knowledge of the work as 'intimate' suggests a deep level of connection. What made this degree of association possible? What qualities in the singer, the work, or the manner in which the work was introduced might have led to such an experience?

The present study addressed these questions by probing student associations with musical works and considering how they might be similar to the formation of meaningful human relationships. Three participants from a large, Midwestern high school were involved: a senior boy and two junior girls from a 54-member, advanced mixed choral ensemble. During the course of the study, the choir learned three musical works. The student participants' progressive knowledge of these works over a five-month period served as the basis for this collective case study.

### Philosophical Views of Knowledge

Three types of knowledge are relevant to this study. Propositional knowledge refers to factual or descriptive knowledge of a work. Procedural knowledge, as distinguished by philosopher Gilbert Ryle (1949), designates the skill or working knowledge one needs to perform a task. The third type of knowledge is acquaintance knowledge, the concept explored in this paper.

Philosopher Bertrand Russell (1912) used the term "acquaintance knowledge" to describe awareness gained

through direct contact with complexes of sensory data. Other philosophers and aestheticians have proposed theories based upon this concept. Education philosopher Louis Reid (1986) applied Russell's ideas to the process of artistic understanding. He characterized this kind of knowledge as being dependent upon an intuitive grasp of parts in relation to a whole, resulting from a direct encounter with the concrete, inseparable qualities of particulars or individuals. Reid contrasts propositional knowledge with what he calls "direct" knowledge or "occurrent cognition." This form of cognition is dynamic, contingent upon and nurtured by the actions and experiences of a performer.

In outlining his philosophy of art education, Feldman (1996) proposed the term "knowledge-through" art to designate a form of knowledge that an individual gains as a result of a unique experience with a work of art:

> ...'knowledge-through' art goes beyond acquaintance with facts: it is the product of an active process which we might call perceptual grasp—knowing the facts as they relate to each other, as they add up to an image, as that image embodies insight, and as that insight impacts on the knower. It would be difficult to find a better cognitive package. (p. 106)

According to Feldman, what the perceiver learns is contingent upon the information carried in the deep structure of the work and the quality of the learner's effort to explore and understand it. This philosophy of visual art can be applied to the perception of musical works as well. An additional level exists for a performer of a musical work who not only perceives the work, but also actively brings it to life.

For music education scholar Keith Swanwick (1994), acquaintance knowledge plays a fundamental role in the arts. He notes that this form of knowledge differs from both propositional and procedural knowledge in that it indicates knowledge of the particularities of a work. In their exploration of music in the interdisciplinary curriculum, Barrett, McCoy, and Veblen (1997) observe that the heightened awareness afforded us through arts experiences requires a commitment of

time and effort, much like that which is required to cultivate a friendship. These authors also propose the concept of "transport" to characterize the individual's progression from detachment to engagement in relation to a musical work.

Music education philosopher Stubley (1995) applies Rosenblatt's (1978) transactional theory of literature to the process of learning and performing musical works. She proposes two types of interaction between musician and musical score based on what Rosenblatt identifies as "efferent" and "aesthetic" stances. An efferent stance refers to occasions when the performer seeks to discover what the score contains and how to articulate that content. Aesthetic stance occurs when the performer attends to the quality of the personal experience of constructing meaning in engagement with the music. Both types of transaction occur throughout the learning process as the performer seeks to honor the composer's intentions while attending to his or her own emerging musical voice.

Dewey (1934/1989) notes that a work of art is an individualized expression *constituting* an experience rather than directing us *to* one. In other words, the work itself embodies meaning. He further suggests that our interaction with that which is external to us results in a transformation of both the self and other. The singer's perception of a musical work is constantly changing. This consideration of what we bring to a work of art underscores the significance of our role in the process. As students in choral music classrooms encounter musical works, they have the opportunity to participate in this kind of interaction with the works they study.

According to German philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer (1960/1989), experiencing a work of art means engaging with another world:

> Self-understanding always occurs through understanding something other than the self, and includes the unity and integrity of the other. Since we meet the artwork in the world and encounter a world in the individual artwork, the work of art is not some alien universe into which we are transported for a time. Rather, we learn

> to understand ourselves in and through it….art is knowledge and experiencing an artwork means sharing in that knowledge. (p. 97)

In this statement Gadamer, like Dewey, suggests that we must be aware of our own role in coming to understand what a work of art embodies. In schools, music performance classes invite students to engage with historical artistic creations. Gadamer adopts the Hegelian view that understanding art involves historical mediation. In other words, to understand historical texts, we must establish and explore the shared space between the work and ourselves. This process is one of negotiation and open dialogue. Gadamer advocates openness and ongoing conversation with a text in the process of coming to understand it.

## Psychological Studies of Close Relationships

An analogy may be drawn between the ways in which a singer comes to know a musical work and the ways in which a person comes to know another person. Both kinds of knowing develop experientially and interactively over time. Both are affected by the duration and quality of contact between the knower and the known. Both have the potential to develop into a long-lasting, meaningful association. These similarities invite an examination of psychological research pertaining to close relationships.

Psychologists define a close relationship between humans as one of "strong, frequent, and diverse interdependence that lasts over a considerable period of time" (Kelley et al., 1983, p. 38). Similar characteristics were factors in the relationships formed between the choral singers and musical works in this study. As student participants engaged with musical works every other school day over a five-month period, the months of preparation time, number of encounters, significance of these connections, and the diversity of experiences were all factors that contributed to the quality of the relationships students formed with musical works.

Psychologists identify two additional properties that may influence interdependence: facilitation and interference. These two opposing influences suggest the importance of the teacher's role in fostering or limiting the potential for the formation of a close connection with musical works students learn. Research on close relationships also identifies explicit maintenance strategies that have relevance to acquaintance knowledge of musical works. For instance, acceptance or openness to one another's differences, effort, and the investment of time are factors that enable relationships to continue and flourish (Fehr, 2000).

Admittedly, there are limits to the utility of this analogy. Human relationships occur between two dynamic beings. Communication and response are initiated and accepted by both participants. A musical work, in terms of Western traditions commonly practiced in American schools, begins as a lifeless score that must be accessed and interpreted by the person learning to perform it.  Still, there are ways that the voice of the musical work emerges during the learning process. Green (1988) describes the role of listening in the process of performing:

> In order to mediate with the musical materials to which they give life, performers have to find themselves in music as an external object, made of materials they are not made of.  When we play an instrument or sing, it is not only our actions or the instruments, nor only the notation if there is any, with which we engage, but also the sounds that result….Whether performers are immensely skilled or just beginners, it is in this process of listening to the sounds which they make themselves that communication through music is born. ( p. 124)

The sounds that result from the performer's efforts are perceptible qualities of the work they seek to know and understand. By listening and responding to these qualities, the performer can participate in a meaningful exchange or dialogue with the work.

The evolution of a relationship can be described in terms

of a succession of different types of relations, new levels being reached when the nature of the relationship changes markedly in any one of its properties (Hinde, 1979; Kelley et al., 1983). In light of her survey of research concerning close relationships over time, Blieszner (1994) notes the following:

> Friendships are not static, but rather, have beginnings, periods of endurance and change, and endings. Each phase of friendship is varied and complex, with many possibilities for how it is played out. Change from one phase to another— for instance, from first impression to closest friendship—can occur rapidly or slowly. The length of each phase—building, sustaining, declining— varies across people and circumstances. Movement from one phase to another is sometimes deliberate and sometimes occurs by happenstance. Not all phases occur in all friendships; some never move beyond the early "just acquaintance" stage, others become deeply intimate and endure for decades with no sign of ending. (p. 5)

These levels of friendship mirror the ways that learners encounter and perceive musical works. Each singer will cycle through a series of impressions, judgments, and revised understandings at varying rates through the process of learning to perform a musical work. Some phases will be short-lived, others more persistent. The pace and extent of movement through this process depends on the singer, the work, and the circumstances surrounding the encounter. In the above statement, the use of the term "friendship" may be misleading. Although close relationships require intense connections, they do not necessarily elicit positive feelings. Students may not "fall in love" with each piece they learn to perform, but frequent interactions with a work are likely to yield some form of connection.

## Methods and Data Sources

The primary participants for this study were three

members of the Concert Choir at a large high school: Allen – a senior, and Faye and Jennifer - two juniors.[1]  The choir learned three musical works[2] that served as the basis for three case studies structured around the three students' experiences with these works. A fourth participant, Lynae, was a sophomore in the Women's Choir. Secondary participants included the classroom teacher, parents, classmates, teachers, and the accompanist who provided information and contextual data that helped to flesh out the case studies.

I selected this site because the choirs had consistently received high festival ratings and the teacher was willing to cooperate. Over the course of the study, the teacher and students became accustomed to my presence in their classroom, but I endeavored to remain as external to the process as possible. It must be noted that the teacher played a significant role in how her students came to know musical works.  Her ideas and teaching techniques influenced how they approached the works she introduced to them. However, in this report I focus on the voices and experiences of the students themselves as a means to explore the phenomenon of acquaintance knowledge in the choral classroom.

Data collection took place over a five-month period from the start of the school year late in August until the choir gave a performance at the state music educators' conference the following January. I conducted multiple in-depth interviews with participants, wrote classroom observations, and held stimulated recall sessions with the participants using videotaped class sessions. The student participants wrote reflective journals after each class session.

I systematically coded and analyzed students' journals, my field notes, and interview transcripts and confirmed my interpretations through member checking. I noted emergent themes. I sorted data by category and grouped statements by the musical works they referenced to provide a cohesive portrayal of the distinctiveness of the works being learned. Organizing the report around the works highlighted the unique traits of each composition and allowed for immediate comparison between the perceptions and experiences of all three

participants.

Because the issues being examined involved the personal experience of students during a long-term process bound by context, I chose to use a phenomenological research paradigm, intentionally studying human lived experience in a naturalistic setting (Van Manen, 1990). Influenced by the anthropological and sociological research methods of ethnography and case study, I sought to capture the complexity and uniqueness of specific cases (Stake, 1995).

## Research Findings that Support the Close Relationship Model

The participants in this study developed relationships with the musical works they learned in class. The quality and characteristics of those relationships were revealed in their spoken comments and written reflections. The process of coming to know musical works as experienced by these participants was highly individualized and, in many ways, resisted classification into distinct phases of learning. Rather than unfolding with any predictable regularity, the changes in focus and perception seemed to overlap, depending on all the subjectivities that influenced the learning context. As Bliezner suggests is true in human relationships, the participants in this study formed different types of relationships with each work learned, some more in-depth than others.

As I began the data collection phase of this study, I concealed my conceptual theories from the student participants in order to avoid their being influenced by my research agenda. I worded questions in a manner that aimed to elicit the participants' own conceptualizations of the process. For example, instead of using the term "relationship" to refer to how the students came to know a musical work, I asked how they would describe what they were doing each day in the choral classroom. All three participants used the word "learn" to describe what I conceptualized as "coming to know' or "relating to" a musical work, so I asked them to talk about their experiences as they were "learning" a musical work.

During the interviews, Allen, Jennifer and Faye revealed their involvement with the works they were getting to know. After spending more than three months engaged in the process of learning *Rejoice in the Lamb*, Faye stated, "I am really beginning to get attached to that song." Her use of the word "attached" implies emotional involvement and signals a kind of knowing which is of a more personal and relational nature. A participant in another phase of this study remarked that "we really got to know that song personally," mentioned being "intimately acquainted" with a work, and described the experience as being analogous to friendships with classmates: "I'm pretty familiar with [that piece], like an acquaintance almost. Like a close friend; not intimate, but a close friend. I know it, I can read into what it means."

When I asked Allen if he could try to differentiate between "learning to sing a song" and "knowing a song" he used an analogy of how other students in his school know him:

> Kind of like if someone were to come up to you and say, "I know Allen Parker. Oh yeah, he goes to school with me, I know who he is." But there's something different from knowing a person and I guess (hesitates) understanding a person? I don't know how to put that. There's a difference from knowing a person and *knowing* a person (the second "knowing" is said slower, with emphasis.) Like a person who might know me, they've seen me on stage, or they've seen me do something for student council, or some kids will just see me on the tennis court or something and then they don't realize that, "Oh, he can sing too," or "Oh, he can play tennis too." They know something about it, they know the general gist of it, but they don't know it on a deeper level.

Acknowledging his multiple selves, Allen understood that those who knew more of these dimensions knew or understood him on a deeper level. Allen's recognition of the varying depths of how others knew him and its correspondence

to questions about how he knew the music he was learning provided evidence to support the usefulness of a relational model for explaining how students come to 'know' musical works. The students' descriptions of their engagements with musical works they were preparing support the notion that there are similarities between 'knowing' music and 'knowing' others.

Other evidence that supports the value of the close relationship model came in the strength of the relationship that students formed with the musical work. When asked what she gained through learning *Rejoice in the Lamb*, Faye remarked "I know it inside and out," and proceeded to describe how she could sing it, talk about what it meant, and characterize its various emotional "colors." Open-mindedness, concerted effort, and the length of time spent with a work all emerged as factors that affected the quality of the students' experience.

### Findings Suggesting Acquaintance Knowledge of Musical Works

Of the three types of knowledge considered for this study, propositional (or descriptive) knowledge about the work was the least evident in student reflections, whereas procedural knowledge (mental skills and vocal technique needed to perform the studied works) figured prominently in the students' written responses.

The third type of knowledge gained by the students was acquaintance knowledge, the central focus of this paper. This category of knowledge refers to the process of coming to know each musical work as an artistic entity to be sensed and interpreted in a way that is meaningful and particular to each participant; it refers to personal knowledge of the work itself. Although the singers made limited reference to this kind of knowledge, their written reflections and the interview data revealed that they formed individualized understandings and interpretations that arose from an extended relationship with the works.

