STUDIES IN ART Education

A JOURNAL OF ISSUES AND RESEARCH IN ART EDUCATION

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EDITORIAL

What I Know

KRISTIN G. CONGDON

Senior Editor

The topic of this journal issue is on out-of-school art education—a subject of great interest to me, as I have taught art in correctional settings, a residential treatment school, recreational organizations, retirement homes, nursing homes, homeless shelters, and in other community-based settings. What I have learned from these out-of-school teaching experiences often has motivated my research, as have the numerous folk artists with whom I have worked over the years. While frequently overlooked as educators in community-based settings, folk artists provide communities with rich cultural expressions that help individuals and groups establish identity, purpose, and problem-solving skills (Congdon, 2005).

This journal is also the last *Studies* issue published under my editorship. Just as I have attempted to pass on lessons from my community-based work, I will pass on what I know about *Studies* to Laurie Hicks, the next senior editor. It is, after all, what Doug Blandy did for me when I took over the position. Passing on information is what we do as educators. We don't hold onto knowledge and wisdom; instead, we (attempt to) teach it to others.

> What often makes out-of-school education so powerful is the opportunity to invent, play, and bring together ideas in new and different ways.

The knowledge I pass on to Laurie about *Studies* is mostly technical and has to do with forms, policies, deadlines, and ways of working with authors and board members. Whatever wisdom I have accumulated in my role as *Studies* editor, however, is different. This is a deeper kind of knowledge that is harder to put to put into words, as it is learned through experience. There is a rhythm to publishing *Studies*, and a teamwork that makes it function successfully. Having a good team to work with is truly a blessing. My assistant and associate editors, Amy Barnickel and Laurie, were ever-present, dependable, and professional. Their commitment and support was unwavering. Julie Voelker-Morris was excellent as a copyeditor. My good fortune extends to Karen Keifer-Boyd, the Commentary Editor, and Sara Wilson McKay, the Media Review Editor. Past Editor Doug Blandy guided me through a few sticky issues, and the Board provided stellar reviews

Holiday Fair at the 3rd Ward, an arts and design collective in Brooklyn. Photo by Liz Clayman.

with keen insights and helpful direction. And no senior editor could have a better publishing partner than Lynn Ezell, the National Art Education Association's Publications Manager. I am grateful to her and everyone at NAEA who supported and championed a redesign for *Studies* during difficult economic times. I was lucky; I had a strong community of editors and reviewers as I became part of *Studies*' publishing culture. The journal will now change as new editors and reviewers take over. Lessons I have learned from this experience will stay with me.

I continue to learn from collaborative experiences, and I marvel at all the creative and successful partnerships that come from sharing knowledge, objects, ideas, stories, and spaces. Collaborations provide individuals with knowledge and the experience of being part of a group. Increasingly, as D.I.Y. communities expand, more people are joining artistic communities. One example is the 3rd Ward in Brooklyn, an art and design incubator for innovation where members gain access to media labs, wood working tools, and photographic studios (Ryzik, July 3, 2010). While the 3rd Ward facilitates the exchange of knowledge by providing studio space, teachers, and event planners, other kinds of learning are often facilitated through participatory artworks in museum settings. For example, in the summer of 2010, Rivane Neuenschwander engaged visitors in exchanging wishes at the New Museum in New

York City. Approaching a wall of colored ribbons, museumgoers were invited to write a wish on a ribbon and re-place it on the wall for someone else's wish. By this action, the artist has "turned private desire into collective responsibility" (Rosenberg, 2010, C21). What often makes out-of-school education so powerful is the opportunity to invent, play, and bring together ideas in new and different ways. The space doesn't have to be fancy or elaborate. For instance, Soup, a monthly gathering of creative people in Detroit, generates numerous ideas as they sit at tables constructed from milk crates and old doors. Ideas range from "creating a pocket park… [to] devising a surveillance-camera video montage" (Ryzik, August 4, 2010, C1).

Working with knowledgeable and dedicated people is key to anyone's success. But when you have the opportunity to work with wise people whose way of working, teaching, and attending to life's gifts and challenges is different, then something previously unseen can become apparent. These are often ways of being that fill us with gratitude and awareness, developing the kind of knowledge that gives us purpose and our lives meaning. I have experienced this awareness from students, artists, and teachers in many places and spaces, most of them in out-of-school settings. You know these individuals and places when you encounter them. They are often people and/or creative spaces that jolt you into another way of thinking and acting. Numerous examples of this jolting awareness can be found.

For example, playwright Michael Locascio (2011) explains how he discovered wisdom in Ellen Stewart, the well-regarded founder of La MaMa Experimental Theatre Club in New York City: "She never read any of the plays [she was given]. She would hold them in her hand, and if she got her 'clicks,' as she called it, the piece would get the O.K." (AR6). While this might sound oddly irrational, Locascio explains, "Her great talent seemed to be to allow the free play of her instincts. I suspect that in the beginning she felt what she was doing more than she knew what she was doing, and the wonder is that her feelings proved to be right on the mark" (AR6).

This way of approving plays may sound odd, but so too may be learning from someone else who performs your work. Keith Richards (2010) explains that after the Rolling Stones wrote and produced the well-known song "Satisfaction" in 1965, they didn't perform it live for years because they couldn't do it well outside the recording studio. It wasn't until they heard Aretha Franklin sing it that they then knew how to perform it properly themselves. It's as if they needed someone else to guide them on how to best know their own creation.

Sometimes, making something work or figuring out the right action to take needs a unique way of thinking or approaching a task. For example, instead of establishing a place-based gallery in downtown New York, Amy Smith-Stewart decided to continuously reestablish her exhibition space, thereby focusing her audience on finding art instead of just going to see it (Williams, 2010). There is a shift in approaching artwork in these examples, and each example provides us with a new way of working in out-of-school art settings. Knowledge is obtained through intuition (by Ellen Stewart), by listening to someone else interpret your artwork (by the Stones), and by rethinking the way one approaches a gallery or creative space (by Smith-Stewart).

Serving as senior editor of *Studies* and teaching in various out-of-school settings has provided me with wonderful experiences that have blessed me with knowledge and, sometimes, a bit of wisdom. Art helps us see the world differently (Tucker, 2008), but wisdom comes when we understand the encounter and act differently because of it. The same can be said of encountering creative people or experiencing intensely pleasurable events.

The authors in this issue of *Studies* all pass on something they know about out-of-school art education. **Alina Campana** examines the work of five artist/educators who also function as activists in a community-based program in Tucson, Arizona; and **Karen Knutson, Kevin Crowley, Jennifer Lin Russell,** and **Mary Steiner** explore informal learning environments in museum education. **Leanne Levy** and **Sandra Weber** describe an art program using new media with teenage mothers, **G. E. Washington** describes how performance in a community-based setting can help refugee children identify ideas about home, and **Donalyn Heise** and **Laurie MacGillivray** describe an art education program in a homeless shelter. A commentary by **Joshua Green** and **Anne Kindseth** examines the relationship between school-based and out-of-school arts learning. Two media reviews related to out-of-school art educational practices complete this journal issue: **Jennifer L. Motter** explores the popular PostSecret website, and **Rachel Marie-Crane Williams** critiques the documentary *Concrete, Steel & Paint*.

It is clear that art education happens in diverse places, and learning takes place in myriad ways. As art educators, we should embrace any and every program that successfully and appropriately teaches us to understand and engage in our world more completely and purposefully. What we know is that innovative ways of creating and living are continuously possible. What we pass on as teachers should include both knowledge and wisdom, in every setting imaginable.

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"The study of performance will help us find the actions, interactions, and relations—the verbs of art—in our community-based art education work."

Community-Based Art Education and Performance:
Pointing to a Place Called Home

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College of Saint Rose

Can art make a difference? This is a call for a new sense of interconnectivity among visual art programs in and out of schools. This common ground will be found in the embodiment of performance, critical reflection, and social change within art learning. One goal of this article is to encourage educators to use the *verbs of art* for building curriculum investigations that integrate social change and community engagement. The cite/sight/site of our critique is centered on an after-school art program for refugee children. Two focal questions: Can performance help art educators become more-effective leaders in community development? Will the study of performance enhance our commitment to active inquiry and social learning?

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This research was first presented at a conference entitled *Youth and Community Development: How the Arts Serve Impoverished Communities* (New Paltz, NY, June 2010).

Prologue

The following are selected excerpts from a story in our local newspaper (Hale-Spencer, 2007):

> In a flood of refugees, Devota Nyiraneza traveled through remote valleys, always hidden, sometimes walking through chest-high water for days at a time.
>
> . . .
>
> Now she is living in New York's capital city, wearing a fuzzy orange fleece in the heat of the summer, and for the first time in her adult life, the war is not at her heels.

Devota Nyiraneza is the parent of three children in our after-school art program. Her children were born in several different African countries as Mrs. Nyiraneza traveled for the most part alone on foot across four countries—Rwanda to Burundi; to the Democratic Republic of the Congo; to the Republic of Congo, Cameroon and, with the help of a stranger, to the United States via the United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees in Yaounde, Cameroon's capital city. Besides the horrors of war, Mrs. Nyiraneza spent half of her adult life fleeing two forced marriages, rebel forces, corrupt government officials, bandits, rapists, manipulative "friends," starvation, disease, and death. At 14, she left Rwanda after hiding for 2 days in a space between the ceiling and roof of her parents' house. When the fight settled she came down to find she was the sole survivor from her 50-member family. After 2 months Devota Nyiraneza left her village and began the almost 15-year journey to the new place she calls home: Albany. She is a 30-year old refugee of the Rwandan genocide. (p. 1)

What is a Refugee?

Through violence and threats to their safety, refugees are forced to leave their hometowns and extended families. The United Nations' Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees meets regularly to define and examine the status of the world's refugees (UNHCR, 2007). This collective defines a refugee as any person who is outside of the country of his/her nationality due to well-founded fears of persecution. This includes people who have fled war or other forms of violence because of their race, religion, ethnic or social group, gender, sexuality, and so forth. Currently, 350 refugees arrive in Albany, New York, every year (Acorcoran, 2009). Before being permanently resettled, refugees usually spend two to three years in camps in several countries. Because their journey is unexpected and forced, refugees often speak little or no English. They come with stereotypical information about the United States, usually from movies and mass media.