Acquaintance knowledge served to synthesize and

transcend propositional and procedural  knowledge. For example, when participants talked about the process of agreeing upon a collective "version" or interpretation of a work, they thus personalized the work, reflecting on how they wanted to portray it.  When they made observations about the text and what they thought it meant, they demonstrated an interpretive level of knowing. Faye described how she believed her classmates made sense of musical works, saying, "every person might have a different vision of it in their head." These visions are manifestations of a personal understanding of a work.

The students identified occasions when they were able to "get into" the music, responding to the combined impact of all its elements, sometimes noting expressive characteristics, at other times moving *to* or being moved *by* the sounds.  They chose to respond to these sounds and allowed that response to inform continued participation in the generation of the sounds of the work. In a sense, they were "conversing" with the work, listening to what it was "saying" to them, through sound, text, or expressive gesture, and responding to it. This kind of responsiveness calls to mind Rosenblatt's transactional theory.

For Rosenblatt, the 'work' arises out of the *transaction* between the reader and the text in a particular context of time and place and purpose. Therefore, while the text itself remains unchanged, the 'work' changes with each encounter. The performer intentionally adopts an aesthetic or efferent stance. Singers respond to the musical "text" and infuse it with meaning. As a consequence of repeated encounters, the "work" that arises from each transaction is different with each "reading".

Allen's and Jennifer's continued interaction with the works led to heightened perceptions of the qualities of the work. During the first week of learning *Rejoice in the Lamb*, Allen described as "bizarre" the unusual text, written by eighteenth century poet Christopher Smart while confined to an insane asylum.  However, additional 'readings' of the work led Allen to revise his initial assessment. One week later, he wrote, "it doesn't sound so bizarre, it's not bad at all.". Jennifer assumed *The Best of All Possible Worlds* would be boring because of its

simplicity, but after a few weeks of engagement with the work, she wrote, "I like how simple the rhythm is without making the song sound too juvenile or boring."

The students also found ways to relate the meanings embodied in the texts of the works to their own lives and experience. For example, Jennifer talked about how her view of the text for *Rejoice in the Lamb*, differed from that of her classmates:

> I like the fact that we are singing something written by somebody in an insane asylum. And that's not because I get to laugh at this guy's craziness….it's really easy to see genius in what a lot of people perceive as just plain idiocy….because I'm all into poetry and just the written word, I think it's just very interesting. For me, I think it's really well-said….I really do see things differently than a lot of other people do.

Jennifer's comment is particularly meaningful in light of the way Jennifer's mother described their family environment:

> Jenny has had an unusual home in that there have been kids in and out, kids with severe problems, too, mostly older, out of juvenile justice, children who came in out of prison systems. [One girl] we adopted was an inpatient in a very heavy-duty facility for a year while she was with us. And we'd go two or three times a week, and Jenny would come, so she saw all these kids who were in lock-down psychiatric facilities and she'd be part of what was going on. And that was when she was about eleven. So she definitely learned to see different things than a lot of the kids. That has shaped her. She feels like life isn't as simple as it looks to a lot of the kids who are around here because she's seen it.

Jennifer's childhood family experiences and her interest in poetry and the use of language contributed to her approach to the text of *Rejoice in the Lamb*. She created her own understanding of Christopher Smart's poetry, transcending the negative stereotyping of his mental illness that was expressed by some of her classmates. Her personal identity informed how she accessed the work and made sense of it. As Armstrong (2000) asserts, our responsiveness to art has its roots in our "private history of perception," or what we have previously seen and known (p. 38).

On her initial questionnaire and in subsequent conversations, Jennifer talked about her experience of another work, Poulenc's *Litanies à la Vierge Noire*,[3] learned during the previous school year: "At first when learning it, it sounds awful, it seems like the notes would never sound good together. But once you have it, it gets inside you. It makes perfect sense." When I asked her to explain what she meant by saying "it gets inside you," she responded,

> If anybody who's ever heard *Litanies* [*à la Vierge Noire*] or looked at it and has tried learning it, there's a lot of dissonance, there's a lot of things that just don't seem like they'd work. But once you sing it and you're in a choir that understands it and that has learned it, I don't know how to say it other than it just gets inside of you. And there's no way to get yourself back to the point where you think, "Wow, that doesn't work."

With these words Jennifer captured the essence of acquaintance knowledge of a work. As a singer of the work, Jennifer persisted through first impressions and overcame the work's technical challenges to perceive the "sense" of the work from the inside. This process allowed the music to get inside her and led to an illuminated understanding of the work.

After four months of engagement with *Rejoice in the Lamb* Jennifer achieved a similar breakthrough in her understanding:

> I just saw pictures in front of my head constantly and it was just like I was all in the feeling, I had it. It was just amazing, it was like the first time it had ever happened and I was just *so* in the music that I could tell what I was singing about. And it was cool, because I made myself actually care.

Being "all in the feeling" and being "so in the music" implies an immersion in and a communion with the work. Jennifer's self-initiated effort to "care" further elucidates what is meant by this kind of knowing. Her conscious investment in the experience was necessary for her to elevate her understanding to this level.

The findings of this study suggest that the three students' experiences with musical works centered largely on the acquisition of procedural knowledge of these works. A brief examination of the kind of knowledge represented in Jennifer's recollection of her experience with *Litanies à la Vierge Noire* points to the merits of this deeper kind of knowing. It is unclear whether this kind of experience occurred because of the qualities of the particular work, the conditions under which it was experienced, what Jennifer brought to her engagements with the work, or a combination of these elements. Nonetheless, the intensity and impact of Jennifer's experience is notable.

Disparities between the experiences of participants in this study are worth noting. For instance, Faye and Jennifer, both sopranos, provided markedly contrasting views of the following passage in *Rejoice in the Lamb,* in which Britten used rapidly ascending scale patterns to set the word "dance:"



After two months of engagement with the work, Faye commented:

> It goes really fast and it's going up the scale, so

nobody really gets all the notes and it just sounds too jumbled and mixed up for me…it's a real problem there because you have to get all the notes, but still go fast enough.  It just doesn't seem like it fits with the rest of the song….I was kind of wondering what the person was thinking when they wrote it, because it just has a lot of weird things brought together.  Like some of it just doesn't make sense, unless there's something behind it that I'm not seeing.

By contrast, three and a half months into the learning process, Jennifer explained what she learned through her association with the same work:

I think the only thing that I can really say that I know about the song is what it's like to sing it. It's just kind of like this is what the song makes me feel.  When you sing the word "dance," and you can make your voice dance, I find that to be interesting.

Faye failed to see why Britten treated this text as he did, while Jennifer found the setting of the text to be one of the most intriguing and meaningful aspects of singing the work. Both learned the work in the same classroom with the same teacher and classmates. The difference, I suggest, was in Jennifer's ability and conscious choice to look beyond the technical challenges and idiosyncrasies of the work and find what made them meaningful to her. Her openness to the experience and her effort allowed her to reach this point of understanding. It is possible that more intervention or facilitation by the teacher could have helped Faye come to her own realizations about this and other aspects of the work. Also, her eventual mastery of the skills required by the work might have freed her to reflect on the passage more thoughtfully. It is important to note that in another instance, Faye was able to make sense of the meaningless syllables that served as the text of the Mongolian folk song *Magnificent Horses* when she noted that everyone had the opportunity to "put their own kind of details to it."

## The Nature of the Process of Coming to Know Musical Works

By chronicling the learning experiences of three high school choral singers, I found a traceable progression as the singers moved from their initial impressions of a work to a closer analysis of it. They began to make sense of a musical work as they attempted to read the notation, construct the sounds, and respond to elements of the work as it unfolded in the learning context.

At the individual level, the process was highly contingent upon each student's temperament, interests, previous experience, and preferred learning styles as revealed through their own statements and those of their parents, friends, and teachers. These individual propensities guided the ways that each participant approached and understood the features of the musical works they studied. During the process of learning the works, students' responses fell across a continuum of possibilities, sometimes shifting unpredictably from one focus to another. These ways of construing the experience reflected the values and beliefs the participants disclosed in their written and spoken reflections. Each composition was perceived, mastered, understood, and valued differently by each participant. The depth of these understandings varied as well, with some students only skimming the surface and others probing a work's more hidden substructures.

The findings of this study support a facets model (Barrett, McCoy, & Veblen, 1997) of musical learning in that each learner's attention shifted independently among various aspects of a musical work in a non-linear fashion. Green notes the sociological complexity of these encounters:

> Although musical experience arises from mediation between an individual subject and a musical object, the nature of such experience is not defined purely by that of the subject and object involved. There is no simple, direct relationship between the predispositions of any isolated individual and the meaningful qualities of any autonomous piece of music. Rather, both

> experiences of the music, and the music's
> meanings themselves, change complexly in
> relation to the style-competence of the subject,
> and to the social situations in which they occur.
> (Green, 1988, p. 141)

The complexity of this relationship between singer and work became evident in the range of responses and preoccupations that surfaced in the participants' reflections on the process. The background of each participant, the history of the works studied (primarily as presented by the teacher), the social contexts of classroom, school, and community, and the teacher are all probable influences on the quality and nature of the students' experiences while learning musical works. Although it is difficult to discern the meaningfulness of these relationships and whether they will endure through time, there is evidence to support the idea of acquaintance knowledge as a legitimate way to conceptualize the learner's experience in the choral music performance classroom.

## Implications for Arts Education

Learning to perform a choral work provides opportunities for singers to experience its intricacies at close range with the potential for the formation of deep musical understandings. In this study, student perspectives of works changed over time, but the extent of these changes and the nature of newly informed understandings differed widely across the participants. For some, deeper understandings were elusive. Choral music teachers in schools and elsewhere might assume that a substantive level of understanding is an automatic consequence of the choral singer's frequent and repeated experiences with a musical work over a substantial period of time. However, as the students in this study revealed, singers can miss what is right in front of them. Choral music educators would do well to consider their potential influence as mediators in facilitating student engagement with the musical works being learned.

A student who personally connects with a musical work

senses that the work carries meaning beyond a set of musical facts and required performance technique. Music education philosopher Bennett Reimer (2003) characterizes this postmodern frame of mind:

> …art does not "exist" until a respondent creates something in herself….the artist [composer] is only a mediator of culturally supplied meanings that then need to be brought to reality by those who respond to her suggestive impulses. (p. 20)

Similarly, children's choir specialist Ruth Krehbiel Jacobs (1948) asserts:

> I believe that our emphasis must be on the child, not the subject. Great music has no value in itself; only when it penetrates the personality and has its influence *there*, does it really live. (p. 8, emphasis added)

This study revealed the tendency of young singers to focus on the technical skills needed for the performance of musical works, especially if the works require a technique that is at the upper end of a student's current abilities. Although approaching the works as skill challenges gave students the opportunity to advance their abilities and experience the rewards of skill mastery, it also meant that they sometimes overlooked the character and artistic import of the musical works in the process. The openness and effort of each student seemed to have an influence on whether the students were able to come to know more than just the skills needed to perform a work with accuracy.

Is it important that students have opportunities to acquire deeper forms of knowledge of musical works? Secondary choral music classes are typically modeled after professional ensembles where classes are considered "rehearsals" and teachers function as "conductors." Under this model, ensemble members are instruments in the most limiting sense of the term, employed as a means to create the music. Often the nature and quality of the singer's experience is given little consideration or taken for granted. To assess the

educational value of the choral music experience, teachers must ask themselves what they have given their students in addition to a set of specific skills that serve the needs of the current season's repertoire. Choral music educators can influence the quality of the learner's experience and should therefore look for ways to monitor student perceptions of the musical works they are learning. Teachers can guide choral singers to experience more meaningful encounters with these works by encouraging students to pursue and reach enlightened understandings of musical works. By fostering acquaintance knowledge of great and diverse works of art, teachers provide an opportunity for students to gain understandings that are as personal, lasting, and rich as lifelong friendships.

## Notes

[1] All names are pseudonyms

[2] Bernstein, L. (1955). *The Best of All Possible Worlds* (from *Candide*). Lyrics by John La Touche. Arranged by Robert Page. London: Boosey & Hawkes Music Publishers Limited, OCTB6242.

Britten, B. (1943). *Rejoice in the Lamb: Festival Cantata for Treble, Alto,Tenor, and Bass Soloists, Choir, and Organ.* Text by Christopher Smart. London: Boosey & Hawkes Music Publishers Limited, H. 15567.

Nien, Y. H. (arr.). (1998). *Magnificent Horses (Fantasy on a Mongolian Folk Tune).* Adapted and arranged by Jing Ling-Tam. Houston, TX: Alliance Music Publications, Inc., AMP-0324.

[3] Translated "Litanies to the Black Virgin"

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# When Pedagogy Meets Practice: Combining Arts Integration and Teacher Education in the College Classroom

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*Abstract*

*This paper describes the implementation of arts-based pedagogy applied to course activities in a 3-year university teacher education program at preservice level. It details methodological approaches, implementations, curricular changes and their impact on student learning. This study finds that, in this particular case, arts-inclusion supported the development of students' motivations, interests, and preservice relationships. It concludes by suggesting that more studies be designed to examine the effect that teacher's beliefs and practices, especially in the area of the arts, have on teaching and learning outcomes.*

## Introduction

During the last fifteen years, the domain of Professional Studies in Education has experienced significant scrutiny and critique—probably more than any other discipline in higher education. It is accused of being both entrenched and slow to change on the one hand, and mercurial and in constant flux on the other (Grant & Murray, 1999; United States Department of Education, 2002). At the institutional level the field also enjoys the dubious distinction, despite consistently high enrollments, of being the most devalued campus program nationwide (Clifford & Guthrie, 1988; Baines, 2003).

Debate currently centers on reform and the "failure" of

educational academic programs to prepare teachers adequately for the future. Notably lacking, say critics, is the ability of colleges and schools of education to encourage students to build skills and expertise over time and to think of their profession as part of a lifelong learning process. Also missing are proactive and innovative curricula for new educators that focus on the wide range of social justice issues embedded in school cultures (Bok, 2003; Ball & Cohen, 1999; Darling-Hammond & Sykes, 1999).

Innovation is clearly called for—and not simply to improve the image of university teacher education programs. Future teachers must be given the skills needed to address a wide range of issues present in Twenty-first Century classrooms. Professional competencies must address the multiple needs and diverse perspectives of students.

While many solutions have been suggested, one practicable reform that is often overlooked in educational circles is the use of arts-based methodologies to support educational change and innovation. The creative exploration and practice of arts-infused and arts-based instruction has been shown to enhance all aspects of education including neurological development (Wolfe, 2001), cognitive learning (Egan, 1999), and psychosocial growth (Gallagher & Booth, 2003; Wilhelm & Edmiston, 1998). The arts are also exemplary tools for integrating social justice issues and, through their pedagogical employment, they enhance inquiry processes, institutional reforms, and integration of collaborative and democratic practices (Fiske, 1999; Gallas, 1998).

This paper discusses one attempt to examine what happens when the arts are adopted as a reform process within a teacher preparation and education program. It examines how implementation of arts pedagogy in a preservice course of study affected the learning of university students seeking a license to teach. It does so by presenting a case-specific, particular and individual perspective by following one instructor (the author) and her students through a three-year inquiry.

## Learning Through the Arts

As an artist, teacher and researcher, the author's perspective regarding teaching and learning about teaching has been influenced by practical experience stemming from the creation of numerous programs that combine arts-based disciplines and processes with pedagogical and methodological aspects[1]. These experiences have led to the firm belief that an arts approach to learning and teaching has the potential to be a powerful and productive experience—a perception that is upheld in much of the literature (Bruner, 1990; Egan, 1999; Gallagher & Booth, 2003; Heathcote & Bolton, 1995; Jewitt, Kress & Ogborn, 2001).

The arts are educative. This is commonsense: humans have learned through art-making for well over one hundred thousand years and, despite some recent arguments to the contrary[2] (Winner & Hetland, 2000), the bulk of the research regarding arts-pedagogies supports the notion that arts-based teaching provides learners with opportunities to perceive and gain knowledge in an integrated and enduring way by providing a successful paradigm for emotional, physical, and cognitive growth (Bresler & Ellis, 1999; Jewitt, et al., 2001; Fiske, 1999).

Arts-based learning enhances the experience of meaning making. The outcomes of arts-based instruction have been shown to increase flexibility and higher-level thinking skills (Wolfe, 2001; Gallas, 1994). The arts are also unique in education because they support a specific analytical area of knowledge (Wagner, 1998) and can also be applied as inquiry processes (Gallas, 1998; Schwen, 1995). Finally, they produce "well rounded" and educated minds and imaginations (Palmarini, 2001; Greene, 1995). Arts instruction provides a unique framework, therefore, to encourage a full scope of learning activities and explorations. As such it is a *critical* pedagogy that is connected in process and outcome to reflectivity and praxis. It represents a valuable and essential part of any education program.

Yet, despite what we know about their importance, the arts are often considered as "add-ons," "extras," or "electives" in public school curricula. Notwithstanding the fact that the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 dictates the arts as "core subjects," it is rare to find a school that places the arts in an ecological and primary framework within the K-12 structure. Also, outside of a few specific programs, the arts are not *commonly* infused within teacher education programs.

## Scope and Context

The author was appointed as faculty at University of Wisconsin-Whitewater's College of Education (UWW) in 1999 and was interested in building on the expertise and methods developed during five years previous experience as adjunct faculty with the Creative-Arts-in-Learning (CAL) program at Lesley University[3]. At UWW, however, the concept of arts infusion was not well understood at the curricular level. The challenge was to explore the possibilities of arts-infused curricula at an institution that was not philosophically oriented toward an arts-based model. In the interest of implementing arts-infused curricula and methods, a long-term study was designed that would focus on the impact of creative practices in UWW teacher preparation and foundations classes.

## Conceptual Framework: Arts Pedagogy

This study explores the influence of arts instruction from a particular and specific perspective—that of the researcher/teacher-artist and her students. For the purposes of this study the terms "arts pedagogy", "arts-based learning," and "arts-infused instruction" are used frequently and somewhat comprehensively. Therefore, clarity regarding these concepts is established here:

Arts Pedagogy is a complex and holistic system of teaching and learning that assumes an integrated ecological developmental system based on the following concepts:

1.A belief in the efficacy of constructivist perspectives regarding the acquisition of knowledge (Dewey, 1997). This means that the teacher focuses on providing rich, expressive and stimulating environments for the exploration of creative knowing. In addition, the seminal importance of socially constructed systems of meaning making is built into this type of learning setting—with emphasis placed on art processes and productions.

2.Interactive kinesthetic involvement in, and performance/presentation of, knowledge by learners and teachers.

3.Dissemination and exploration of information through, and with, multiple modes of communication—what Richards, Gipe & Moore (2000) describe as "the new and expanded vision of literacy" or what Dresang (1999) calls "radical change."

**4.Interdisciplinary and collaborative demonstrations** of competencies through the incorporation of media-based products, virtual technologies, and the fine and performing arts.

5.Consistent use of arts-based learning and/or arts-infused instruction.

6.Inclusion of critical and aesthetic analyses that makes use of a language of arts criticism, one that also provides the learner with cognitive scaffolding that s/he may build on, and the communication of perceptions and understandings over time.

The following study and subsequent discussion is grounded in the belief that this framework provides learners with educative, interactive, and imaginative positions for knowledge acquisition.

## Arts-Based Learning and Arts-Infused Instruction

"Arts-based learning" and "arts-infused instruction" are outcomes of the conceptual framework (discussed above) and encompass a wide range of activities. These are defined here as:

1. *Arts-based learning* implies working towards understanding and mastery of knowledge systems through in-depth explorations and practice of the arts, primarily through a discipline-based approach. For example, in an elementary school classroom, arts-based learning would require that students learn the craft of playwriting, thereby increasing literacy learning by writing, producing, and critiquing original plays and theatrical productions. Another demonstration of this approach is students' understanding, retention and application of mathematical concepts through the practice of designing a building or landscape.

2. *Arts-infused instruction*, on the other hand, implements curricula through integration and infusion of non-art content area knowledge with arts processes. In this model the arts are viewed as tools for learning that are applied across disciplinary fields. This might take the form of teaching science concepts through asking students to paint accurate renditions of plants or animals observed through science inquiry. Another common example of this approach is teaching social sciences and history through reenactments and/or visits to living museums and interpretation centers.

### Research Question

This study examines the impact of arts-based and arts-infused methods within a program that educates individuals

seeking a license to teach. Innovative approaches in such courses have historically been difficult to support and sustain (USDE, 2002). The answer to the following question is sought in the study: How does arts-based and arts-infused pedagogy and practice affect participants' professional learning within a traditional education program for teacher training?

## Method

This investigation is grounded in qualitative, narrative, and arts-based research methodologies (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Mitchell & Weber, 1998; Cole & Knowles, 2000) and utilizes Barone and Eisner's work (1997) as a frame for applying arts practices as both data and protocol. Validity is established through a paradigm of authentic relativism, in that it depends on the research design, development of the research relationship, and the reflections and understandings of participants to create an authentic account grounded in the events studied (Maxwell, 1996).

In this case, the processes of capturing an accurate and legitimate perspective were emphasized through a long-term iterative process of asking questions, reflecting information and nascent findings back to participants, and subsequently reassessing interpretations by comparing divergent and negative data trends (Mello, 2002; Strauss & Corbin, 1997). Also, since findings from the data were used to revise course and teaching methods, it was possible during Phase I and II to test the efficacy and accuracy of data themes on an ongoing basis. Subsequently, those findings that most accurately reflected participant's perceptions were used as guiding templates. As newer data were collected these themes were modified further in an iterative process.

## Data Collection

The author's teaching assignment included implementing a three-course core curriculum for undergraduates in transition from a general to a professional

education major, (typically at the end of their sophomore year). This series of UWW classes was nicknamed "The Block." "Block" courses included a cohorted initial field experience, entitled *Observation and Participation* (O&P), and two other courses focusing on diversity and human development, i.e. *Education in a Pluralistic Society* (EPS) and *Child Development* (CD).

This study examines the impact of arts-based pedagogies and arts-infused methodologies on "Block" students' incipient professional understanding—specifically focusing on those individuals interested in pursuing a career in elementary education and who elected, during 1999-2002, through the registration process, to attend "Block" sections #2 or #3.

Data included surveys, interviews, reflective journals, students' performance and artwork, and archival analyses. All data quoted in this paper are excerpted from the complete data set and have been selected as exemplars of trends and findings. Individuals remain anonymous and quotes are identified by type rather than by source.

Research moved through three phases. Phase I (Fall 1999 & Spring 2000) involved establishing a baseline of information on past practices and student outcomes. During Phase II (Fall 2000 & Spring 2001), inquiry focused on student perceptions and also examined the instructor's attempts at redesigning course activities. Phase III (Fall 2001 and Spring 2002) offered more possibilities for examining program growth and evolution as arts-based learning pedagogy and practice became imbedded, and curricular changes expanded.

### Participants

Similar to teacher candidates nationwide, a majority of students in "Block" sections #2 and #3 were in their early twenties, white, and female. Most reported growing up in small Mid-western towns or cities where they attended public schools. Their understanding of educational culture came from their own

experiences as a child-student and from volunteering in local churches, summer camps, Head Start programs, and community-based childcare facilities.

Their top four reasons for choosing to pursue a career in education were: (a) experiencing a calling for, or a life-long interest in, the teaching profession; (b) wanting to be teachers because they "love being around children;" (c) having parents or family members who encouraged them to become teachers; (d) believing that teaching would give them access to a middle class income and life-style. In addition, many worked their way through college by finding employment in the childcare industry and a third were first generation students from working class or farm families.

Students were eligible to participate if they were registered for classes taught by the researcher (sections #2 and #3). All "Block" courses at the university were limited to twenty-seven students per semester. Enrollment varied from year to year. Therefore, numbers of participants in this study fluctuated from twenty-two (in phase I) to twenty-eight (phases II and III). Individuals were considered viable participants after they had volunteered and signed an agreement acknowledging their interest in being included in the study (as per University Internal Review Board Standards). Students were given the option of dropping out of the research process at any time with no negative consequences attached. None elected to do so.

### Arts-Based Activities

A variety of arts-based and arts-infused explorations, central to this study, were assigned to students in "Block" sections #2 and #3 as part of course work (see Figure 1). They included a variety of disciplinary and participatory activities such as role-plays and theatre games, dance and movement explorations, puppet shows, storytelling, art work, singing contests and simulations.

Instructor participation was also core—classes were sometimes taught 'in character,' with the instructor portraying

theorists such as Jean Piaget, Maria Montessori, or Lev Vygotsky. In addition, storytelling performances were presented by the instructor/researcher in all O&P classrooms at the field site(s). As a result students were exposed to student directed activities and instructor led explorations and methods.

**Figure 1**

**Major Arts Activities Implemented in Study**

| Type | Teacher role | Student role | Pedagogical model | Educational Goal |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Role-plays | Coach | Participant | Arts-infused | Increase empathy for diverse perspectives. |
| Simulations | Coach | Participant | Arts infused/ Arts-based | Provide real-life situations and increase student ability to problem solve. |
| Drawing, painting, watercolor | Coach | Participant | Arts-based | Expand students' art repertoire and explore creative and constructivist processes. |
| Craft projects | Coach | Participant | Arts infused | Provide opportunities for sharing, reflection, and action within a learning environment. |
| Puppet Shows | Coach | Participant | Arts-based | Increase students' skill level and encourage integration of social justice issues in educational settings. |
| Human Experience Theatre | Coach/ Participant | Participant | Arts-based | Increase students' skill level and encourage integration of social justice and equity issues in classrooms. |
| Storytelling | Coach/ Participant | Participant/ Audience | Arts-based/ Arts infused | Increase empathy for diverse perspectives. Encourage narrative methodology in teaching environments. |

| Dance/ Movement | Coach | Participant | Arts-based/ Arts infused | Encourage students to use kinesthetic arts to express and assess content learning. |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Singing | Participant | Participant | Arts infused | Expand students' repertoire of arts activities and reinforce content area learning. |
| Character Acting | Participant | Audience | Arts-based | Increase students' understanding of key concepts. |
| Reflective Writing | Participant | Participant | Arts-based | Increase students' perceptions and understanding of professional dispositions |

## Findings

This discussion concentrates chiefly on data derived from the O&P course activities, due to the fact that: (a) the O&P curriculum was most flexible and offered the greatest opportunity to design and explore innovations; (b) reflective writing and analysis was consistently assigned as a core requirement making it easy to follow student thinking over time; (c) O&P seminars offered numerous opportunities for discourse and iterative analyses of emergent theories; and (d) curriculum for O&P explicitly required synthesis of other "Block" course content and activities.

Many methods and events were examined during the scope of this study. However, only three are discussed in depth here. They are: (a) storytelling, (b) puppetry, and (c) arts school site. These three aspects were chosen as focal points for discussion of the findings because data indicate that they had the clearest impact on student learning.