This is the start of my second year as the director of a college service-learning program at the Emmaus United After-school and Family Literacy Center for Refugees in Albany. The program is sponsored by the United Methodist Church and actively supported by The College of Saint Rose. The program is popular in our college. Our students are encouraged to volunteer or devote considerable portions of their course fieldwork to develop after-school art, poetry, music, life skills, and English as a Second Language (ESL) classes for 62 children and youth whose families fled one of ten countries—Sudan, Democratic Republic of Congo, Republic of Congo, Nepal, Thailand, Iraq, Burma, Rwanda, Pakistan, and Malaysia. This work is good. I am beginning to wonder, however, if "art

classes," with the simple objective of creating art for the sake of art, are situated outside of the central concerns and considerations of the after-school program. The mission of the organization is to directly improve the lives and standards of living for people who are refugees (RISSE, 2009). Albany is one of a handful of cities used by the federal government to relocate refugees from around the world (USCRI, 2010).

Each child in our after-school art program has a life vs. death story that precedes the harsh journey to Albany. The newspaper reporter ended the story on refugees in our community with a one-line quote for Devote Nyiraneza: "In life," she said, "there are always going to be some kind of problems" (Hale-Spencer, 2007, p. 21).

Stories like these have pushed me to ask what can be done differently in my work. Can the work of community-based art education be pushed more and more closely to the problems of life?

Introduction

> Imagine how the learning process would change if teachers, like [Suzanne] Lacy (community-based performance artist and teacher), considered the aesthetic possibilities of curriculum and pedagogy. Unaware of their… potential to position themselves in an aesthetic dimension, teachers are locked in the routine of classroom instruction and management. They are too often preoccupied with fulfilling the requirements and expectations of the school's curriculum agenda… what Lacy's community-base[d] performance works offer classroom teachers is a process by which to attain agency within the context of schools by reaching out, beyond preexisting curriculum practices, to create new possibilities for interaction, one that involves teachers and their students as critical citizens with community issues and concerns. The consequence of such action is that teachers and students explore and discover new content from families, neighborhoods, and communities that contributes towards a contextual reciprocity. That is learning from the perspective of academic study. (Garoian, 1999, p. 138)

Charles Garoian (1999) is asking if teaching can be examined as an act that, like any act, can be re-positioned in order to reconfigure the relationships, interactions, and actions between and among its community of participants. Like Garoian, I am concerned with *what happens* between and among the performances of teaching, particularly out-of-school art teaching.

I have witnessed how the fight to preserve the arts has pushed educators to argue for the primacy of particular artistic disciplines, practices, and developmental approaches. We are in what appears to be an eternal battle to prove that arts matter!

Not surprisingly within our profession, tension is growing between advocacy for in- and out-of-school art learning experiences. Will school administrators decrease support for in-school programs if alternatives for art education can be mobilized outside of the classroom? Because they are unregulated and often staffed by uncertified teachers, do out-of-school programs lower the quality of arts instruction in our communities? Or, maybe, does out-of-school education in visual art have an advantage, because it is free of the policies and regulatory structures forced on K-12 school arts programs?

This study is my formal attempt to explore the idea that *the performance of art can make a difference in the experiences of everyday life.* Here I am responding to Charles Garoian's (1999, 2002) proposition for new teaching and learning possibilities generated through the juxtaposition of community and performance. There are two essential questions underlying my considerations: (1) will the study of performance help focus attention simultaneously on both social learning and object-making, and (2) can performance be used to discover new spaces of social change within art education work? The

study includes a description of performance as a field of academic engagement; this is a methodology that emphasizes a focus on the doing of actions. The emphasis on performance tied in nicely with my secondary theoretical considerations: the "verbs of art" or the actions of artmaking as a way of teaching us about ourselves and our relations to one another. Specifically I include a critique of two art projects at an after-school center for refugee children. These critiques illustrate a few reasons why a group of college students and I failed to align our art lessons for children with the community development goals articulated by an after-school center. When done for the sake of community building, I argue, art learning must adopt an emphasis on the development of relationships, social structuring, and culture, not object-making. I close the article with a brief sketch of how a community-based performance art project might help in-school educators demonstrate art education's contributions to social change and new community engagements.

Performance: What Is It?

Often in my teaching and community work, I unknowingly rely on theories and concepts of *performance*. Performance allows people to play with actions, interactions, and relationships between themselves and others. The service-learning interns and I were learning to help the refugee children to perform—act on, interact with, and build relationships between—the reality of being in Albany while performing memories of what happened before (McKenzie, 2001). A better understanding of performance as a concept eventually enabled us to employ within our community pedagogies acts of remembering, researching, searching, finding, sharing, re-making, painting, exhibiting, taping, stringing, pointing, and laying work on the floor. Through reconsideration of performance as an organizing and pedagogical tool, we learned to emphasize the actions or verbs of art while teaching art for the sake of community building.

For my students and me, this was not an obvious shift. I have come to understand that we were examining our art teaching and learning as performance in order to see and articulate our relationships differently. In the development of contemporary art education, there are fundamental misunderstandings about the *use* of performance. Commonly, performance is understood as simply another artmaking medium, rather than a different artmaking concept (Garoian, 1999; Garoian & Gaudelius, 2001, 2004). In conversation, I have heard educators as well as artists complain about having to "make room for" yet another discipline. Typically this complaint is followed by the irksome retort, "But I'm a visual art, not a performing [art,] teacher!"

This popular retort against performance is grounded in a disciplinary bias steeped in assumptions that overlook, misunderstand, and restrict the idea of performance. A more rigorous unpacking of the term will yield insights that diagram performance as a method of study or way of seeing, not merely a "new medium" of creative expression. Furthermore, the theoretical frames generated by the study of performance[1] can be used to recast the theories and assertions of art and visual culture education in lieu of more-dynamic modes of community engagements.

Primarily, performances are actions. Performance, however, must also include the deliberate choice to "show" what is, has, ought to, or could be (Schechner, 2003). Performance is more than simply "doing" activity. It is a "showing doing" that is done or cited in light of reflexivity. Through performance, my interns and I learn not only who we are, but also who our children are, and how we fit together. Performance can best be understood as recycled and repeated human behavior or "twice-behaved behavior" (Carlson, 1996; Denzin, 2003; McKenzie, 2001; Schechner & Appel, 1990; Schechner, 2003).

"As" Performance

Built into the study of performance is the possibility for a critical reflectivity—the interchange between the doing and the citation of doing. It is critical reflectivity that makes an analysis of performance most useful to art learning. Everything we do—combing, tying, driving, making art—can be looked at "as" performance. All "activity carried out with a consciousness of itself" (Carlson, 1996, p. 4) can, in hindsight, be seen as a performance. "Any behavior, event, action or thing can be studied 'as' performance, can be analyzed in terms of doing, behaving, and showing" (Schechner, 2003, p. 32). To illustrate Carlson's point, Schechner describes the difference between viewing of the spherical earth from space and on a flatten world map. He proposes maps and globes are convenient ways to visualize, interpret, and summarize the topography and demographic features of our world:

> Everyone knows the world is round, but flat maps are extremely useful. You can't see the whole world or even a significant part of it at the same time on a globe… But the "real earth" does not look like its mapped representations—or even like a globe. People were astonished when they first saw photographs taken from space. There was no sign of a human presence at all… They (maps and globes) perform a particular interpretation of how the world ought to be. A map is a "projection," a particular way of representing a sphere on a flat surface. (Schechner, 2003, p. 32)

Maps are tools to interpret boundaries, territories, and special features of the places we inhabit (or imagine inhabiting). Schechner makes it clear that maps are used to articulate and argue for different ways of seeing. Maps are flattened, tucked into briefcases, carried where we go, laid on tables or tacked to walls, and even viewed sometimes by whole groups of people. Laurie Hicks and Roger King (1999), art education researchers, argue convincingly that mapping constitutes a pedagogical performance that can be harnessed. At the Emmaus After-school Program, the children and teachers discovered world maps can also be spread on the floor and used as a prop in the performance of pointing to a place called home. Maps can become part of the *action* of artmaking, awareness raising, or community building.

Like metaphors, maps and performances are used to cite the meaning of other interpretations. Maps are projections of the earth, and performances are retellings of restored behavior. Combing your hair, tying your shoes, driving a car, dancing, writing, singing, and painting are a few of the behaviors that can be restored and retold through performance. Like pointing on a map to home, combing hair, dancing, tying a shoe, singing, writing, driving a car, and painting can all be represented—performed—in order to retell points of view on an idea. We learn about ourselves, others in our communities, and our relationship to almost anything through the re-presentation or the performance of meanings. Further stretching Carlson's social theory of performance, Schechner (2003) writes,

> The habits, rituals, and routines of life are restored behaviors. Restored behavior is living behavior treated as a film director treats a strip of film. These strips of behavior can be rearranged or reconstructed; they are independent of the causal system (personal, social, political, technological, etc.) that brought them into existence. They have a life of their own… Restored behavior can be of long duration as in ritual performances [or the performances of learning English] or of short duration as in fleeting gestures such as waving goodbye [mixing watercolors or pointing to home] (p. 28).

It is important to note Schechner's emphasis on behaviors, not the objects. There is a difference between information gained through the observation and study of behaviors and that of objects. Broadly speaking, objects represent,

illustrate, or can be used as props for ideas. Behaviors or, more accurately, performances share information by doing and interpreting meaning (Piper, 1996). Objects can stand apart from the logic, laws, and controlling forces that govern their makers. Performances cannot.

Yet objects and performances are both about obligation. During engagements with art, the learner momentarily becomes displaced and then re-included as a part of what they are reading. The entire context of the world around us and how we relate comes to bear through the interpretative process of reading art. When engaged with art we learn "what it means to live as free subjects in an unfree world" (hooks, 1995, p. 8). In after-school art programs, as in the K-12 art classrooms, individuals explore their relationship to art, life, and the social structure of their world. "It must never be forgotten that the aim of art appreciation is not to 'analyze' pictures or to 'learn to understand' a world of art. It is much more important to make the individual sensitive to its [an art object's] values in order that he [or she] can relate himself [or herself] to it meaningfully" (Lowenfeld, 1957, p. 33). We use art as a vehicle to learn more about our experiences and ourselves.

Personal Palette of Color

> The art class opens a lot of opportunities for the children to get out of their routine and enjoy. They can use colors to draw things from the country they came from and draw things they see here. They are here but they are not forgetting what happened before (Rifat Nazir, personal communication, January, 19, 2009).

The education director of the after-school program, Rifat Nazir, shares this statement during a staff orientation with me and the art teaching interns.