## Storytelling

Since storytelling and creative dramatics is the

particular focus, area of expertise and art form practiced by the researcher/instructor, it was used extensively as a core arts-experience. It was presented to students as part of class 'lectures,' in theatrical performances, through anecdotal sharing, and as research protocol. Scholars in teacher education (e.g., Ball & Cohen, 1999; Cole & Knowles, 2000; Richardson, 1997) have also argued that retention, community, and professional literacy are increased through narrative and storied processes.

A number of stories were selected from both traditional and personal sources and shared with students in both written and oral form. Criteria for selecting these tales was based on the content of the stories as well as their plot connections to curricular objectives and goals. Folk-tales such as *Glooscap and the Baby,* a myth about infancy from the Abanaki people, or *Tiger's Whisker,* a story about tolerance and patience from the Korean tradition (see appendix), were told in on-campus courses. After hearing stories told aloud, students were invited to reflect in journals and online, and to tell stories of their own, including memories, experiences at O&P sites, and information they had heard or read.

> What great stories! Each one very inspiring as well as reminders that success in teaching will not always be easy but will be rewarding. I don't think you can be a really good teacher without having lots of experiences. The stories helped me understand this.　　　　(Online Discussion)

> Your stories really made me think and I thank you. What I got out of the stories is what happens when someone believes in children and isn't willing to give up on them. The other thing I got was patience. These stories are great learning lessons as they stretch my mind, making me think about what I will do.
> 　　　　　　　　　　(Online Discussion)

In responding to surveys, a majority of students felt that performances made the course work more "*fun*" and commented that incorporating storytelling in the "Block" made the subject matter seem "easier to learn." Most students also

reported that, although they found the experience very different from other instruction, they appreciated the opportunity to share narratives with their peers.

> At first, I will admit that, although I am a fairly outgoing person, I was nervous about this class. I was unsure as to what the expectations would be, and I had thought, this professor is so weird…and now I realize that this is a perfect way to teach. It won't be so difficult in my teaching as I had once thought. I am going to remember this and tell stories when I get my own classroom.                    (Interview)

> Over half of the participants also felt that the content of the stories, when told aloud (as opposed to reading the text) was a connected type of learning and teaching.

> I think that because I had to tell a story that it made me more aware of the stuff inside the story itself. I am reading more now than I used to and I am enjoying it more too! But the challenge is to put away the books and notes and know the material so you can tell it to others.
> (Reflective Essay)

> If you tell children what you did when you were their age or about my mom and dad then they will always want to tell you things they do. It's a neat way to have them tell you about things instead of sitting there trying to drill them about facts.                    (Online Discussion)

Participants indicated that storytelling helped them get a clearer perspective regarding their future profession. As one student observed "I've found that when a teacher takes the time to talk about their background then I am more willing to talk about mine." Data indicate that the experience enhanced the classroom experience (Mello, 2001).

## Field Study

In Phase I (1999-2000) "Block" fieldwork was based on a compulsory model. Once a week, all O&P students were bussed from campus, en masse, to work in city schools. Students had little say in where they were placed and no flexibility regarding hours or times. In addition, school administrators selected participating teachers. Principals' criteria varied and decisions were often made on the basis of which individual "needed help," due to burnout, overload, or large class size. This often left undergraduates with less than adequate role models in field-site classrooms.

> The farther into the day we got the more Mrs. Portage yelled. The longer the day went on the bigger the headache and Mrs. Portage yelled more. She also uses what she calls "writer reminders," which are having the kids write a sentence such as, "I will stand in line appropriately," 50-200 times. I think this is a waste of time…I am personally making a mental note to never make children do this repetitive busy work.                    (Reflective Journal)

University students had the unenviable position of learning about best practices by observing inappropriate or ineffective ones. Findings indicate that the experience did not significantly promote professional competencies nor encourage students to engage in classroom activities. Clearly pedagogical and methodological change was necessary.

Emerging findings from Phase I prompted the researcher to institute changes in the way that O&P was configured and taught. Two specific activities were added during Phase II as assigned requirements in the O&P course: (1) creation of a reflective puppet show and (2) the exploration of attitudes toward teachers through visual images. Reflective journaling remained a key component and was expanded to require that students post and respond to selected entries on a course-wide listserv.

Changes proved beneficial. Data show that in journals,

student reflective language increased. These entries included more thoughtful, lengthy and detailed discussions. Student interest in fieldwork (as reported on surveys) increased and became more positively oriented.

Successful as these interventions were, there was still a mismatch during Phase II between what students were doing in their oncampus "Block" courses (see Figure 1), versus the field experience itself, which remained fairly traditional. University students were still expected to conform to 'observer' status and work in constrained, stressful, and narrowly defined formats.

In Phase III of the study, based on findings from data, a new site was established—an arts infusion magnet school agreed to sponsor UWW students. Other changes were also made at this time. These were: (a) the university faculty now had an opportunity to choose teachers—with input from school administration—thus ensuring higher quality expertise on site; (b) Bussing was eliminated and students were required to find their own transportation; (c) The O&P seminar was redesigned as a hybrid[4] course incorporating both virtual and face-to-face meetings. Discussions then moved from a listserv to a threaded online message board. Data imply that these factors impacted positively on students' perceptions.

A majority of students were now more positively inclined to regard their field experience as valuable. In journals and postings they explored these perceptions in detail.

> The thing that impresses me also is that the teacher is involved in theatre. I found that the theatre classes for the young children focused on letting them use their imagination. The teacher actually talks to other teachers and sees what they are working on and incorporates that into the drama class. This way the children can approach the topic at a different angle and the idea is reinforced.            (Reflective Journal)

Students were impressed by the differences between an arts-infused school versus a traditionally oriented one. Even

the architecture influenced their thinking.

> I was so interested in seeing the school! It was surprising. First of all it was full of children's artwork and it included the parents' work too! I was impressed to find that they have their own gallery, stage for drama, and a dance studio. There are two huge art classrooms as well. It was very interesting to find that there was only one small gymnasium throughout the whole school. Apparently they put much more emphasis on doing art than sports! It certainly got me thinking.            (Reflective Journal)

> I am in awe of this whole place. It has to be the most colorful school I've ever seen. The whole curriculum focuses around the things that I like best: arts, music, and creativity!
> (Online Discussion)

Students also began to express greater interest in the diverse nature of learners.

> I guess that one of the biggest things that I learned from this classroom [experience] was how to teach and get along with diverse populations of students. I am not talking about racial diversity (although there was a lot of that) I am really talking about diverse abilities and disability levels of students.
> (Online Discussion)

Not all students had positive experiences however. A few made astute observations about the fragmented experience of children who had to "go to so many special subjects, like music and art, that they couldn't concentrate on one thing for very long." They also noted that, in some fine art classes, students who did not show interest or talent were relegated to the back of the room where they became bored and unhappy.

> I do not see all of the kids being totally and constantly thrilled by an arts environment. I

> think as is bound to be the case some kids love art and some kids love science or whatever it is they enjoy.                              (Reflective Journal)

Overall, however, changes in field work along with the stronger pedagogical connection between the college classroom and the field had a positive impact.

> The students at the arts school build self-confidence in their drama classes, but it is also a part of the dance program. It's the main form of physical activity in a day. I thought that this was a good way to learn- it helps mature relationships later on.        (Reflective Journal)

> So, is there any benefit to these kids going to an arts-based school at such an early age? I think so. I think that the arts give the kids a chance to be themselves, to be creative, gain confidence, and get to know themselves. (Reflective Journal)

Components of "Block" courses were now synchronized pedagogically and practically. This helped establish a greater sense of clarity and focus on the part of students. They became interested in arts-infusion and arts-based approaches requesting more "fun stuff like the role playing" and seeking out resources on "how to do these arts things." A small group of students even explored the idea of introducing arts-based methods in their own classrooms.

> It's been a very interesting and creative experience-I didn't know school could be this interesting. Now I feel that I have picked the right area of study and that if and when I get my degree I think teaching will make me happy.
> (Reflective Journal)

## Puppet Shows

A key assignment in oncampus seminars was the students' written and produced puppet shows. Participants

were required to depict issues and conditions experienced during fieldwork. Students were asked to learn theatre skills and processes that included identifying plot outlines, creating characters, writing dialogue, building puppets, rehearsing and performing. Scripts were collected as documentation of the process. Performances, discussions, and reflective writing were used to assess the effect this activity had on student perceptions and understandings.

Students in Phase I and Phase II generally created plots that depicted conflicts between teachers and students, students and peers, and students and family members. Themes focused on stressful situations and a significant minority ended unhappily for all concerned. Conflict was rarely resolved in an equitable manner and was often exaggerated for the purposes of comic relief and irony. In addition, despite the fact that the school site had a majority of students from a wide variety of racial and ethnic backgrounds, the majority of characters in the puppet plays were White—like the university students themselves.

> **Teacher Puppet**: You stupid! You are so stupid! Sit down. Pay attention. (Screaming) I am the teacher everyone be quiet! I said shut up!
> (Puppet Show)

> **Narrator Puppet**: And so, the school was closed and everyone was sent to different schools. The nasty principal was never found. Who knows, maybe he is teaching somewhere else now? May be in a school near you! (Puppet Show)

When the field placement changed to an arts magnet school (in Phase III), data indicate that the content and focus of the puppet shows also changed (although course directions and guidelines remained the same). For example, puppet attributes broadened as students included more non-White and differently-abled characters. Plot content also changed. Characters were more proactive and the amount of violence, both comic and dramatic, decreased significantly. Teacher puppets were more competent, overall, and many plays ended with a moral or a teaching point. All puppet shows from the

arts-magnet group had happy endings.

> **Teacher Puppet**: That's great! I like how we solved that problem. Henry are you OK now?
>
> **Henry Puppet**: Uh huh. Thanks. I have friends to help me and my dad says he'll come to school to show us how to make the playground better—let's build a swing set!
> **Other Puppets**: Yeah! Ok! Great! Sweet!
>                                               (Puppet Show)

## When Pedagogy Meets Practice

At the beginning of their "Block" experience students were asked to respond to surveys. These were designed to examine student readiness and their perceptions of the field— both before and after the actual experience. Data indicate that in Phase I and II, students expressed high stress levels regarding their fieldwork. For example, a majority of the comments focused on students' perplexity concerning the urban school environment. Comments also centered on students' perceived apprehension regarding their ability to cope and/or teach in city schools in the long-term. These data show that in Phases I and II, UWW students come into the "Block" "confused" and "worried." They felt concerned about their ability to be an educator and to accomplish assigned academic tasks. However, when the field site included more active and arts-based programming, and when the professor's pedagogy was connected to that framework, then, data indicate, confusion and discomfort decreased.

Although a direct causal link can not be absolutely established, that is, it cannot be proven that the introduction of arts-based activities was the sole cause of increased student success, data does indicate that exposure to arts-based practices assisted students in committing to their service in schools. It also enabled students to conceive more thoughtful and narratively rich reflections on practice. In addition, seen as a stress relieving activity, the arts enabled students to deal with

tensions and fears. As a result, participants found themselves better able to explore their learning situation in a more relaxed fashion.

During Phase III, apprehension was dissipated further, by a wider range of factors; the arts-based school site (including faculty and students), arts-infused curriculum, new service-learning based formats, and the fact that a faculty member interacted on site as both a performing artist and teacher. This infused approach to learning encouraged reflection and created a model for self-assessment.

> Looking back at my experiences—at the creative arts school and *everything*—I think about how much I would still love to be there again working with my class. I can't believe how fast time went! …Every week we did fun and interesting things…we did booklets…made art foam projects…information and games… puzzles and a dramatic game…it was very involved and it also included writing a lot too. I watched the class grow and progress. I learned many good teaching practices too…In the entire time at [the school] I met many people who were totally different from me and I saw things going on that I was never involved with during elementary school, such as drama and dance classes. I think that this makes the school a great place to go. I hope that I have the opportunity to teach in a school like this one someday.
>
> (Reflective Journal)

> I am very grateful that at [the arts school] we were so active. All of this has taught me quite a bit on what it takes to be a good teacher. I never knew that so much work would have to go into a single day. Throughout this entire experience I feel that I have been very active in every aspect of classrooms: a teacher, an observer, and most importantly a learner myself.
>
> (Reflective Journal)

> I don't really know if it was because I worked in a drama class or not—maybe because we do role-plays and stuff in our college courses too—but I am now completely at ease in front of a class of children! I think that is because we get right in there and act ourselves that we are expressing ourselves and learning about being expressive.                          (Reflective Journal)

Findings indicate that as the philosophy, pedagogy and method, (i.e. arts infusion and inclusion) became interwoven and as the arts as an educational perspective was modeled consistently in course activities (including field work), student learning was supported and enhanced.

## Conclusions

Data show the following evolution of outcomes and findings:

> 1. UWW students entered the arts-based college classroom with trepidation and doubt. The instructor's presentational style and curricula were not familiar to them. As a result, in the first few weeks of classes, students struggled to understand the course context. However, after this orientation period students became appreciative of the arts-infused environment. Attendance was always high, with few absences, and student input and productivity was also substantive.

> 2. Students quickly moved into the "this is fun" mode, viewing arts-based methods as enjoyable and interesting, i.e., doing "things I really love doing and not boring homework."

> 3. The "fun factor" led to less negative stress. Students began to focus on exploring curricula from more creative perspectives. Their writing strengthened over time, becoming more

reflective and interpersonal in approach. In addition, students produced texts and participated in class discourse and performances that were storied and highly detailed.