Three 10-year-old boys are in the middle of an intense watercolor painting lesson. The project began with the guiding question: *What are the colors of your country's flag?* Three first-year art education majors—Rebecca, Lisa, and Michelle—organized this introductory lesson around the process of making personal palettes using colors from the nation's flag of each child's home country. Immediately the kids were hooked. With minimum encouragement, they began independently researching the flags of their three home countries. They made small magic marker reproductions thick with the flag colors, and then the children created nametags in the shape of tiny fish using these colors. There were 12 children in the class, and seven different "flag templates" were created. Figure 1 is a photograph of the children intently learning for themselves to mix and apply watercolors using their personal palettes of color. When they wrote the lesson, Rebecca, Lisa, and Michelle had no idea the flag question would be such a good hook for the project. In fact, it worked so well that the children would not stop coloring with magic markers on the first day, and then they would not stop painting on the second day. This introductory watercolor lesson stretched for almost three class periods. The children and their teaching interns completed a couple of art projects that semester, but few rivaled the personal palettes of color for generating enthusiasm and interest.

Unfortunately, Rebecca, Lisa, and Michelle did not completely understand the critical implications posed by their guiding questions at the time. These interns were simply following the lead of the after-school education director. They simply wanted to "use colors to draw things from the children's country." Like many of us, these young educators failed to catch and build on the critical implications in the act of organizing personal palettes of colors around the individual histories and journeys of children. They did not ask broader questions about the implications of mixing the actions of art and learning. Garoian (2002) characterizes the possibilities in such questions:

Figure 1. Water Color Painting Exercise, 10-year-old boys.

> Thus, the purpose of creating and performing identity in the classroom as art is not for children to romanticize the past, to revel in nostalgia, or to trivialize learning activities in school. On the contrary, it is meant to encourage critical reflection as they compare and contrast their memories and cultural histories with the academic knowledge that they learn in school. The performance of identity as art finds its historical and theoretical roots in the work of performance artists… (p. 122)

The children were not making performance art. Yet, how could the integration of performance concepts help the teaching interns discover new ways to use the personal palettes of color as starting points for critical reflections? Through the exchange of memories and cultural histories, could the children develop an infectious enthusiasm for understanding the deep meaning, symbols, and personal consequences of painting with the *colors of their flag*?

Transformation, Art, and Education

Like the education director, Michelle, Rebecca, Lisa, and I believed "art class opens a lot of opportunities for the children to get out of their routine and enjoy" (Rifat Nazir, personal communication, January, 19, 2009). However, we did not question the assumption that acts of making art, in and of themselves, could be socially impactful.

One group of community-based artists in New Orleans, The Crossroads Project, understands *social change* as the "transformation in the formal and informal systems of society that lead to positive outcomes such as greater openness, equality and appreciation among people" (Knight & Schwarzman, 2005, p. xvii). Whether we're talking about a community, classroom, or perhaps the entire field of art education, change requires an alteration of perspective and point of view. Change and transformation are interlocking concepts, and art has been understood as an important levee in this combination (Booth, 2003; Goldbard, 2006; O'Brien & Little, 1990). Art

is the "fuel" feeding our yearning to connect to whatever appears in front of us—to connect in ways that force us to see the world differently (Booth, 2003, p. 22). bell hooks (1995) goes as far as proclaiming, "Art constitutes one of the rare locations where acts of transcendence can take place and have a wide-ranging transformative impact" (p. 8). If art is on the side of "transcendence" and has the ability to have "transformative impacts," then *how does this happen?* What and who is being transcended? Where and when does the transformative impact of art occur? It seems that asking children to re-make images of their world using colors from the flags of their abandoned homelands would naturally lend itself to critical reflection and change. It did not. Why were we unable to identify and commit the children's work to these acts of transformation?

Looking back, there are many reasons why we might have missed these transformative possibilities. Maybe even our approach to making art with the children was misguided. The editor of our field's leading research journal, Kristin Congdon, insists that art and visual culture education "must recover from old, outdated ways of thinking, seeing, creating, teaching, and living in the world. We need to invent, explore and move with new ways of researching" (2010, p. 100). The exploration of new ways to engage and study art's transformative qualities, for me, is a question with endless possibilities..

However, art education, as evidenced in and out of schools, often fails to act on theoretical approaches supporting transformative critiques and considerations that emphasize life-changing experiences of community. In her textbook *Community Art in Action*, Congdon (2004) argues, "Because we learn about and critique twentieth-century art by studying the expression of individual artists in the isolated environment of a museum or gallery, we often neglect to think about how (or why) art has the power to connect us and help us think through community-based issues" (p. 42). On the street, in parks, or at refugee literacy centers, art has the potential to help people make connections, ask unconsidered questions, and envision new possibilities. Art, including community-based art, can help us re-consider, re-search, and re-discover obscure, difficult, contentious, or unapproachable problems or issues.

In his analysis of the street art created by Banksy (2006), Sheng Kuan Chung (2009) explains how a medium rooted in graffiti culture might help students make deep connections and gain different perspectives on issues in their lives and the lives of others. Street art can also teach youth unique techniques for raising important social concerns or questioning dominant social practices.

More and more contemporary artists, like Banksy, are intentionally blurring the lines between life and art (Hickman, 2005; Rose & Kincheloe, 2004). Many artists are situating their work in publicly accessible social settings (Congdon, 2004; Kwon, 2004; Molesworth, 2003). "Moving outside the cultural centers of artistic distribution, such as museums and galleries, and into the spaces of daily life and experience establishes more direct contact with an audience, and subsequently, with the flow and character of social life" (Richardson, 2010). Art education researchers must allow our cites/sights/sites of research to change. "University art educators need to reconfigure what they do to connect community, art and education… doing so helps the field meet the demands of a changing world" (Garber, 2004). Further, "Art education practice provides a significant opportunity for students to engage in a substantial relationship to their surroundings" (Hicks & King, 1999, p. 15). This alteration in ways of seeing our work will lead to more-dynamic demonstrations of art education's response to significant social conflicts (Congdon, 2010). In accord with the goals of this study, it is good to re-emphasize that first our work must look different—our research

should generate different views of art education and lead to different looking works of art.

Maps on the Floor, Silhouette on the Ceiling

It is four days before the community exhibition and open house for the Emmaus after-school art projects. Each student intern has agreed to create a dynamic interactive installation expanding the big idea of our semester-long service-learning project: *transforming the learning space of refugees through art*. This task proved to be more difficult than I had anticipated.

However, during the first semester at the Emmaus After-school Program, I was blessed with aggressively independent-thinking interns.[2] Before the open house, a member of the class challenged my focus for this work. Nathan, an art education graduate student, asked a series of critical-thought questions something like: "How do you see the whole community exhibit coming together? Is our work really transforming the space? And what can I do for change? I don't know where to begin with the exhibit."

I cannot recall my initial response to Nathan. I remember feeling confronted and a little offended. I remember saying to myself, "[Bleep]. It's four days before the program. Nathan, it's your responsibility to decide how to exhibit your work, not mine. There's nothing I can do to help you!"

Wisely, I kept my cynical barking to myself. Instead, I asked Nathan to meet me later that evening at the after-school literacy center. For over an hour, he and I sat looking at his studio artwork,[3] reviewing all the work he had created with the children, and examining alternative exhibition spaces in the center. We discussed two topics in particular: silhouette drawings of the children's profiles, and a beautiful 6- by-12-foot world map donated to the center by our Chair of the Art Department, Professor Karene Faul.

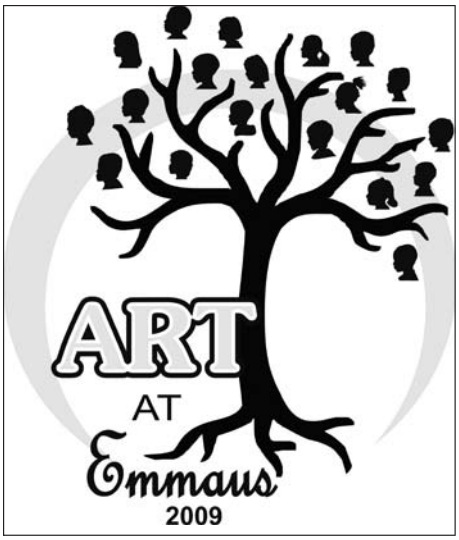


Figure 2. After-school T-shirt Logo.

During the early weeks of the art program, Nathan, along with other graduate student art teachers, made silhouette drawings of each child's profile on 2-by-3-foot drawing paper. They planned to use these drawings for other projects, but as it turned out only 19 profiles were used for the design of a T-shirt logo. Figure 2 is a copy of the handsome logo.

Nathan and I also talked about the children's reactions every time the world map was brought to eye level. Everyone in the room would swarm the giant world map, shouting and pointing all over the map to places they called home. At the same time, the entire group was talking all at once, telling each other the first story that popped into their heads. This performance was repeated when the map was placed in a hallway, the cafeteria, or against the wall in a classroom. This improvised learning activity never got "old."

I asked Nathan, "Would it be possible to 'connect' the children's silhouettes to the action

of pointing at home?" To my surprise, this single guiding question jumpstarted his work!

Figures 3-5 are pictures of a 6-year-old child from the Republic of Congo interacting with Nathan's untitled installation exhibit. Nathan mounted each child's silhouette on the ceiling in the main reception room of the after-school center. Beneath the drawings, the giant world map was laid flat on the floor, and Nathan ran one piece of blue yarn from each drawing to that particular child's country of origin. From the start, the children wanted to help install the project. They loved the idea! While it was displayed they ran around the map, searching once again for their homes. Nathan's installation was a wonderful success. It set a nice interactive tone for the community exhibition and open house.