4. In Phase III, when a new arts-based learning site was employed, students benefited from seeing 'real teachers' in 'real schools' involved in arts learning on a daily basis. This led to modifications in student's perceptions regarding "what teachers do."

In reviewing the concept of arts-based pedagogy which grounded this study, data indicate that students gained a better understanding of the arts as a tool for learning. They also became more familiar with constructivist methods in action and gained an expanded view of teaching and learning methods.

From a constructivist Dewian (1899/1979) perspective, this study suggests that pedagogy and practice is most successful when they are "in sync"—that learning is better supported when an instructor can, through interaction and demonstration, show a direct and compelling connection between methods, underlying beliefs, and epistemological conditions of learning. It is probable, therefore, that in educative situations where pedagogy and practice are in harmony, learners will thrive.

This study also describes what Winner and Hetland (2000) refer to as an "arts rich learning environment," one that is broad based and inclusive. It also connects to Heathcote and Bolton's (1995) understanding of learning environments which stresses that the processes of art, rather than the products, are more likely to be educative. Data also support Eisner's (1998) position that the arts are a foundational part of the learning environment—a necessary condition for "the kind of schools we need." Findings suggest that from the perspective of study participants, best practice *was* enhanced by the inclusion of arts-based learning in their teacher education program.

## Implications

Data discussed here support the concept that teacher candidates can benefit from arts-based investigations and processes and that the incorporation of arts, used to create inclusive programming, supports learning and strengthens preservice development. The scope of the study addresses—although does not definitively answer—large overarching questions, such as: (a) the need to introduce arts-based activities into college classrooms; (b) placing student teachers in arts-infused and arts friendly environments; and (c) exploring images of teaching through arts processes such as art-work, storytelling and theatrical productions.

This study reports on one particular and idiosyncratic case, presenting specific examples from a single set of courses, instructor and her students. As such, broad suggestions for replication cannot be made with any reliability. However, the study stands as an example of an on-going, arts-based, instructional environment designed to encourage and support meaningful learning experiences. It finds that students developed a better understanding of core content *because* of their arts-infused instruction.

Whether participants would have gained this expertise without an arts focus is a question that this study does not address. Neither does the study consider the effect of other particular factors such as the historical events happening during 2001 (one of the years in which the study took place) nor the influence of the individual instructors' personality and demeanor on outcomes and student attitudes. What data do show is that students in this arts-infused study were more likely to attend class regularly, respond narratively and in more reflective detail, confront issues observed in classrooms, and appreciate their the role of the arts in education.

Clearly data cannot fully support this author's assertion that there is a distinct advantage for learners when teachers are explicit regarding their pedagogy, especially in an arts rich environment. However, it is hoped that this investigation will lead to more studies that explore the connection between beliefs about teaching and the practice of instruction. It is hypothesized

that when these are aligned, and if they are connected to creative and explorative learning processes, students are likely to be able to integrate these methods when they become educators.

It is suggested, therefore, that teacher education programs address the subject of creativity and flexibility in more substantive ways and encourage preservice teachers to explore the arts—especially in their initial stages of preservice development, (well before methods courses or student teaching). Finally, this study recommends that more inquiry be undertaken to examine the impact that linking methods to pedagogical frameworks might have on learning and professional development.

## Notes

[1] The author spent twenty years producing arts-in-learning programs as a professional storyteller before entering academia.

[2] Winner and Hetland (2000) state that no significant research based correlation has yet been shown connecting academic learning with arts instruction. The authors suggest that the body of literature on this subject is methodologically poor, lacking in scope, or idosycnratic at best. They call for more studies on the topic.

[3] CAL is unique in that it focuses on integrating the arts across the curriculum by delivering a program of study that stresses artistic modalities together with content area instruction. It also requires instructors to be working artists as well as scholars and insists on the infusion of arts in all its core courses. At Lesley University students enroll in CAL specifically because of its arts approach.

[4] Phrase coined by Garmham & Kaleta (2002) and Spilka (2002).

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# THE TIGER'S WHISKER
## A Teaching Tale
### Retold by Robin Mello

Once upon a time, many years ago after the Great War, a soldier returned home to his native village. His wife and child welcomed him joyously for it had been three years since they had last seen him. But, try as she might, the wife could not help her husband resume his former life. He was not the same man she married. Instead of laughing the way he used to before the war, he scowled and said gruff and hurtful things. Sometimes he flew into a rage and screamed in anger. Added to this, he could not sleep because when he did his dreams tormented him.

The poor wife was beside herself, not knowing what to do. One day out of desperation she went to the cave of the Wise-one. Wearily she sat down at the entrance to the cave and whispered: "My husband has not been himself since he returned from the war. Please tell me what to do? We are so poor, though, that I have no gift to offer you for your wisdom. Please help me."

A low quavering voice answered: "I know what will cure your husband. But first, payment. Bring me the whisker of a live tiger and I will help you. NOW GO!"

"The whisker of a living tiger? How could anyone do that?" But, the next morning at dawn the young woman killed a chicken and set out for the tigers' hunting ground. When she came to the tiger's lair she placed the chicken on the ground and hid behind a great rock to watch. No sooner was she hidden, and then she heard the tiger. As it began to eat the woman stood up, bowed low to the tiger, and ran. Each morning she did the same thing. Over and over again she would take a chicken to the tiger and each time the tiger began to eat she would step a little closer. Inch by inch and day by day the tiger became more and more used to her.

Finally, a day came when there was only one chicken left. That day, when the tiger came to eat she walked right up to it. She could see it's sleek fur with its delicate stripes. She could smell its breath and feel its warmth. "Tiger, tiger" she sang to it in a low voice. The tiger looked up at her and made a low growl deep inside its throat. Her body began to shake with fear and her knees almost gave way but she kept singing her lullaby. "Sleep tiger, sleep tiger, sleep."

The tiger closed its eyes, curled up, and began to purr. The young woman bent down and whispered in the tigers' ear. "I am sorry tiger but I must beg you for one of your whiskers in exchange for all those chickens." And then, quickly, she plucked a whisker from the tigers' cheek and ran as fast as she could back to the village. The next day, she made the slow difficult climb up to the mountain cave of the Wise-one.

"Wise-one, I've brought you the tigers' whisker. Now, please tell me what to do about my poor husband?" The small quaking voice replied: "First tell me how you got the whisker." So, the wife told her story.

"Ahhhhhh!" said the Wise-one. "You already know what to do. The war has changed your husband's heart into a tiger. Patience and faith can change him back. Little by little and day by day is how you tame a tiger and how you heal and teach a loved one too.

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# An analysis of students' perceptions about composing: What, for them, characterizes aspects of composing?

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*Abstract*

*The purpose of this study was to examine 13-year-old students' perceptions, elicited in interview sessions after they experienced composition, about what, for them, characterizes composing. Analysis of their responses revealed that (1) to compose one must have playing, reading, and writing skills, and some knowledge about musical elements and style to begin a composition; (2) to begin a composition one may make structural decisions before beginning, start with an idea, or explore and then practice and evaluate; (3) composers decide when a composition is completed; and (4) there is more critical involvement when composing than when listening. Gaining insight into students' thoughts about composing can provide structure and guidance for teachers who nurture musical learning through composition. Involving students in reflective thinking about what they understand, perceive, and experience is important for their growth as reflective musicians.*

## Theoretical Framework

Support for experiences in music composition by the music education profession is evident in a variety of books, articles (e.g., Swanwick and Franca, 1999; Webster, 1992; Wiggins, 2001) and curriculum documents (e.g., see the National Standards for the Arts, 1994). Likewise, a growing number of writers seek to understand how students compose, i.e., what

strategies they utilize when asked to compose a piece of music (Bunting, 1987; Levi, 1991; Citron, 1992; Christensen, 1993; Wiggins, 1992; Hickey, 1995; Daignault, 1996; Barrett, 1996: Sundin, McPherson, and Folkestad, 1998; Burnard 2000a/b; Younker, 2000a/b). While participants in these studies represent varying ages, skill sets, and musical understandings, the findings reflect specific engagements while composing, such as exploring, developing, evaluating, practicing and performing. Some studies have concentrated on strategic processes identifiable within a developmental progression as exhibited by "novice" and "expert" composers (Davidson & Welsh, 1988; Colley, Banton, Down & Pither, 1992; Younker & Smith, 1992, 1996), while others have focused on time spent on different composing processes (Ainsworth, 1970; Kratus, 1989). All of these have guided further inquiry about the role creativity plays in composition (Burnard and Younker, 2002; Younker and Burnard, 2002). Finally, pedagogical and curricular issues related to composition, including assessment, in educational settings can be found in a number of earlier and more recent publications (e.g., Paynter, and Aston, 1970; Schafer, 1975; Hickey, 2003; Wiggins, 2003).

Despite this literature, we know very little about students' perceptions about composing and how it is meaningful, if at all, at the individual level. As Glover (2000) states, "Although a range of classroom activities have been developed which cluster under the general description of composing, there seems little consensus in curriculum planning about what composing means either for young children or for the population at large, as an ordinary activity in which any and all of us can participate" (p. 12). One aspect of understanding that is meaningful at the individual level constitutes reflections about the "doing," or in the educational world, one's reflective practice (Schon, 1987), and, for the purposes of this paper, reflections about the nature of composition, both generally and at the individual level.

Jorgensen (2001) describes interaction that occurs in curriculum, between teacher and student, between student and student, and between student and subject matter. Seeking

students' input about content and pedagogy fuels students' intrinsic meaning that in turn, drives curiosity and inquiry with more intensity than do externally imposed meanings, extrinsic rewards and products, many of which are provided by the teacher. This interaction through dialogue creates environments that, for students, allows for growth of vested interest and experiences as a valued contributor; for the teacher, it enables understanding about what is meaningful and understood by the student. Teachers and students are thus informed about how to structure subsequent experiences in which further understandings can be constructed.

Listening to students' voices can provide a deeper understanding about their perceptions (Campbell, 1998). As Campbell stated, "The music children have within them, as well as their thoughts about music, are starting points for understanding their values, their knowledge, and their needs. Their voices, as much as the voices of experts, should help to determine something of an educational plan for them, for this is how a musical education can be in touch with their lives and experiences" (p. 5).

Auker (1991) and Christensen (1993) reported that students, in response to questions about their composing activities, show a deeper understanding of composing processes when they are given opportunities to talk about their experiences. Burnard (2002) gained insights about intentionality of students' decisions while composing through an analysis of students' compositional products and verbal descriptions of the strategies they used while composing. These insights are highly valued in educational settings where students' constructions of meanings are desired and recognized. Younker (2000a) asked students to 'think aloud' while composing a piece of music, and to answer questions about their experiences after they composed. Findings indicated that students were cognizant about the activities during the experience of composing, and with much replication described their strategies after they finished each of three 45-minute composing sessions. As with Auker and Christensen, Younker concluded that students had

a deeper understanding of what comprises composing after they had experienced three sessions in which they composed a piece of music as reflected in answers given before, during, and after the composing experiences.

After an investigation of how children attribute meaning to improvising and composing, Burnard, (2000a/b) recommended that children should be encouraged to reflect on what it means to improvise and compose. In a study aimed at identifying good and effective composition pedagogy, Odam (2000) found that 91% of the students who answered the questionnaires agreed that composing required thinking and hard work, while 49% felt that it was hard to compose if you could not play an instrument well. Sixty three per cent of the students who responded stated that they heard the music that they wanted to compose in their heads.

As stated in the opening paragraphs, much of the research on composition has focused on how students compose; the role creativity plays during composition; and pedagogical and curricular issues, including assessment. Less attention has been given to students' perceptions about what comprises composing and how it is meaningful at the individual level. There has been a growing support for the value of such insights (e.g., Jorgensen, 1997, 2001; Campbell, 1998), understandings about what students might gain from reflecting on their own actions (Auker, 1991; Christensen, 1993), and what researchers/ educators might gain from uncovering students' perceptions (Burnard, 2002; Younker, 2002). However, aside from a few studies of students' perceptions about what comprises composing, what it means, and how it can be meaningful, (e.g., Burnard, 2000a/b; Odam, 2000) the literature is scant, thus creating a need for further inquiry.

Building on previous studies[1], this paper sets out to gain further insight about students' reflections on composition. The students in this study were 13-year old boys and girls in 8th grade who attended the same arts-based school since 4th grade, had or were taking private keyboard lessons, and had experienced composing activities with technology and in a piano class setting. It is my intention to gain multiple data sets

in attempts to discern patterns of thinking across ages and levels of musical tuition and experiences, about composing in general, and composition at the individual level. Thus this study reveals such reflections from a particular age group.

## Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this study was twofold: (1) to explore students' perceptions about what, for them, characterizes composing after each of two composing experiences; and (2) to explore similarities and differences of those perceptions across students in a selected age group. The following research question was posed to guide this inquiry: What patterns emerge from an analysis of students' verbal responses to questions about composing given in a semi-structured interview setting after two separate composing sessions?

## Methodology

The study involved eight 13-year-old students who were asked to (1) answer questions, in a semi-structured interview, about their composing experiences and composing in general after each of two composing experiences; (2) compose music over two separate sessions using technology; and (3) verbalize everything they were thinking while composing.[2] Each session lasted between 30-45 minutes, a time decided by the student in that they informed me when they were finished (see Table 1 for an outline of the study).