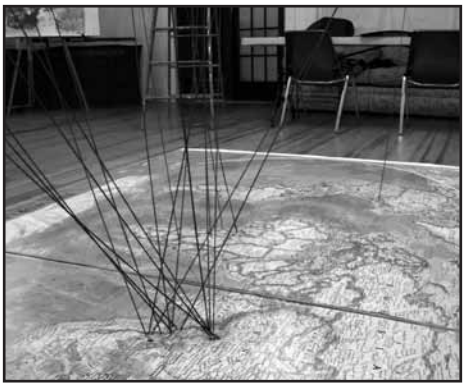
Experimenting with the Verbs of Art

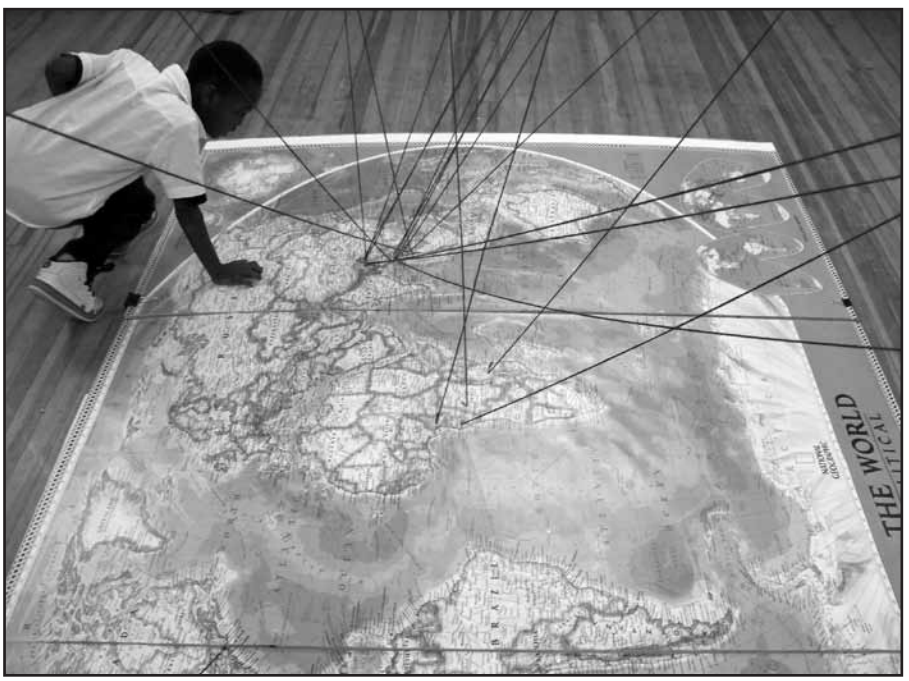
Out-of-school settings can provide an environment for art teachers to experiment with stretching teaching and learning experiences toward active, but also critical, inquiry. The lack of weighty institutional mandates allows creative teaching to get a foothold in the out-of-school site. New types of learning relationships are cultivated at community centers. Studies have shown most urban youth come to these settings because they *choose* to be actively involved in an array of projects with positive adults (Kirshner, McLaughlin, O'Donoghue, Stroble, 2008). Also, out-of-school educators often have well-established and productive relationships with coalitions of community organizations (Goldbard, 2006; Knight & Schwarzman, 2005). Many centers list the development of community collaborations as an explicit goal. Out-of-school sites provide ample room for the refinement of art teaching practices that include a greater emphasis on the growth of relationships, social structures, and culture. However, this "experiment" will require a movement away from the almost exclusive study of objects, towards the study of actions or performances.

Eric Booth (2003) shared lively stories and interactive demonstrations on the verbs of art. He animated verbs like paying attention, responding, making connections, and yearning. There is not sufficient space in this study for unpacking and elaborating on these verbs of art, but it is important to understand that Booth is pointing to a new home for the arts. He redirects our attention to the arts' "…capacity to expand your sense of the way the world is or might be" (Booth, 2003, p. 22). This is a place where the arts are used because they "invite us to create, imagine, and connect to something that we care for, they encourage our attention" (Rose, 2003, p. 46). Driving the point home, Eric Booth insists all artists share the same job: "We are all agents of artistic experience… we serve as agents for other people to engage in the essential verbs that wake up the arts experience. It's not in the media. Just because you have your hands on clay doesn't mean anything artistic is happening" (p. 18). Lately I have reminded myself that Nathan's installation was conceived when he and I *sat, reviewed, examined, discussed, reflected, recalled,* and *connected* our discussion of his artwork, the observation of the children, and the teaching goals of the center in order to *create* new possibilities for how we see and are seen at the community center.

Conclusion

The study of performance will help us find the actions, interactions, and relations—the verbs of art—in our community-based art education work. Art teaching and learning uncovers new ways to address community problems or concerns when the objectives of our work include paying attention, responding, making connections, and yearning. Performance is primarily about actions, interactions, and relations. In defense of dissolving disciplinary divisions that segregate performance as an artmaking practice, Adrian Piper (1996) highlights "performance art's potentially vast power to confront its audience with substantive claims that





Figures 3-5.
Above and right: Silhouettes on Ceiling and Map on Floor.
Right: Pointing to Home.

Untitled Community Art Installation. Nathan Banks (College of Saint Rose Graduate Student). Emmaus United After-school and Family Literacy Center for Refugees. December 2004.

can effect far-reaching changes in people's views about any of the very many substantive topics with which performance art deals" (p. 61). Our romance with the nouns of art has led us to the mistaken defense of art objects. This romance has created fractured voices of advocacy defending the uniqueness of art practices as separate individual disciplines. Instead, let's raise our collective voice in celebration of the unique contributions and confrontations that art teaching and learning *actions* provide for schools and communities. Combining creativity and social change through performance will eventually lead us to discover new possibilities in the actions of art.

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ENDNOTES

1 *Performance Studies* is involved with questions of cultural expression and subjectivity. An interdisciplinary field in the most rigorous sense of the term, performance is an ever-widening field of study that looks to be "taken up" by any number of thinkers who engage its generative critiques.

The development of performance studies has many obscure, interrelated, and hard-to-identify origin stories. Most agree with Richard Schechner's assertion that the first seed of the discipline was planted in 1980, when the New York University (NYU) Graduate Drama Department changed its name to the Department of Performance Studies. This change in name and academic focus coincided with a series of conferences on ritual, art, and performance organized by respected anthropologist Victor Turner and Schechner, who was a NYU professor of drama at the time.

Performance studies is a relatively small discipline with a limited number of colleges and universities around the world housing formal programs, schools, or departments. However, researchers employing theories of performance have had a overwhelming influence on a variety of fields and disciplines. To great advantage, art educators like Charles Garoian and Yvonne Gaudelius have tapped into performance studies and its network of scholars and artists (2001, 2004). Judith Butler's widely cited work on theories of gender performativity is perhaps the most well-known use of performance studies (1990, 1993, 1997). As we search for new ways to respond to the unique circumstances of an increasing complex social landscape, more and more art and visual culture educators will learn to use performance studies.

2 I would like to take this opportunity to publicly recognize and thank the students of my first service-learning class at the Emmaus after-school program. These students include Diane LeCours, Reanna Fisher, Nathan Banks, Elizabeth Leonard, Jacqueline Weaver, Sarah Fuest, Rachel Jensen, Jessica Fitzgibbons, Chris Heard, and Christopher Beers, as well as Professor Ben Schwab, volunteer painting and drawing instructor. Without their tireless efforts and unyielding dedication, the artwork at Emmaus as well as the research for this article would have been impossible! I hope to include contributions from this team of community-based art educators in future writings on this topic.

3 Nathan is an accomplished sculptor and performance artist. Beginning with his undergraduate studies in Purchase College at State University of New York, Nathan has been intrigued by community-based performance art. He had a community project titled *The Cow Project* profiled on a Cable News Network (CNN) broadcast (Fitzgerald, 2002).

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"*Community* can be thought of as both a noun—referring to a specific place or group of people—and a verb—referring to a certain way of collaborating and interacting."

Agents of Possibility:
Examining the Intersections of Art, Education, and Activism in Communities

ALINA CAMPANA
Minneapolis, MN

Some art educators working in communities exemplify an alternative to the more common and stereotypical notion of the artist as autonomous, self-focused, and neutral. They view artmaking and education as vehicles for social justice and, in some cases, for social and political activism. In these broader social functions, the boundaries between art, education, and activism fade. This article examines the motivations, perspectives, development, and experiences of five artist/educator/activists who worked in community-based settings in Tucson, Arizona. Common characteristics, relevant issues, and implications for the field are presented and discussed.

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This article derives from master's thesis research conducted at the University of Arizona under the guidance of Dr. Elizabeth Garber in 2007 and 2008. Findings were presented at the National Art Education Association Annual Convention, March 2008.

> If artists and long-term protestors are similar in their thoughtful creativity and material deprivation, the underlying reason is a sense of moral and personal calling to their work, the fusion of social and individual fulfillment.
>
> —James M. Jasper (1997), *The Art of Moral Protest*, p. 341

To varying degrees, artists and art educators either embrace or struggle against the notion that they are isolated and alienated from society. Exemplary of the modernist era in art, but with roots back to the European Renaissance and the Enlightenment (Anchor [1967] in LaChapelle, 1984; Gablik, 2001), the stereotype of the isolated, alienated artist and his or her accompanying artistic genius has permeated mass media, our schools and institutions, and the general public's ideas of art and its place in our world. In a sense, "the artist" is an ultimate embodiment of individualism, full of "autonomy and self-sufficiency" (Gablik, 1995, p. 74), notions which are prized in the United States. Generally accompanying this viewpoint is a belief that art is neutral, "created not for moral or practical or social reasons, but to be contemplated and enjoyed" (p. 74).

This version of art and artists, though valid and valuable in its own right, can obscure the more integrated roles that art, artists, and educators can have in community-building, cultural affirmation, and articulating a need for change. In these broader social functions, the boundaries between art, education, and activism fade. The individuals in this study are all three—artist, educator, and activist—at once. In practice, these three roles come in no specific order, and depending on context, one may take precedence over the others. Their intersection leads to something more than the sum of the three parts. And the ongoing manifestation of that sum is rarely static or confined to itself, as it is also influenced by the needs and contexts of a collaborating community or group. Working in communities and dedicated to social change, the role the artist/educator/activist plays is significantly different from artists or teachers as we have experienced and sometimes assumed them to be. They are no less a vital aspect of our conception of what community art education, and indeed, any educator, *can* be.

F. Graeme Chalmers (1974) writes of the many roles artists can play, including "magician, teacher, mythmaker, sociotherapist, ascriber of status, propagandist, and catalyst for social change" (p. 21). He also sees the arts' place in social movements, change, and culture, noting that those intersections are not often acknowledged or valued in education. He also addresses community as an important realm for art education: "The community is the primary association about which the integration of art activities and democratic goals should be organized" (pp. 22-23). His is a tantalizing, though vague, perspective born in a time often defined by social movements and challenging the status quo. Today, what do "community" and "activism" mean in relation to art and visual culture education? What are some of characteristics of artist/educator/activists' backgrounds and identities that might shed light on the role higher education could play in their preparation and support? These questions will be explored here.

Community in Art Education

Today's art education field finds its center solidly within the school setting. Certainly, schools are central to education in the United States, and to the development of art education in this country. But as Giroux (1995) suggests, "**Education** cannot be reduced to the discourse of **schooling**" (p. 8). There is a whole range of issues that youth and communities confront which schools cannot fully address or influence, at least not within current school education. Given the complexities of contexts and social structures in which people negotiate their responsibilities, dreams, obstacles, and values, to focus almost solely on schools is to limit the field and potential for art and visual culture education.

In art education literature, there is little consensus on or critical development of the definition of the term *community.* It is rarely explicitly defined.[1] Most often, it is thought of as a noun (place and/or people) whose primary importance is in its relationship and potential value to the art classroom. Community art education, as it is used here, refers to art education occurring in non-school settings, with any number and age of people. But this definition of community does not only involve articulating the **thing** that makes up a community. It is also a **way** of working. *Community* can be thought of as both a noun—referring to a specific place or group of people—and a verb—referring to a certain way of collaborating and interacting. The work may be ongoing, such as a program at a nonprofit organization, or emerge more organically from a particular relationship, situation, event, or idea. Either way, it is driven by a particular context, need(s), and/or asset(s), and grounded in articulating some problematic or oppressive status quo, envisioning alternatives, or celebrating a particular aspect of a community. The scope of this conception of community art education does not include school teachers who use the community as a resource or site for learning and exploration in their classrooms, nor does it include educators who do not consider their work to be somehow sociopolitical in nature (for example, recreational community art workshops).

The work of a community-based artist/educator/activist shares many traits with *assets-based community development*; that is, work which:

- Is community-inspired and driven, rather than externally imposed and constructed;
- Centers on local people and assets, particularly social relationships and networks, rather than external power, knowledge, and resources;
- Grows out of dialogue and collaborative inquiry, rather than external evaluation, determination of needs, and implementation of strategies to address them; and
- Is participatory in nature, focusing on empowerment and ownership in the process, rather than treating community members as clients or recipients. (Mathie & Cunningham, 2002, online)

This approach is in stark contrast with the common *needs-* or *deficit-based approach* to community development (Kretzman & McKnight, 1993), which encourages residents to see themselves as powerless and keeps resources in the hands of service organizations and outsiders, leading to fragmentation in the community, devaluation of community wisdom, and a focus only on maintenance and survival, rather than meaningful change (p.5).[2]

The artist/educator/activist and assets-based community development also have much in common with critical pedagogy and social justice education. Several art educators seek to expand art education through the inclusion of visual culture based in critical pedagogy theory with the goal of empowering students to be thoughtful, reflective, and active participants in society (see, for example, Eisenhauer,

2006; Gude, 2004, 2007; Tavin, 2002, 2003). Multicultural education theory and scholarship is another area which has been powerfully connected to art education theory and practice toward a vision of social justice (see Desai, 2000; Garber, 1995; Stuhr, Pertrovich-Mwaniki, & Wasson, 1992).

Activism in Art Education

Though the term *activist* is commonly used in art and visual culture education regarding advocacy for art programs in schools, in this case *activist* is not synonymous with *advocate*. Nor is it limited to individuals protesting in the streets. Rather, it encompasses a variety of work toward social and political consciousness, empowerment, and change. This version of activism is not one of indoctrination or the masses being led by the few—a potential pitfall as we consider the intersections between educator and activist. Instead, activism focuses on building a democracy (Giroux, 1995) based on critical inquiry and thinking (Freire, 1970/2006), taking risks, and becoming "insurgent citizens in order to challenge those with political and cultural power as well as honor the critical traditions within the dominant culture that make such a critique possible and intelligible…" (Giroux, 1995, p. 9).

Some recent sociological theorists, primarily in Europe, suggest that most contemporary social movements, sometimes called *post-citizenship movements* (Jasper, 1997), are significantly different than the "citizenship" social movements of the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s. Whereas citizenship movements (including the labor, civil rights, and women's movements) work for **inclusion** in dominant culture and society, post-citizenship movements focus on **dissatisfaction** with dominant culture and society. Jasper, a sociologist and student of social movements, cites Melucci and Lofland's argument that much innovation and progress in post-citizenship movements "take place offstage, in apparently quiet periods, as ideas circulate and new forms of living are tried" (1997, p. 65).

The contributions of the arts to social movements, change, and activism have been noted in the sociological study of social movements.[3] If change is conceived as being an ongoing, multilayered, and complex process, as Melucci and Lofland suggest, then activists' work extends to more subtle, less overt ways of working than the more common notions of activism. The arts' role in activism can include the communication of a movement's or group's worldview, opposition, and vision; facilitation of dialogue towards political and social consciousness for both participants and the broader public; creation and expression of collective identity and solidarity; and working toward "cognitive liberation," a critical transformation from hopeless submission to oppressive conditions to a readiness to change those conditions (see Adams, 2001; Clay, 2006; Eyerman & Jamison, 1995; Friere, 1970; Jasper, 1997; Kester, 2005; McAdam, 1999; Roscigno & Danaher, 2004; Taylor & Raeburn, 1995).

James Jasper (1997) draws a metaphorical parallel between the artist and the protestor, suggesting that they are "key articulators" of alternative lifestyles, and of new ways of seeing, judging, feeling, and thinking about the world. As such, protestors and artists are "moral innovators" building on and rethinking "existing traditions in order to criticize portions [of those traditions] and experiment with alternatives for the future" (p. 65). Sociologist Eyerman (2006) brings many of these ideas together when he suggests that art be viewed as an "experiential space," seen as

> a form of social activity through which new kinds of identities and practices emerge… as a cognitive praxis, art is a space for individual and collective creation that can provide society with ideas, identities, and ideals… like a social movement, art opens space for experimentation, social and political as well as aesthetic. (p. 19)

Increasingly, the arts and artists are being considered in much broader contexts than the art world, with more emphasis placed on identity and ideology formation and affirmation in communities and society. "At issue is the necessity for cultural workers to develop a collective vision in which traditional binarisms of margin/center, unity/difference, local/national, public/private can be reconstituted through more complex representations of identification, belonging, and community" (Giroux, 1995, p. 13).

If the arts are increasingly being viewed as a component of community work and change, is the field of art and visual culture education prepared to include these approaches to and reasons for artmaking? As the field works to define its relationship with community work, an increasing number of university and college art education programs are offering a community track.

Artist and critic Suzanne Lacy (1995a) notes that the skills and knowledge necessary for community-based art education focused on change are diverse and interdisciplinary. She writes, "artists have drawn on models outside the arts to reinterpret their roles" (p. 39), and emphasizes the great difference, even opposition, there is between traditional, modernist notions of the artist and the artist working collaboratively toward change: "In seeking to become catalysts for change, artists reposition themselves as citizen-activists. Diametrically opposed to the aesthetic practices of the isolated artist, consensus building inevitably entails developing a set of skills not commonly associated with art making" (p. 177). A basic notion in the field of art education is that being an art educator is not the equivalent of just being a good artist. In addition to artistic skill, there are certain pedagogical skills, knowledge, and philosophies which are ideally developed in order to teach art in a classroom. Further, Flores and Day (2006) find that the three main influences on teacher identity formation are prior influences, initial teacher training and teaching practice, and the contexts of teaching (p. 224). Further, they found personal biography to play a key role in "mediating the making sense of teachers' practices and their beliefs about themselves as teachers" (p. 230). Working from the understanding that community art education is different from teaching art in a classroom, and that skills in addition to artmaking are integral to the work, what is important in the background and identity formation of a community-based art educator? And how can community art educator preparation programs provide the skills and training necessary to be successful in this area?

Methodology

Drawing on perspectives from community art education, sociology, art criticism, critical pedagogy, and social justice education, two questions guided this research: (1) What leads an individual to work in non-school settings with a focus on using art in educational community work towards social or political change? and (2) What are the key aspects or characteristics of these individuals' identities, backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives on their place in society and role in education, art, and change? Three criteria were used to select five participants in the Tucson, Arizona, area. The primary one was how closely each individual fits the roles of artist, activist, and educator, as defined by the researcher (both in their own estimation and based on what I knew about their work).[4] The second criterion was the goal of including the experiences of a diverse group of people (with regard to gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, and age). The final goal was to examine this work within a range of art forms.

Case studies were constructed from a 2- to 3-hour interview with each participant. The interviews were semi-structured and conversational, guided by interview questions. The interviews were digitally recorded, and the transcripts were analyzed in detail to select histori-

cal facts, quotations, perspectives, metaphors, and anecdotes which illustrate the connection of the individual's motivations, experiences, history, and surroundings to his or her work. These were then woven into an instrumental case study (Creswell 1998), and a member check was conducted with participants.

Participants

These artist/educator/activists have diverse personal and artistic identities and backgrounds. In 2007, at the time of this study, G.E. Washington was a 39-year-old African American, gay male performance artist (G. E. Washington, personal interview, July 30, 2007). Josh Schachter was a 37-year-old White male photographer (J. Schachter, personal interview, November 14, 2007). Kimi Eisele was a 36-year-old White female writer and dancer (K. Eisele, personal interview, September 25, 2007). Jason Gallegos was a 27-year-old Chicano male media and film artist (J. Gallegos, personal interview, December 12, 2007). Kristen Suagee-Beauduy was a 23-year-old mixed-ethnicity female mixed-media artist and aspiring artist/educator/activist (K. Suagee-Beauduy, personal interview, November 11, 2007).

Shared Characteristics

The artist/educator/activists interviewed for this study have traveled very different paths in their lives and work. Each individual's chosen artistic medium is different; their histories and family backgrounds vary; educational paths diverge; and details of their educational work involving art in communities are distinct. Yet a common theme in each is that their evolving notions of their roles as agents of change are intimately tied to their personal experiences, strong feelings, and perceptions about problems with the status quo. Individual and societal experiences and understandings intersect in formative ways. And the weaving of artist, activist, and educator produces some shared characteristics which define and illustrate their work and lives. While no broad and general conclusions about artist/educator/activists can be drawn from a study of this scale, these shared characteristics in the way that they think and talk about their work are worth noting as a possible starting point for further research regarding preparation and evaluation criteria for community artist/educator/activists.

Experience as outsider and interest in larger structural issues as they relate to individual experience.

One striking characteristic shared by all five artist/educator/activists is the experience of being an outsider at some time in their lives. This experience as outsider has significantly influenced the formation of their identities, leading each to value multiple perspectives and work toward perceiving structural inequalities and hierarchies. For some, these experiences as outsider are related to aspects of the individual's identity which are not part of the dominant culture in the United States. For example, Washington's race, sexuality, and experiences with class; and Gallegos's and Suagee-Beauduy's ethnicity and class. Eisele and Schachter grew up, in many ways, with the privileges of the dominant culture, but had significant experiences as outsiders through work and foreign travel. Whether present since birth or acquired later in life, this position outside dominant mainstream culture has provided a lens which highlights difference and power inequities.

Connected with this, these five individuals spoke of a strong interest in larger structural conditions of our society, such as systems, power, resources, and inequity. These were focal points of some participants' college and graduate studies, such as Gallegos's undergraduate sociology double-major, Eisele's master's degree in geography, Schachter's master's concentration in social ecology, and Suagee-Beauduy's building of interdisciplinary social justice undergraduate studies. But their focus on larger systems is not just textbook-based and theoretical; each artist/educator/activist's interest is in

the way larger systems affect and influence individual situations, perspectives, and experience. For them, societal, institutional, and individual experiences and conditions are interdependent. They all speak of an attention to larger structures and their influence on individuals. In turn, this fuels both their creative work and their educational work as responses to inequities they have perceived or experienced. The result is work grounded in goals of social justice.