**Table 1**

**Outline of the study**

| PARTICIPANTS | CRITERIA FOR PARTICIPATION |
|---|---|
| 13-year-old students, boys and girls | Enrolled in the same arts school since 4th grade |
| Surveyed (N=54) Fulfilled all criteria (N=10) Completed all stages (N=8) | Received or were receiving private keyboard instruction |

| TASK |
|---|
| Asked to compose 1 or 2 pieces [their choice] over 2 sessions that lasted approximately 30 minutes, using computer software and hardware, and a synthesizer |
| Asked questions, in general about composing after the set of each composing session. |
| Immediately after each session asked questions, in a semi-structured interview, about their composing experiences |

The site was a 4th–8th grade school for the arts in which all students experienced an equal number of classes in music, drama, dance and the visual arts. Students apply for entrance to the school subject to specific criteria based on the motivation to work in groups and independently, and a desire to enhance skills and understandings in the arts. Evidence of technical skills and musical potential are not regarded as criteria for admittance. These aspects are therefore not assessed through auditions or through measurements of achievement and aptitude. The school is a public school and bussing is provided so that access is available across economic levels. The philosophy of the school is that all students who so desire should have equal opportunities to be educated in the academics and in the arts, regardless of previous opportunities, race, and economic status.

This particular site was chosen because of the unique character and ethos of the setting.

A survey was administered to 54 grade eight students to collect information about (1) their name, age, grade; (2) when they entered the school and (3) private keyboard instruction, if any, that they received outside of school time. From the list of 13-year old students who had attended the school since fourth grade, and had received or were receiving private keyboard instruction (N=24), 10 were randomly selected and asked to participate in the study. Of the ten, 8 completed all aspects of every session.

Data reported in this paper comprise verbal responses to questions about composing in general. These questions were asked in a semi-structured interview after each of two sessions in which students composed. The reason for asking after each composing session was to determine changes, if any, in the studednts' thinking as they were experiencing composing.

The interview questions attempted to elicit students' thinking about (1) what one would need to know in order to compose; (2) how composers begin composing a piece of music; (3) how one would know when a composition is finished; and (4) differences, if any, between composing and listening.

Specifically the questions were,

1.   What kinds of things do you think people need to know in order to compose?

2.   How do you think composers start to create a piece of music?

3.   How would the person who is creating the composition know when it is finished?

4.   Do you think composing will be different for you from listening? Why, or why not?

Three of the four questions were posed in the third person because of previous studies (Younker, 2000) that had revealed that, typically, more answers were given in the first

person than in the third. The desire was for students to reveal their perceptions about composing generally, (i.e., their reflections about how composers compose), and at the individual level (i.e., how they might compose or had composed).

Rather than completing composing activities in which the parameters were teacher-formulated, in this instance, the students were asked to compose music using technology, thus the constraints and freedoms were defined at the individual level. Specifically the students were told, "I am interested in how you create music" and instructed to "create a piece of music." No other parameters were imposed by the researcher. The external parameters included composing resources, specifically, a Macintosh computer, Yamaha synthesizer, sequencer, MIDI interface, and software program (Musicshop, V 1.0). It was the students' choice to use the synthesizer or mouse to input notation; the former was chosen most frequently for exploring, refining, and practicing and the latter for changes of specific pitches and durations. The software program captured all that was played, thus students were not required to notate their compositions.

Typically, the students composed music that represented music learned in their piano class in which they were taught chord progressions of familiar songs (e.g., Pachelbel's Canon), were asked to play melodies and derivations of those songs, and improvised over the chord progressions associated with the melodies. Melodic lines were created in conjunction with, before, or after decisions about chord progression were made. Consonance appeared to be important, as dissonance was avoided and 'fixed' when it occurred. In terms of form, harmonic progressions, and melody constructions, students created music in the styles of Baroque and Classical western art music. Often students explored until a melodic idea or chord progression appeared to be acceptable and then generated material that was shaped into an A, AB, or ABA form. There was a comfort level at the piano when playing melodies and chord progressions and evidence of theoretical understandings of key signatures, chord constructions, tonality, and chord progressions.

## Data Sources and Analysis

The research questions were addressed by analyzing students' responses to questions that were posed in semi-structured interviews immediately after each of two composing sessions. All sessions were video- and audio-taped. Through analysis of the text, I located words, phrases, and sentences that indicated the students' perceptions about various aspects of composing, and I identified patterned regularities of key words and sentences (Wolcott, 1994) that suggested common themes and issues (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). To provide the reader with information about aspects of regularity, numbers are given to represent the quantity of that regularity (presented in Table 2 below). This process involved reading through transcripts to gain an overall perspective of the information, and re-reading to highlight key words that represented thoughts, ideas, and feelings that were articulated in response to the questions. In addition, my immediate responses to those words were written in the margins, responses that were in the form of questions, reminders, and reactions. When words or phrases appeared more than once across answers of students, categories were created and the quantity of answers were recorded. What is presented does not represent all information that was given in the form of answers, as that which was not relevant to the research questions was discarded (Wolcott, 1994),.

From this analysis I discerned patterns of students' thoughts about the nature of composing at the individual level, and within and across students, which involved many readings of transcripts that contained interview-talk. In relation to the research questions the following are presented: (1) examples of students' responses to questions asked about composing processes in general after each of two composing sessions; (2) descriptions and interpretations of those responses; and (3) discussions about any patterns that emerged. Extensive quotations are provided to support the analysis as represented in the interpretation, discussion and implications.

## Presentation of the Data and Discussion

### Table 2

### Answers given after the first and second composing sessions.

| *Q. 1's focus:* What one needs to know in order to compose. | *Q. 2's focus:* How composers begin to compose a piece of music. | *Q. 3's focus:* How one would know when a composition is finished. | *Q. 4's focus:* The differences, if any, between composing and listening. |
|---|---|---|---|
| **After 1st session** <br>• Knowledge about musical elements (6) <br>• Piano, keyboard skills (2) | **After 1st session** <br>• Referred to musical elements (5) | **After 1st session** <br>• When a composition sounds finished, complete, has closure (8) ends on 'do' or the tonic (3), has a beginning/middle-end (1), material is in contrast to previous material (1) | **After 1st session** <br>• Different (6) because composing requires more thinking, involves ownership over changes and the actual work |
| **After 2nd session** <br>• Knowledge about musical elements (4). <br>• Theoretical knowledge (2) <br>• Musical background (1) <br>• Piano, keyboard skills (2) | **After 2nd session** <br>• Referred to musical elements (4) | **After 2nd session** <br>• Sounds finished (5) | **After 2nd session** <br>• Differences (6) –more work when composing (3), critical thinking is involved when composing (3) <br>• Ability to change the materials when composing |

| After 1st session • Affect at the individual level – "have a feel for the music" to compose "beautifully" (1), "could just have fun" without concern for right or wrong answers (1). | After 1st session• Sources for motivation –what is felt (1), a plan (3),what is generated from exploration (1) | After 1st session• When ideas are depleted (1) • When all that is desired is realized. (1) | After 1st session• Partial difference because to compose one must listen to make decisions (1). • No difference (1) |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| After 2nd session • Affect at the individual level in terms of what is felt (1) or representing what is felt (1) • The intent (1) | After 2nd session • Sources for motivation–a plan (2); an idea or inspiration (3); exploring, practicing, and evaluating (2) | After 2nd session •When the composer has exhausted what she wanted to say (2)• Knowing it is complete (2) | |

Generalizations about the findings should be made with caution. The sample size of the study was small and reflects the specific situations in which the project was realized. The findings do, however, provide 'food for thought' about students' perceptions, and composition pedagogy and curriculum. As well, the differences between answers given after the first and the second composing sessions are minimal, which suggests that the composing experiences that occurred in the second composing session did not influence the second set of answers. If students engaged in multiple composing sessions over a period of time, answers might reveal greater differentiation and variance. The content of answers, however, is of interest to those interested in students' perceptions about composition. These contents are presented below:

## Question 1: What kinds of things do you think people need to know in order to compose?

### *Responses given after the first composing session[3]*

Six of the students indicated a need to know about musical elements. This knowledge included understandings about harmony, rhythm, and pitches. For example:

> You need to know your chords and your chord basses so you can base your melody on your chord. Because if you have a D major chord you're obviously going to try to make your song [have] lots of D's and G's and B's.

> . . . know what sort of notes go together best, chords versus, the melody, and also with harmonies, the differences between minor and majors.

> You need to understand how the notes work, and the rhythms.

One indicated a necessary knowledge of a variety of rhythms and pitches to create an 'interesting composition':

> You need to know that you have to have different rhythms for it to be an interesting composition and you have to have different notes because if it's all one note or if it's all one, like there's all quarter notes then it would sound dumb.

Only two students reported the need for a piano background even though all students had piano class as part of their music program and used the keyboard and mouse while composing: "I suppose the most important thing is… sometimes a background in music or piano lessons helps, but…"

Two students mentioned the need to know what is felt on a personal level, that is "have a feel of the music, like, if they don't enjoy what they're doing then they can't compose anything beautiful" (one student) while the other student

viewed the opportunity to "just have fun and make up your own thing. It isn't bad or whatever."

### *Responses given after the second composing session*

Four of the students spoke about the importance of knowing how to interweave the various elements of music to produce something that "sounds good". Specifically, students talked about "how to harmonize notes" and "to know what notes sound good together." There was recognition of the possibilities resulting from the varieties of notes and rhythms, and of the knowledge that can enhance one's ability to compose a piece that "sounds good." One student spoke about tonality, and the ability to write in major, if that was the intent:

> … like if they want to do a major piece then they
> would have to make it major, they couldn't do
> just a couple of notes major and then a couple
> of notes minor. They would have to do it all that
> they intended it to be.

Another student acknowledged intent that could be facilitated through the ability to be creative: "…know how to be creative I guess, to know what you like so you can sort of put that into your music…"

One student suggested that "anyone can compose" but that a musical background could enhance the overall sound of the piece while another thought it necessary to "be familiar with your keyboard or instrument or whatever you're working with…". This necessary familiarity when creating is reflected as she continued with: "…and being able to make something up and not worry about how you're playing it, just being able to like concentrate on the music, and not how to play anything…". Two students were more emphatic about the 'need to know', specifically "Definitely a piano or a theory background helps a lot" and, "They need to know notes and theory and stuff so that they can piece something together." For all of those who alluded to 'the need to know' there were indications that such knowledge would enhance the sound of the composition,

as though not having to think about theory or how to play the instrument frees the composer to focus on making the composition "sound good". In terms of affect, two students indicated the importance of a feeling, that is, to "have a feeling for it" and "use the way of feeling."

The majority of answers for both interviews revolved around the following requisites for composing: playing, reading, and writing skills; and knowledge about musical elements and style. One could suggest that the students were able to recognize the need to have both as resources for composition. A previous study reported that three of nine students, all of whom had *not* received musical instruction outside of the school-based elementary general music program, thought it necessary to have knowledge about musical elements in order to compose before they experienced three 45-minute composing sessions while four thought so after the composing experiences (Younker, 2000a).

Only two of the eight students thought that one should have some skills on an instrument which is curious, given the fact that they were involved in piano classes, had received formal instruction outside of the school, and were composing using a synthesizer and technology. Reasons were not given for identifying or not identifying the necessity of having some skills on an instrument so any conclusions are speculative. Again, an earlier study reported that of nine students, none whom had received private piano instruction, two of the three 8-year old students, and all of the 14-year old students indicated the need to have some skills on an instrument (Younker, 2000a). Perhaps not having the skills and experiences with keyboards enhances students' awareness of what is needed. Odam (2000) reported that students thought it necessary to play an instrument to alleviate some of the difficulties of composing; in other words, knowing how to play an instrument well could facilitate composing. This raises pedagogical issues about the knowledge students should acquire before they are 'allowed' to compose. Should they interweave knowledge and instrumental skills as they experience composing, thus allowing for constructions of new knowledge while utilizing existing knowledge and skills? Alternatively, should students be provided with the necessary theoretical knowledge and keyboard skills before they are

'allowed' to compose?

In both interviews, the same number of students spoke of the feel for the music, that is, sensitivity to the expressiveness of the music being composed. Dialogue about affect and sensitivity to the expressive qualities of music should be integrated throughout students' musical experiences as the role of affect is at the core of the nature and value of music in education and of our musical understanding as human beings. Often we are engaged in technical aspects of music making and do not make explicit the role affect plays in our interaction with music. For this group, engaging with the arts for half of each school day may have increased awareness about such a role and highlighted the need for sensitivity when composing.

## Question 2: How do you think composers start to create a piece of music?

### *Responses given after the first composing session.*

In response to question 2, two students referred to beginning with a melody. One of these students provided an account of how she begins to compose, beginning with melody, indicating the role of harmony and the importance of expressive components to "make it have feeling."

> Well myself, I start by making up a melody, and from there I would make up a sort of a harmony that would be not as important as the melody, just a harmony to go with the melody. Then I would make up a bass part to make a fuller sounding piece, and then I would make something, just, maybe it, it might be three or four notes, it would just be sort of like to add accent on top, just like a simple *tiri* at the end of each bar or [singing] *da da da da, da da*, something like that, to make it have feeling. And then you go about the way the parts all put together, and if one of the parts clashes in a certain part then you would change a note or something. And you

> change… . Then at the very end you would be very critical, and say "well, I don't like the sound of that, let's change that." Or the, if one part is *forte* and you want it to be *piano* then you'd make it softer.

Three students alluded to a plan while one suggested exploration: "I guess, to start out by, like, just playing, like, anything on the keyboard, like, just any kind of notes." In terms of planning, each student referred to different things, that is, the need to have a plan, and the need to decide about various components of the work and the key and mood:

> By making a plan.

> I suppose the basic things that they decide what sort of aspects do you want in the piece, whether you want it to be maybe more and more like minor… .