For example, Gallegos's films and his digital storytelling with youth are responses to stratification and under-representation. He notes that

> I always had the desire to work with youth. And again, going back to underrepresented populations, and if I really think about it, it goes back to the environment that I grew up in and the people I grew up around.

Schachter's photographic eye and community- and other-centered approach to collaborative projects responds to his global perspective on the complexities of human interaction and development:

> I think largely the way I've become a photographer, in many ways, is because of my training in a totally different field, which is in social ecology. Because I basically was trained in observation… learning to see things, and systems, and learning to understand relationships between things, has played a huge role in how I photograph, and the sort of social commentary I try to express through my work.

Washington's performances and teaching methodologies are responses to silence and assumptions that both grow out of and nourish structural inequalities. As he states,

> A large part of what I do is a response to the shutting down of other people… culturally, socially, politically, individually…. I think artists can be a site for sowing the seeds of change, or for plowing… I turn up ideas, and… churn up the group.

Eisele's collaborative community projects and improvisational movement and dance respond to privilege, disparities in development, and democracy. Finally, Suagee-Beauduy's search for ways to combine activism and art are a response to hidden and visible oppression, hierarchies, and inequity in our society.

Lacy's (1995a) concept of *new genre public art*[5] describes what happens when art, activism, and education intersect, portraying one alternative to the isolated artist. She explains that this special, relatively recent genre of art resembles

> [p]olitical and social activity but is distinguished by its aesthetic sensibility…. an art whose public strategies of engagement are an important part of its aesthetic language. The source of these artworks' structure is… an internal necessity perceived by the artist in collaboration with his or her audience. (p. 19)

She suggests that this art's roots are grounded in the development of various groups and movements, including feminism, ethnic identity politics, and Marxism. This type of art and these various groups "have a common interest in leftist politics, social activism, redefining audiences, relevance for communities (particularly marginalized ones), and collaborative methodology" (p. 25).

Giroux (1995) emphasizes that an educator must be reflective about his or her relationship to complex power networks and how that influences the ways we interact with students or community members, as well as what we teach. Virtually any space can be pedagogical, and all education is political. As such, he holds that artists and other cultural workers must see their work as political and pedagogical:

> Critical pedagogy as a theory and practice does not legitimate a romanticized notion of the cultural worker as one who can only function on the margins of society,

> nor does it refer to a notion of teaching/performance/cultural production in which formalism or the fetish of method erases the historical, semiotic, and social dimensions of pedagogy as the active construction of responsible and risk-taking citizens. (p. 9)

Educators and educational spaces are not outside or immune to the complex network within which identity, community, and power are created and conceptualized. As such, educators and community developers must constantly critically evaluate and renegotiate how, what, and why we educate and work toward collaborative and participatory change.

Self-Reflection, -criticality, and -modification.

> I think that the job of a person of consciousness is to always be reexamining what they're doing… I think it would be easy to… say, "I'm doing this food and dance project, and here's what I want to get out of it, and here's what I want the community to get out of it." And I mean, I do have some of that agenda, obviously… But I think also that the deeper truth is that… I examine my role in even asking those questions. (Eisele)

Experience as an outsider does not automatically result in critical thinking and reflection, however. As illustrated in Eisele's words, an important complement to the outsider experience in these artist/educator/activists is that they distill their experiences into reflective observations and assessments of their own work, collaborations, and efficacy. Each artist/educator/activist is reflective about what his or her unique perspective reveals regarding privilege, inequity, and power. Many of them regularly evaluate themselves in relation to larger structures. In doing so, they also seek to respond to these evaluations by modifying and developing new strategies for their work in different contexts.

Washington suggests that a primary role of the artist/educator/activist in society is "to raise questions and to point out interesting juxtapositions that were taken for granted," with the aim of expanding perspectives and challenging assumptions. Significantly, these artist/educator/activists ask these questions not only of society and other individuals, but also of themselves. The following are some of the questions asked by the interviewees over the course of the research interviews.

- What actually constitutes change and success?
- What does [equality] mean? Does equality mean, make you more like me? 'Cuz I have had opportunities? Does equality make you into who you want to be?
- If I'm gonna reject [the status quo], what am I going to put in its place?
- How do [community members] want to approach [the project], and what are the… long-term implications?
- Where is that belief [that I can make a difference] coming from? Is that reacting to the dominant structures? Like, can I make a difference because I'm White and educated?
- Why am I here? Can I really make a difference? Why do I think I can make a difference? Why should I even try making a difference?
- What are your motivations for wanting to work in the community?
- What is truth? How does our own experience and background affect how we interpret information?
- If we're going to work with young people and have them think about the environment, how can we do that without knowing where they're coming from in the first place?
- How do you stay true to what the youth wanted to say, and [ensure that] other people's agendas don't overtake them?

These questions illustrate the engaged digging that these artist/educator/activists

undertake as part of their work.[6] This reflection and questioning aligns with critical pedagogy, where a complex view of relationships, between individuals, community, and the world is key. With this complex view comes the necessity of constant reflection on and dialogue about those relationships, as well as the hidden curricula embedded in society and institutions which help keep power structures in place. This requires educators to look at fundamental issues of power and their relationship to greater societal forces that affect educational settings. "Critical pedagogy asks how and why knowledge gets constructed the way it does, and how and why some constructions of reality are legitimated and celebrated by the dominant culture while others clearly are not" (McLaren, 1989/1998, p. 169). This is also a foundational concept in assets-based community development and contemporary activist work.

Empathy and awareness of others support focus on collaboration.

An important prerequisite for meaningful self-reflection and evaluation is empathy and awareness of others: being able both to relate to and see oneself in relation to other people and groups. These two qualities are also key to collaborative work towards change, in which empathy and awareness of others is both a motivator and guide in facilitation of a project. Schachter's words highlight the importance of these qualities:

> I believe neighborhoods and communities are the best experts of their own lives… so if I go in with humility, knowing that I don't know everything about what the issues are in their community, then it's going to be, usually, a somewhat successful project. Because I'm respecting the fact that they have a huge amount of knowledge and expertise, even though we don't often look at communities necessarily that way. It's always about deficits.

As indicated in the way these five artist/educator/activists speak of their work, empathy is not a surface embrace or acknowledgment of difference. Rather, it is a constant attempt to understand and see from another's perspective. This, in turn, leads to reflection and questioning of one's own place in relationship to others. Another key concept in critical pedagogy is the postmodern understanding that reality and knowledge are not fixed and absolute, but rather dependent on one's experiences, ways of interpreting those experiences, and subject to transformative actions based on those interpretations. As such, educators must acknowledge their position of authority, and relinquish the position of "truth providers" for that of "facilitators of student inquiry and problem posing" (Kincheloe, 2004, p. 17). Emphasis is on dialogue, investigation, and inquiry as methods, rather than one-way transfer of pre-determined knowledge from teacher to student, or outside community developer to community member. Process is highly important. This contrasts starkly with the *banking* or *transmission model* of education, a term which Freire (1970/2006) uses to describe an educational environment in which knowledge is "deposited" by teachers in students, and the extent of student involvement is "receiving, filing, and storing the deposits" (p. 72). Freire holds that the attitudes and practices of the banking model of education "mirror oppressive society as a whole" (p. 73).

Eisele connects awareness and response inherent in improvisational movement to democracy:

> If you're interested in creating something larger, or shaping a new society, then, I think, by necessity, you need to pay attention to what other people are doing. So in improv work, you know, you pay attention to… what your choices are, and what your body wants to do, but you're always trying to expand your awareness and pay attention to what other people are doing… [and] also notice what you're

> not noticing… the process of making work in this way is sort of inherently democratic because everybody's responsible for everything that's happening at any given point… and in that way it's subversive, you know, in terms of the society that we live in.

They are constantly evaluating and re-evaluating different aspects of a project, often focusing on the dynamics of the relationships, and how he or she is influencing or interacting with others.

Empathy and awareness of others help form the foundation of collaboration, a significant aspect of many of these artist/educator/activists' work. Their descriptions of their approaches to collaboration share a few common traits. For example, they aim to facilitate participant- and community-driven projects. Their focus is not on their own work or art-product, but on facilitating others' creation or dialogue. They seek to move away from the center of the group. And they genuinely value knowledge, perspectives, and contributions other than their own:

> Depending on what kind of stories emerge from participants, and what participants step forward as wanting to take a continuing role, that will then shape the pieces that we create… I don't know quite how it's going to work but [I will] really tak[e] a large view and see what emerges. (Eisele)

This is a distinct break from conventional top-down approaches to conceptualizing knowledge and education, which codify and rank knowledge and skills, and focus on individual development in those areas, leaving little room for community and local knowledge or collaborative skills.

Interdisciplinary backgrounds; Little formal training in arts disciplines or education.

> That's how I've approached the arts, in that I don't want to be JUST a dancer or just a writer, but I want to be a good human being. And being a good human being, for me, was also knowing about other things beyond just craft. So the craft could incorporate geographic knowledge, for instance, or political information. (Eisele)

Rather than art being a sole or primary focus, many of these artist/educator/activists employ art alongside other disciplines, as Eisele's words describe, resulting in an interdisciplinary approach to their work toward change. Possibly one reason for these artist/educator/activists' relatively easy departure from common methods and goals of artmaking and education is that four of the five participants have relatively little formal training in the arts. Though all were involved in the arts as young people, four of the five majored in something other than the arts in college and graduate school, ranging from biology to sociology to forestry and social ecology to interdisciplinary studies. Only Gallegos majored in the arts, with a degree in Media Arts; yet he also had a double major in sociology. Further, as an artist/educator/activist, Gallegos found that pursuing a MFA put him in a community of artists whose intent and reasons for making art were different from his own:

> A lot of people are concerned with making art that doesn't speak about any of this other [political and social] stuff. At all. And a lot of people are not sure why you would want to do that… sometimes I feel like, again, maybe [art school] isn't where I should be, maybe I should be back, you know, on the streets doing what I do, instead of being part of this population of people.

In addition to having differing and limited levels of formal education in their art forms, most also have limited formal training in pedagogy and community development (only Washington has studied education at a higher level). Regardless of their education background, and perhaps because of it, they have strongly adopted and gravitated toward pedagogical approaches that align with specific education theories, such as critical pedagogy and social justice education.

Process-orientation and different reasons and criteria for creativity.

"Somebody who has a background in the arts and is using it to get communities talking, engaging them in dialogue, that's what I wanted to be" (Suagee-Beauduy). As suggested earlier, these artist/educator/activists do not consider the production of "fine art" an important goal for their collaborative work. Instead, their descriptions of their work echo contemporary sociological notions of activism, as discussed previously, where the arts and creative process are tools, or vehicles, to achieving other goals, such as dialogue, sharing individual experiences, gaining and developing voice, envisioning alternatives to the status quo, and revealing hidden assumptions and prejudices. While a quality art product is one aspect of successfully using art to these ends, it is not the primary end goal of the artist/educator/activist's work.[7] The process, developments, and revelations along the way are the focus of these artist/educator/activists.

Motivation consistently other than financial compensation and job security.

These five artists/educators/activists are not driven by typical extrinsic motivation and influences, such as employment opportunities, job security, and money (Flores & Day, 2006). In fact, if these factors can be said to have any influence on one's choice to become an artist/educator/activist, it would be negative. All participants in this study, in some way, cite job insecurity and financial considerations as challenges in their work. However, each artist/educator/activist possesses strong internal motivation, which is generally stronger than the lack of these extrinsic benefits. This echoes sociologist Fendrich's (1977) findings that interest-based politics alone will not sustain long-term commitment to a radical leftist movement, but that a strong, "other-oriented humanism" and ideological commitment are necessary, as well as a commitment to pursue one's career based on motivation other than extrinsic rewards. Lacy (1995a) also emphasizes that this type of work comes from a deeply internalized motivation and perspective on one's place in the world and as relative to other people:

> The transition from a model of individual authorship to one of collective relationship suggested in this work is not undertaken simply as an exercise in political correctness. A longing for the Other runs as a deep stream through most of these artists' works. (p. 36)

This work is not just a job; it is, often, an extension and manifestation of the way the individual would like to live and would like the world to be.

Conclusion

The characteristics outlined in this study raise a number of issues and questions for the field of art and visual culture education regarding institutional inclusion, preparation, and understanding of artist/educator/activists.

One issue with implications for the preparation of community art educators is that the skills necessary for collaborative, democratic work in communities are different from the solitary artist or classroom teacher's needs. In collaborative community work, the locus of activity shifts away from the artist or student to the group. Interaction is a vital part of creation. Students are not often assigned; if involvement is to continue, relationships with participants must be built on trust and interest. The creation is not fully under the artist's control, and the product is shared. Not only does this challenge our conventional notions of authorship in the arts, it also demands skills that are not commonly associated with artist or teacher training, including dialogue facilitation as part of the artmaking process, coordinating meaningful collaboration, and inclusion of multiple voices in the artmaking process and product.

Further, the artist/educator/activists in this study have significant interdisciplinary backgrounds. This influences their artmaking and approach to thinking about and working with

communities. If this truly reflects the needs of community arts educators, how might this element of preparation be incorporated into college and graduate-level programs?

There are also practical considerations: As several of these participants indicated, financial survival can be a challenge. Given the patchy infrastructure for permanent long-term employment with one employer, survival skills are also necessary. Business, communication, and grantsmanship skills, as well as an understanding of the nonprofit and government sectors, are important to long-term survival and success in this arena.

Another issue regarding this work is that there are no set standards or methods of evaluation for the work of artist/educator/activists. Assessing and measuring outcomes in this work is challenging. Lacy (1995a, 1995b) highlights the need for a language, and more importantly, criteria by which to address, analyze, and evaluate collaborative, participatory, change-oriented art practices as "an integrative critical language through which values, ethics, and social responsibility can be discussed in terms of art" (1995a, p. 43). This approach to artmaking even challenges art as we know it, redefining it "as a process of value finding, a set of philosophies, an ethical action, and an aspect of a larger sociocultural agenda" (1995a, p. 46).

Artist/educator/activists develop and adapt projects based on the context, situation, and partners. Each participant in this study spoke of clear philosophies and principles, including collaboration, participant- and community-centered focus, empathy, development of voice, and questioning the status quo. Their reflective and flexible approaches have a symbiotic relationship with the individual's identity: as the artist/educator/activist evolves, so does his or her collaborative work; and collaborative creation leads to new insights and perspectives that change the individual. Given this, how is such work described, compared, analyzed, and evaluated? Each individual conducts informal and intuitive assessments. Schachter, in particular, spoke of a need to agree on basic standards or goals among photographic storytelling facilitators so that inappropriate criteria and approaches are not grafted onto this way of working. As he stated:

> There needs to be some agreement about how you work in a community, particularly if you're not part of that community… there are certain things… like humility, and thinking about your assumptions, and all these things that people aren't aware of. They just think, "Oh, I'm gonna give some kids cameras, and they're going to take amazing pictures, and we'll have an exhibit and it will be great, and everyone will be empowered." But you know, that's not what the work is about. It's about all those things that are between, that happen in the process.

How might the field of art and visual culture education construct meaningful and appropriate conceptual language and frameworks, as well as methods of assessment and evaluation of this work and its impact? What bridges and relationships can be built to help us understand and share about this multi-faceted work?

These artist/educator/activists personify many vital facets of contemporary work in communities, the arts, education, and activism. Their ways of conceptualizing themselves, their work, and their roles in society reveal a version of the artist and educator that is an agent of possibility which departs from the "recycled" versions of old (Gude, 2000) in significant ways. Not only is this community art education work a revealing site for art and visual culture educators researching critical pedagogy and social justice education, it also informs a little-understood but increasingly popular strain of art and visual culture education preparation programs and offers a wealth of potential for further critical research.

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ENDNOTES

1 Marche (1998) makes a useful distinction between different notions of community, outlining three general approaches to conceptualizing community in art education from a school-based perspective: "*taking from,*" "*learning about,*" and "*acting upon*."

2 This echoes Friere's (1970) critique of the "banking model" approach in education.

3 Many of the roles the arts have played in activism have close ties to key concepts in social justice education and critical pedagogy.

4 This is a limitation on this study, as the definitions of the three components of an artist/educator/activist were pre-defined and used to select the participants. At the time of the study, I was a White, politically liberal, straight, middle-class, college-educated 29-year-old American woman. I brought, and continue to bring, a certain perspective and set of beliefs and assumptions to this study. I tried to remain constantly aware of this as I searched for and interacted with participants, conducted interviews, and analyzed and interpreted the data. Yet as true to the participants, their words, and experiences as I have tried to be, the study contains the marks of my values, beliefs, vision, weaknesses, and perspectives throughout.

5 This term is the closest I have found to the concept of community art education as applied in this article.

6 The extent to and ways in which these questions translate into pedagogical and artistic action and interaction with different groups is not within the bounds of this study. However, this could be an important area for further research, with implications for all educators who value the reflective process.

7 Nevertheless, most of these participants also sometimes make art more for art's sake.

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"Arts-based activities are among the most important vehicles for enabling young women to discuss their situations and express their feelings, for learning how to learn, and for gaining self-knowledge and social awareness."

Teenmom.ca: A Community Arts-Based New Media Empowerment Project for Teenage Mothers

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This article reports on a community activist arts-based media production research project. Project TEEN Mirrors Of Motherhood (M.O.M.), was designed by the authors, who are art educators and arts-based researchers, in collaboration with Elizabeth House, a Montreal community organization dedicated to meeting the needs of pregnant teenagers and young mothers. The purpose of the research was to examine how media production, offered in the context of a community organization, can empower teenage girls in difficult circumstances to share their views, to participate in community or policy discussions that affect them, and to define and solve some of the many challenges they face. Using digital photography, art, and video, the young mothers explored ways to re-frame, re-present, and discuss their own understanding of issues in their lives as well as re-consider their options. To disseminate their messages, the project produced an exhibit, a film screening, and a website, www.teenmom.ca. (See Figure 1.)

This article is based on the Project TEEN M.O.M. report written in February 2010 for Elizabeth House, the participating community site.

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Why Media Production in a Community Setting?

In an increasingly mediated world, it is essential to become media literate—that is, to develop:

- The ability to critically read our social visual world;
- The digital skills necessary to function in everyday life;
- An informed voice;
- Media produced as a means to disseminate information;
- Tests for ideas;
- A personal aesthetic; and
- Exploration and expression of identities, ideas, and creativity.

Media production is a way for youth to negotiate mediated ideas, deconstruct cultural messages, and participate in both local and global discourses by authoring and distributing their own media. These are not "frill" skills; they are essential to life-long education (Ginwright & Cammarota, 2002; Darts, 2007; Goldman, Booker & McDermott, 2008). Unfortunately, large segments of our youth population fall through the cracks, getting little or no opportunity to acquire this kind of critical literacy or to access the opportunities that art-based media production can offer. Too many young people live in poverty and go without safe shelter or adequate food, let alone computers, cameras, or art supplies. Many of them, especially young women, suffer silently. It is this out-of-school population that we want to reach, research, and serve.

Arts-based activities are among the most important vehicles for enabling young women to discuss their situations and express their feelings, for learning how to learn, and for gaining

Figure 1. Project Teen M.O.M. website, www.teenmom.ca

Text: ***"Girls our age don't know what to expect when they are having a baby and you can't hear it from any adult what we go through because an adult doesn't know but if you hear about the experience of being a teen mom from another teen mom, you can understand and feel more comfortable. No girl should have to feel like they are alone in this world."***

—Shantelle

self-knowledge and social awareness. Drawing on new media platforms to democratize and globalize girls' voices, art teachers can be ideal facilitators to encourage self-study, critical thinking, the application of creative imagining to solve problems, and the development of individual and collective responsibility (Goodman, 2003; Levy, 2006, 2007a, 2007b, 2007c, 2008, 2009; Bruce & Lin, 2009; Levy & Weber, 2010; Sinner, 2010; Lin, Grauer & Castro, in press). Although new media arts education programs within schools have been one way of responding to the challenges of interpreting and negotiating the daily flow of mediated representations, more often than not, media education is still restricted to technical and knowledge-based activities (Lin, Castro, Sinner & Grauer, in press). One way to fight the moral panics associated with media influence and to empower young women to define and solve their own problems is to teach them how to become critical consumers and critical media producers. This becomes especially important for the very girls who have the least access to this kind of education. Teaching art-based media education to acquire skills that promote life-long learning and empowerment within a community organization that serves young women is an effective way to reach those who we believe may need it most.

Objectives

The five objectives of this project were: (1) to assess the potential value of arts-based media programs offered to young women in a community setting; (2) to identify and document key elements of best practices for viable arts-based media education in community settings; (3) to develop guidelines for the establishment of sustainable and useful arts-based media production for youth in community centers; (4) to examine arts-based media production as a method for personal and social inquiry; and (5) to document and understand some of the experiences of teen mothers.