> Well since I was composing on piano I thought about what key I wanted to do it in and…I wanted to start it, what mood I wanted to say.

Of these three responses, the last indicated the kinds of activities experienced in the students' piano classes, specifically, the acquiring piano skills through playing chord progressions with melodies.

> One student referred to 'within', that is affect at the individual level: "Usually just what they feel in, write, like, famous composers, they just, they, like what was inside them, like what they felt…"

### *Responses given after the second composing session.*

Responses after the second composing revolved around three approaches–exploring, practicing, and evaluating; beginning with an idea or inspiration; and deciding about structural aspects of the composition. In terms of exploring, and practicing and evaluating choices made, students spoke about

"doing, like just trying out different things," and "begin by playing something and see how I like it and change parts I didn't like about it and then just add stuff to it." In terms of a preconceived idea, students indicated "by a sudden rhyme that you have in your head or a couple of notes . . ." and "I usually begin with if I have something in mind I start off with doing that and see how it goes and try different things as I go along and go over it." This would suggest that these students have either experienced or suggest that others experience conceiving of a musical idea before it is played on an instrument or sung. The student who articulated the last comment, however, continued with "… and then other people just sit down with nothing in mind and try whatever comes off the top of their head" acknowledging that there may be multiple ways to begin a composition. Some students indicated that making decisions about the composition was how one began:

> I suppose the first thing you do is chose the style you want…you also have to choose stuff, like you can make it like a long one, so basically just the format of it.

> You begin by finding what your key signature you want to start in and then you find a melody and you can turn your melody around in different ways, you can make it longer, you can transpose, it…

In addition to commenting about structural decisions, this last statement also reflects the process of 'finding', which could mean through exploration or one that is 'in your head' and of thinking divergently when making decisions about presentation of the melody. In terms of making decisions about the composition one student referred to "a way of feeling…what kind of mood you're going to set."

Students' responses revolved around making structural decisions before beginning, starting with an idea, exploring and then practicing and evaluating what evolved from the exploration. This finding concurs with previous studies that found that students heard or prepared the musical ideas in their

heads before composing (Odam, 2000; Wiggins, 2003, Younker, 2000a).

The variety of answers in the present study do not represent experiences in their piano classes in which activities were teacher-formulated but do represent the composing experiences of this study. Students constructed their own constraints and freedoms in response to the simple directive of "create a piece of music" and thus their answers are reflective of the variety of approaches taken throughout both composing sessions. From a pedagogical perspective the nature of teacher-formulated versus student-formulated musical problems and solutions is still open to debate. One suggestion is that students can identify and solve musical problems and their musical understanding is more meaningful when they are given opportunities to determine the constraints and freedoms for themselves (Burnard and Younker, 2002; Younker and Burnard, 2002).

### Question 3: When would the person who is creating the composition know when it is finished?

#### *Responses given after the first composing session.*

In response to question three, all of the students suggested that when a composition sounds finished, complete, or has closure, it was done. Qualifiers for what constitutes "sounding finished" included finishing on the tonic and ending with material that contrasted with previous material:

> It has a feeling of closure, you wouldn't end, like you were doing a piece in C major, you wouldn't end it on D or B or F. You would end it on, usually on C or maybe G because if, you were ending a piece you wouldn't want it to leave someone hanging when they're listening to it. And you want it to sort of have a feeling of closure in the end, and cause you want to make it, if you're going to make a song, you could either end it in very soft, or you could end it

like a very grand ending. You could, well, usually you wouldn't have it the same as throughout the piece, to make it stand out, and, I think that's it.

Often, it could be, or sometimes like me, you start running out of ideas but, when sometimes a piece sounds finished and often, a lot of songs would be more...yeah...it all depends on how it sounds, if it sounds incomplete and it's ended on, like a '*re*' or a '*la*' it doesn't sound finished.

The last response suggests changes in the student's thinking while talking aloud. During the process she entertained a variety of ideas and then converged on the importance of ending on the tonic to indicate finality.

Another qualifier was having a beginning, middle, and end: "I think it sounds finished. It has, like, a beginning, a middle, and end…." while another placed ownership on the composer:

I think it just sounds to them that it's finished, and they know it's finished, not that they don't want to do it anymore. It's just, it sounds finished, and like it just makes them feel like it's finished. They have a feeling that it's finished when they listen to it.

Lastly, one suggested the composition was done "either when it sounds finished or when he [the composer] runs out of paper".

### *Responses given after the second composing session.*

Five of the eight students indicated that a composition is finished when it sounds finished. There was a variety of reasons given as to why the composition sounds finished. One was how the music was composed:

…when it sounds finished when the notes fall

into place and everything and you end on an ending note

…there might be a certain thing in music where a certain special, a certain ending so that would finish it off.

'Just knowing' was another reason given: " I think they know when it's finished, when it sounds finished to them." Finally, two students suggested that the composition was finished when the composer had completely exhausted what she wanted to 'say': "… when they feel that they've done all they've, you wanted to do."

In general, all students thought that ownership over the composition played a part in determining when it was finished, whether the composer has realized all intentions or has made decisions that indicate closure.

Students overwhelmingly agreed as to when one would know a composition is finished, that is, when it sounds done or when the composer has made the decision that the composition is complete. In terms of "sounding finished", students reflected the influence of Western tonality in that they indicated ending on '*do*' providing a sense of closure to the listener's ear. The second theme that evolved reflects the composer who has nothing else to say, in that all has been articulated through the music. Throughout all of the answers, students attributed ownership to the composer in terms of completion of an original work. This sense of ownership provides vested interest and can be a strong motivation for music making through composition. Again, these results reflect those of Younker (2000a).

### Question 4: Do you think composing will be different for you than listening? Why, or why not?

#### *Responses given after the first composing session.*

Six of the eight students were confident that composing was different than listening. When one composes, "you're making up your own song" and making decisions about

changes, thus "you get to do it your own way." One student suggested that while" there are a lot of aspects of listening in composing" it is still different "because composing involves a lot of thought. When you're listening you just take the information in but when you're composing you actually create it." Another thought there was minimal difference because "you have to actually do the work." However, listening involved attention to details even when one was not composing:

> I mean, when you're listening to something…you're still listening as much as you would if you weren't composing it. You'd still be listening just as much for all the little details, where you should fix this and that sounds good, and all that, like the composer would still listen to all the stuff that the listener that's not composing is doing.

Similarly, another student recognized that listening was part of her composing process, and when listening "to other people sometimes it's like I'm composing and I listen as if I was doing it, to help them, if they were composing as well. But in some ways I think it's different too." One student answered briefly with, "Um, no. I don't think so."

### *Responses given after the second composing session.*

Six students indicated differences between composing and listening while two suggested that listening is part of composing particularly as decisions are made about what 'sounds good': "I don't think so, because you have to listen to compose…I need to listen because you need to know to like, what notes sound good together…"

Of the six students who expressed differences between composing and listening, three thought that composing required more work in that one had to think more and do more things, and three were specific about the thinking in that critical thinking is required as decisions are made about the music:

Because when you're listening you don't have to like, you don't have to really think that much. You have to think about what you're listening to but you don't have to use your brain as much as you would when you're composing because when you're composing you have to think about so many things at once. When you're listening you can just say, "oh that sounds nice or that doesn't sound good but when you're composing you have to do that as well as do lots of other things.

Yes, because when you're listening it, it, you're just listening to something that somebody else worked on or has had trouble with it, but when you're actually composing you're the one who has witnessed the trouble and you're the one who wrote it down and gave it to somebody to play… it's a lot more work, but it's still, it, it's very rewarding.

Finally, one student referred to the ability to change the materials when composing:

Well, when you're composing, it's, it's kinda different. Because, like, you get to listen with the computer and you get to sing it to yourself as you play it back and you can make your changes, but when you listen you cannot change it. It's not if you're listening, it's not your style and yours to change, so.

Answers given in both interviews indicate differences between composing and listening. The experiences of thinking more critically and listening attentively to make decisions about musical choices were reflected in six of the eight students' answers. The two remaining participants were more emphatic about the critical role listening plays while composing. It is interesting to note that other studies involving students of differing ages and differing levels of musical tuition in and outside of school-based programs revealed results similar to

those reported in this study. Odam (2000) found that the majority of his subjects reported that composing required thinking and hard work. Younker (2000a) also found that students differentiated between composing and listening in that composing required more work and critical thought.

## Implications

Instruments with which students are to compose can hinder or contribute to students' motivation. As revealed in the results, some students did think that one should be able to play an instrument, most notably a piano, the instrument on which they were asked to compose. Relationships between facility on an instrument and compositional approaches have been investigated in a small number of students. Burnard (1995) found that instrument selection is critical to children's compositional process, influencing the ways they relate to composition, and the nature of the musical outcome. More recently, Swanwick and Franca (1999) related instrument selection to learned movement patterns, reporting that children when composing "may practice their repertoire of musical schemata, reorganizing and extending them" (p. 15).

Many studies have revealed strategies utilized by students while composing, including exploration and expansion of ideas (e.g., Cohen, 1980; Kratus, 1985; Swanwick and Tillman, 1986; Christensen, 1993; Hickey, 1995; Barrett, 1996; Younker, 2000a/b). The results reflect age differences between students who referred to exploration and those who spoke about ideas as being the impetus for composition. Whether or not this finding should influence how composing activities are structured for students across ages and tuition settings remains unknown until further investigation is undertaken. It could indicate, however, the importance of engaging students in dialogue about how ideas can be generated from exploration, and then realizing the content of those conversations.

Ownership of musical decisions is a characteristic noted in studies that focus on students' perceptions about the roles critical and creative thinking play while composing (e.g.,

Younker, 2002). Vested interest in activities generates intrinsic motivation for participation and contributes to self-constructed musical meaning. Students' ownership over decisions while creating original material allows for the application and construction of knowledge about music and musical understanding. Not only does this provide strong support for composing activities – it also serves as a guide to engaging students in dialogue and effective questions as they compose.

Students' perceptions about similarities and differences between listening and composing indicate some concerns. How we engage students as they listen is crucial if they are to experience active engagement. Swanwick and Franca (1999) investigated the quality of musical understanding as revealed while composing, performing, and audience-listening and suggested that students' musical understanding cannot be developed unless they are given opportunities to exercise higher levels of thinking. Equally critical are discussions that occur after listening experiences in which students identify, compare and contrast, analyze, and evaluate what was heard.

### Conclusions

While much attention has been directed at composition as a viable means for music making in music classrooms over the last decade and a half, there is still much to learn about composition pedagogy. One area that has received less attention is what students think about composing–what it is, how one does it, and what one needs to know and acquire to engage in it. Gaining insight into students' thoughts about composing can provide structure and guidance when making decisions about composing in music classrooms. Recognizing and integrating students' reflections about what is meaningful can contribute to vested interests in and values of music making while involving students in reflective thinking about what they understand, perceive, and experience can enhance their growth as reflective musicians.

**Notes**

[1] In the context of my research program, the participants differed from those in a previous study in which students' perceptions about and reflections on composing were investigated (Younker, 2000a). In Younker (2000a), I investigated reflections of 8-, 11-, and 14-year-old students who had attended the same elementary school, and for the 14-year-old students, the same junior high school; never had formal musical instruction outside of the school-based music program; and, for the 14-year-old students, had never participated in the choir or instrumental programs.

[2] Results of (3) were presented in Younker, B.A. (2001). "Thought processes and strategies of thirteen-year-old students while composing." Presented at the Roundtable session of the *American Educational Research Association,* 2001 Annual Meeting, Seattle, Washington, April.

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# Why and How to Teach Music Composition: A New Horizon for Music Education, edited by Maud Hickey

**Maud Hickey**

*Reston, VA: Music Educators' National Conference
[MENC], 2003.*

*ISBN 1-56545-154-6*

**Reviewed by Matthew Thibeault**

*Stanford University*

This book on the teaching of music composition is exemplary of the kind of imaginative and boundary-exploring research that music education needs. An international assemblage of authors presents a *tour de force* which, if not an organized symphony, is great soundtrack of a book.

There is a need for just this kind of work, given the lack of emphasis on student creativity and autonomy in favor of the concert-based curriculum prevalent in the USA. Despite having received what I consider a fine education in music, I graduated without having written or performed an original composition at school. Like many of my friends then and since, experience with composing or improvising, if it were had at all, came during lunch in the band room, or at local jam sessions. Perhaps because they have not experienced composing themselves, many teachers still have little reason to notice its absence from their classrooms or to question this state of affairs.

Continuing the work of the past several years, Bennett Reimer's Northwestern University Music Education Leadership Seminar (NUMELS) series convenes leading thinkers in music

education around a single issue. Previous volumes addressed the National Standards and multiculturalism, and a forthcoming volume will address popular music. This format has the advantage of addressing a timely topic while allowing a variety of opinions to be heard (hence the suggestion that this book plays more like a soundtrack of hits from different artists). To this end, Maud Hickey does a commendable job editing and arranging the work of international scholars.

The strength of this volume lies in the generous and diverse conceptual approaches to composition. Cultural psychology, social constructivism, and dialogic inquiry loom large in many of the chapters, and are reviewed along with philosophical and psychological perspectives on creativity by Margaret Barrett and Maud Hickey. Most of the authors concur with the situated nature of learning in the music classroom. Methodological richness is indicated by frequent references to luminaries such as Bakhtin, Bruner, Cassirer, Gardner, Geertz, Greene (Maxine), and Vygotsky.

Student composers represent another group of thinkers whose ideas are explored in depth through several chapters. Margaret Barrett examines two 10-year old composers; Joyce Eastlund Gromko presents work with elementary age students as well as 4 and 5 year-olds. Sandra Stauffer showcases the work of middle school students with a notation program, and Magne Espeland explores the social aspects of composing around the idea of an African Drum with middle school age children. Some of the compositions are presented in a performance transcription in addition to standard or non-standard graphical notation. Transcriptions of conversations are also used frequently to illuminate some of the deeper meanings. Espeland provides interpretation and analysis of a qualitative nature based on his observations of a performance and a videotape of the work students undertook in preparing that performance.

The book is divided into five sections of 1-3 chapters each; Philosophy, Creativity, The Developing Composer, Contexts for Composing, and The Role of the Teacher. The first two sections provide foundations for talking about composing by exploring how psychologists and philosophers have explored

composition and creativity. The view of composition as meaning-making and dialogic in nature sets the stage for the kind of work found throughout the book. Researchers coming from a quantitative background, or those with less research experience in general, will find these chapters particularly helpful in establishing a common vocabulary and exploring some of the important ramifications of these terms.

For readers seeking an orientation to the practical implementation of composition programs, Jonathan Stephens' chapter, "Imagination in Education: Strategies and Models in the Teaching and Assessment of Composition," from the section on the developing composer, would be a good place to start. Stephens tracks the ideological development of British music educators from an emphasis on knowledge about composers and technical approaches to theory, towards more progressive and exploratory activities, with composition at the center of this work. Stephens describes many of the issues and questions that were faced, providing a "sneak preview" of what we are likely to face here in America as we attempt to address the implementation of composition, as envisaged in such documents as the National Standards. Stephens' personal note on his own developing interest in composing, dating from his early explorations with a player piano, provides an inside view of the wonders that composing can offer. His awareness of the important benefits of exploration is a delight to the reader.

The final two sections of the book present an examination of the contexts for composing as well as the role of the teacher. Brian Moore explores some of the contexts for "The Birth of a Song," including addressing issues of technology. Sam Reese's chapter, "Responding to Student Compositions," is a solid chapter with practical advice for teachers, and would make a wonderful reading for a college class of aspiring music teachers. Betty Anne Younker presents a rationale and appreciation for feedback in the classroom composition community.

If there is a missed opportunity in *Why and How to Teach Music Composition*, it is the omission of significant consideration of students' music: popular music and compositions with lyrics.

Popular music is hinted at in Gromko's discussion of having students learn "their music" (p. 71), and mentioned in Stephens' essay. However, despite the presence of the word "rap" one time (p. 145), this book is completely devoid of the music that any student I know would want to make—particularly from upper-elementary to college-age; students I have worked with want to express themselves through pop music. Whether it be a computer-music student who wants to echo the producer/ composer Moby, or a third grader who wants to re-conceive a class song as a rap, I have found students continually dreaming, thinking, and music-making in the vernacular.

This neglect of popular styles is not merely problematic for ignoring a favorite choice that students will often make when given the chance. Remixes, rock music, use of turntables, and other aspects of popular styles that emphasize *music concrete*, lyrics, and cultural values that might be less appreciated or understood by music teachers, present special issues and problems that need to be explored if the teaching of composition is to be taken seriously by students. None of the thirteen or so examples of student compositions presented are popular in style, none contain lyrics, and teachers who will be exploring composition will have to turn elsewhere for guidance (I personally used Kenneth Koch's books on teaching poetry, and would also recommend British writers such as George Odam or Keith Swanwick).

Other drawbacks are minor and not unexpected. Creativity is referred to somewhat passively, as Maud Hickey talks about "creative people" and research into "the creative person," rather than more actively as a verb or a process in a way that such thinkers as John Dewey would have espoused. Throughout, depth and richness of empirical data is lacking. Readers are not given enough information about situations, persons, or compositions to consider alternate explanations for phenomena. If qualitative and ethnographic approaches are going to advance the field, then we need more than colorful examples from a methodological standpoint.

In the end, once composition is valued, successes may sustain teachers and researchers through the growing pains that

will inevitably accompany these explorations. What I found most rewarding in my own teaching was that, in allowing students space to be expressive, we discovered new territory to share our music and our lives. Students sang me songs they wrote that I had somehow previously failed to invite, and other students were delighted to learn songs when they "knew the composer". These moments are some of my most prized, and I commend the authors for advancing the profession's commitment to engage students through composition.

*Why and How to Teach Music Composition* provides a good complement to the other NUMELS volumes, and is an essential rallying point for research into composition. It will also prove interesting to those researchers interested in exploring socio-cultural, qualitative, and philosophical approaches to understanding music learning.

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# Longitudinal Qualitative Research:
# Analyzing Change through Time

**By Johnny Saldaña**
*Walnut Creek CA: Altamira Press, 2003*
*ISBN: 0-7591-0295-3 hardcover*
*0-7591-0296-1 paperback*

**Reviewed by Laura A. McCammon**
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In the recording industry, a "crossover artist" is one who worked primarily in one style of music and then records a song which is intended for other music markets. Country-Western singer Faith Hill did this, for example, when her song "That Kiss" played on Pop Music stations. In many ways, Johnny Saldaña is also a crossover artist/researcher. Long one of the most respected drama/theatre education researchers in the US, Saldaña, Professor of Theatre at Arizona State University, has published a book on longitudinal research aimed at the broad community of qualitative researchers. He is the first drama/theatre educator that I know of to do this.

I should probably "come clean" right here and state that I have known Johnny Saldaña since 1988. Not only have we collaborated on a couple of projects together, but I have been aware of and involved in to some extent with many of his research projects including reading early drafts of this book since he presented it first in 2001 at the American Education Research Association Annual Meeting in Seattle and again at the American Alliance for Theatre and Education (AATE) Conference in San Diego (where it was awarded the AATE Research Award.) Some of my work is also cited in the book. I am inclined, therefore, to be partial, but I also believe this to be

a very good book and one that will be of use to anyone in any field who wished to do longitudinal research!

*Longitudinal Qualitative Research: Analyzing Change through Time*, is "recommended as a supplement to introductory texts in qualitative inquiry or as a handbook for researchers conducting long-term fieldwork" (p. ix). While Saldaña has carefully incorporated ideas from a variety of research methods texts, he bases the book in large part on his own experiences with three longitudinal projects in theatre education: 1) a seven year Theatre Response Study tracking the perceptions of an initial group of 64 children from kindergarten through 6th grade, 2) Survival, a 20 month collaboration with an Anglo teacher as she came to understand how to "survive" as an arts teacher in predominantly Hispanic school, and 3) "Someday When I'm Famous", an ethnodrama based on a 2 ½ year study of the high school theatre experiences of one of the participants in the Audience Response study. One of the strengths of this book is the frequent use of examples from Saldaña's research and from other longitudinal projects in a variety of other fields.

While Saldaña humorously notes that longitudinal studies take a "lonnnnnnnng time", he defines longitudinal as those studies, especially in educational settings, which last a minimum of nine months. In the first chapter, he establishes a theoretical base for longitudinal research by exploring concepts of time and change and the search for change—the goals of longitudinal inquiry. Chapter Two explores longitudinal research design and looks particularly at how a project can be managed over the long haul especially when there might be changes in the research team. He offers useful insights, based on his own experiences, for data gathering and management, and he discusses in depth the ethical issues and challenges involving informed consent and "Human Subjects" permission for a study that will probably evolve over time.

One of the most challenging aspects of longitudinal research lies in finding ways to analyze a huge corpus of data. This is the topic of Chapter Three. Here Saldaña describes data analysis as separating into discrete and sometimes over lapping *pools, ponds* or even *puddles*, the large *ocean* of data collected over time. He describes ways in which to search for central or

core codes in the data, and the usefulness of data analysis packages such as QSR NVivo, The Ethnograph or NUD*IST. Some packages are better, Saldaña notes for example, for studies three years or longer.

One of the most useful aspects of Saldaña's work is the set of questions he developed to guide the analysis of longitudinal qualitative data, introduced briefly on pages 62-65, and described in more detail in Chapters Four and Five. Saldaña developed five questions which can be used initially to frame data analysis:

1. What is different from one pond or pool of data through the next?

2. When do changes occur through time?

3. What contextual and intervening conditions appear to influence and affect participant changes through time?

4. What are the dynamics of participant changes through time?

5. What preliminary assertions (propositions, findings, results, conclusions, interpretations, and   theories) about participant changes can be made as data analysis progresses? (p. 63)

Another set of questions help generate "descriptive information to help answer the five framing questions." Saldaña notes that these are more quantitative in nature:

1. What increases or emerges through time?

2. What is cumulative through time?

3. What kinds of surges or epiphanies occur through time?

4. What decreases or ceases through time?

5. What remains constant or consistent through time?

6. What is idiosyncratic through time?

7. What is missing through time? (p.64)

The final set of questions were developed to facilitate integration of descriptive information and to "help the researcher toward richer levels of analysis and interpretation":

1. Which changes interrelate through time?

2. Which changes through time oppose or harmonize with natural human development or constructed social processes?

3. What are participant or conceptual rhythms (phases, stages, cycles, and so on) through time?

4. What is the through-line of the study? (p. 64)

This text is easily readable and useful not only for what Saldaña says, but for how he says it. The tone is friendly and collegial; the text is enriched by the stories of Saldaña's own research projects and the excerpts from numerous other studies. While Saldaña does rely on artistic examples throughout, he is careful to explain them. He uses metaphor frequently to explain complex issues. For example, he compares the analysis of multiple strands of core categories to the conductor's score for a symphony (pp. 132-134). It is obvious that Saldaña has treated the complex process of longitudinal data analysis with equally complex forms of description and comparison, all in the effort to make his ideas accessible to many readers.

What I found particularly encouraging were Saldaña's accounts of wrong turns he took or problems he encountered. Not only do these episodes model the persistence one must have to do longitudinal data analysis, but they also help establish Saldaña's "bonafides". The reader is assured that he has developed his insights based on rigorous work of his own.

As I read accounts from other longitudinal works Saldaña cites such as the documentary *Scared Straight Twenty Years Later* (Shapiro, 1999) or "Life at 85 and 92: A Qualitative Longitudinal Study of How the Oldest Old Experience and

Adjust to the Increasing Uncertainty of Existence" (•gren, 1998), I found myself interested enough to consider looking for copies to explore for myself.  Saldaña opened up other research areas for me.  Saldaña notes that, "Virtually no one outside of theatre education accesses my field's research literature…" (p. x).  It is my hope that as others read Longitudinal Qualitative Research, they will become interested in reading some of the arts education research.  After all, a crossover artist frequently inspires interest in the original field; look, for example, at what River Dance and Enya have done for Celtic music.

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We are deeply grateful to following individuals who gave their time and expertise in the review process.

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# 2004 Dissertation Award
## Sponsored by the Arts and Learning
## Special Interest Group of the
## American Educational Research Association

The Dissertation Award Committee of the Arts and Learning SIG is pleased to announce the winner of the 2004 Dissertation Award:

African-Centred Art Education:
An Alternative Multicultural Curriculum and
Pedagogy.

Dr. Samuel Adu-Poku

*Youngstown State University*

The award committee also acknowledges with an honorable mention a second submission:

The Ensemble Art of the Solo

Dr. Kimberly Powell

*The Pennsylvania State University*

The award is presented annually to the scholar whose work, in the first instance, is of interest to Arts and Learning SIG members, and in the opinion of the panel of judges, bears the hallmarks of integrity, quality, depth of knowledge, style, and significance to the field. All jurors found the papers by Drs. Adu-Poku and Powell compelling, however several jurors noted that Dr. Adu-Poku's work was of critical significance to Canadian art education.

This year's competition was open to all doctoral students whose thesis had been completed in the three years prior to the annual meeting. Presentation of the awards will be made at the Arts and Learning Special Interest Group Business meeting in San Diego. In addition, both papers will be included in the 2005 edition of the Arts and Learning Research Journal.

# 2005 Dissertation Award
## Sponsored by the Arts and Learning
## Special Interest Group of the
## American Educational Research Association

The Dissertation Award Committee of the Arts and Learning SIG invites entries for the Dissertation Award. A paper, based on the author's recently completed dissertation, should be submitted. The award will be presented at the business meeting of Arts and Learning SIG at the Annual Meeting of AERA. The award will include publication of the paper in the Arts and Learning Journal.

**Criteria:**
The award is presented annually to the scholar whose work, in the first instance, is of interest to Arts and Learning SIG members, and in the opinion of the panel of judges, bears the hallmarks of integrity, quality, depth of knowledge, style, and significance to the field.

**Eligibility:**
The competition is open to all doctoral students whose thesis has been completed in the three years prior to the April, 2004 annual meeting (i.e. a dissertation defended in 2002, 2003, 2004).

**How to submit:**
The manuscript should be typed, double-spaced (including quotations, footnotes, and references) in APA style on 8.5 X 11 inch paper, with ample margins, and should run about 20 pages or less in typed length. The author's name and affiliation should appear on a separate cover page, and only on this page, to ensure anonymity in the reviewing process. An abstract of 100-150 words should be included on a separate page. Five fully blinded copies of the manuscript should be submitted for blind reviewing. In addition to the hard copies, e-mail the documents in MSWord 95 to the committee chair. Send all materials to

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Manuscripts are accepted for consideration with the understanding that they are original material and are not under consideration for publication elsewhere, nor will they be sent to another publication simultaneously. Authors whose manuscripts are accepted for publication who are not alredy members of the A&L SIG are required to join.

**Submission dates:**

Deadlines for submission: December 31, 2004. The review process will take place during January-February, 2005. The winner will be announced at the 2005 Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (AERA). The paper will be published in the 2005/2006 volume of the Arts and Learning Research Journal