Theoretical Framework, Pedagogy, and Methodology

In a project where the researchers are also the art teachers, as is the case here, it is important to seek coherence between the pedagogical and methodological approaches used for the research. Like many other art educators interested in *critical pedagogy*, we have been inspired by the work of scholars such as Freire (1970), hooks (1995), and Kincheloe (2004), whose conceptions of teaching and learning are linked to consideration of the political and social contexts that intersect with all individual quests for knowledge. We see a logical and fruitful connection between this kind of pedagogy, which seeks to empower participants, and the visual research methodologies for self-study and social change described by Weber and Mitchell (2004); Weber (2008); Mitchell (2006); Mitchell and Allnutt (2008); Mitchell, Pitthouse, and Weber (2009); Levy (2006; 2007a, 2007b, 2007c; 2008; 2009); and Levy and Weber (2011).

The research methodology elaborated for the process and the curriculum of Project TEEN M.O.M. draws heavily on established visual methods developed for *photovoice* (Wang, 1999), *self-study* (Weber & Mitchell, 2004), *curated photo albums* (Mitchell, Weber & Pitthouse, 2009), and *activist collaborative documentary filmmaking* (Levy, 2007b, 2007c; 2008).

Self-study in the context of an arts-based community or classroom setting can be an empowering tool when used for personal and social change. We have incorporated it as a central theme in our curriculum by inviting participants to conduct their own self-studies on topics that matter to them, using new media art techniques explained in the sections that follow.

Digital photography is central to this project. We adapted Caroline Wang's (1999) visual methodology *photovoice* where participants are invited, guided, and equipped to produce their own images, making visible their voice around a particular social issue that affects them

directly. Participatory in nature, photovoice is often used in the context of community work or social activism to better understand what really matters to people. It follows the premise that, as Wang explains, what experts think is important may not match what people at the grassroots think is important.

We draw on the earlier pioneering work of Jo Spence (1988). Starting with her book *Putting Myself in the Picture,* Spence has inspired researchers who seek to use a critical, activist eye in producing images and working with photo albums. Of particular relevance to this project is Spence's collaboration with Joan Solomon (Spence & Solomon, 1995) for the book *What Can a Woman Do with a Camera*? That work draws together a fascinating collection of essays describing visual projects based on still photography carried out by ordinary girls and women. Their projects visually take up the crucial questions of (1) how can we, as women, tell stories that eradicate the disparity between how we are seen, what we think and feel, and what we actually do? and, (2) how do we present who we really are in terms of images? These questions, as well as the critical use of photography, are central to our work with young people. Our use of digital photography is also informed by the significant work on photography and family albums done by other scholars including Kuhn (1995), Spence and Holland (1991), and Weiser (1993).

We adapted and use a protocol entitled *curated photo albums* developed by Claudia Mitchell and Sandra Weber (Mitchell, Pitthouse, & Weber, 2009) for creating and curating self-study photo albums in which participants take and choose pictures around a theme. The notion of a curated photo album refers to selecting and displaying a small number of photographs around a selected theme or question. As "curator" of the album, the photographer gives it a title, includes captions, and writes a short statement of intent.

Finally, we draw on *activist collaborative documentary,* an empowerment pedagogical methodology developed by Leanne Levy (2008) based on her girl-centered collaborative documentary film work with teenage girls (Levy, 2007b, 2007c; Levy & Weber, 2011). The work's mission invites young women to *share stories for change* by becoming researchers and filmmakers of their lives. Of particular relevance to Project TEEN M.O.M. is the young women's individual use of art, photography, and video to re-frame and re-present with critical and transformative intent the meaningful issues in their lives as well as the ongoing collective participation and critical feedback from the group.

Overview of the Project and Participants

In consultation with the Director, Linda Schachtler, and the Educator, Michele Bourdages, we recruited a group of eight young women (ages 14 to 23) who volunteered to participate in Project TEEN M.O.M.. When the project began, five of the participants had a child between the ages of 9 and 23 months, one participant had three children under the age of 3, and the other two participants were expecting and delivered in early summer.

The group is diverse, reflecting the racial, linguistic, ethnic, and cultural mix of a cosmopolitan Canadian city. Although they are all from low economic backgrounds, their circumstances and stories vary widely. Some of them have had to face challenges such as poverty, violence, abuse, growing up in foster care and group homes, depression, and/or addiction. Four of the young women lived in residence at Elizabeth House when the project began. One of them left Elizabeth House about two-thirds of the way through the project. The others who participated live either in assisted housing or in the community with a family member or on their own. All of the participants receive or have received some sort of support services from Elizabeth House, and three of them were stu-

dents at Elizabeth High, a program with daycare facilities for pregnant teens and young mothers.

Participants committed to a series of thirteen 2-hour workshops, one or two videotaped private interviews (approximately one hour each), and one-on-one tutorial or production meetings as needed. Presentation of their work to each other and, later, through an art exhibit to a broader audience was a crucial part of the project. Most of the participants also kept a mixed media process journal for their own purposes. The use of photography and art in the activities combines study of self with social critique in the interest not only of better understanding one's own situation, but also of helping others in similar circumstances. In order to identify and document key elements of best practice for viable arts-based media education in community settings, almost all of the activities were videotaped so that we as researchers could reflect more accurately on what took place.

Workshop Activities and Data Collection

It is important to note that in this kind of self-reflective, autobiographical, and activist documentary work, we believe the written word must accompany the visual text for the personal message to be discovered and intentionally articulated by the artist so that it may clearly be understood by the viewer. In activist, therapeutic, and empowerment-oriented arts-based programs such as these, we advocate that written texts be considered just as "artful" and "visual" as visual texts.

Data was generated through a series of workshops, which centered on the following activities.

Activity 1. Viewing and reflecting on media images and documentary films (two workshops).

In the context of group discussions, the participants critiqued media representations of teenage pregnancy (e.g., the movie *Juno*; celebrity teenage pregnancy) in the light of their own experience. Secondly, by viewing "activist" productions made by other teenagers in difficult circumstances (Levy, 2007b, 2007c; Mak & Mitchell, 2000), the group was stimulated to engage in discussion of serious issues that affect them and aspire to get their own message to others.

The following excerpt from the teens' conversation is an example of the types of responses that *Juno* generated within the group:

> I thought the film was unrealistic; it's a good idea to make a film about teenage pregnancy but it was very unrealistic to our actual reality, to our actual lives. The whole thing didn't connect with me, just being so disconnected with her child, the parents how they were acting, how easily she was able to give up her child, how she chose the adopted parents, it was not mocking teenage pregnancy but it was showing an idealistic side of how everyone wishes young parents would act, "either get an abortion or gladly put your child up for adoption."
>
> . . .
>
> The only kinds of movies we have for young parents, are the ones that in the end, they give away their baby. In every movie that we see, or in some documentaries, the message is "it's better that you give away your baby or have an abortion." I think differently, especially in today's day, what we need to show the young people is to stick it out, do what you gotta do.

Activity 2. Diva Mom art (two workshops).

Made of cardboard and mounted on small 8-by-10-inch canvasses, and incorporating paint, collage, cardboard cutout, drawing, and writing, the Diva Mom activity was designed as a way for the participants to reflect on their new or impending state of motherhood—"baby in my life." Using popular magazines often looked at by adolescent girls, the collage work aspect

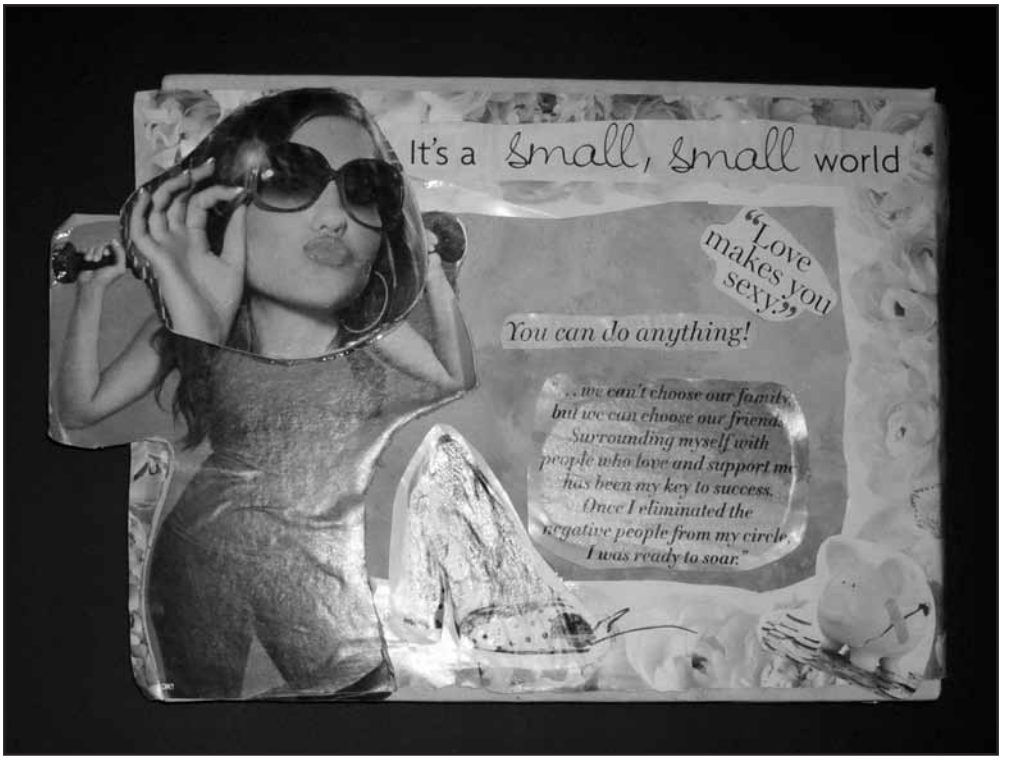

Figure 2. Diva Mom Art by Christina.

Text: "*It's a small, small world. Love makes you sexy. You can do anything! We can't choose our family but we can choose our friends. Surrounding myself with people who love and support me has been my key to success. Once I eliminated the negative people from my circle I was ready to soar.*"

is based on envisioning oneself as a true diva in her own right.

The following entries from two different moms are examples of the thought processes and responses this project stimulated and generated:

> I want to look good but also to feel strong. This is a broken piggy bank because money is a very big issue in my life right now. I put a shoe for fashion because I want to be a young hip mother, I am still young and I deserve to look good. I am taking baby steps to get my life back on track and feel good about myself. (See Figure 2.)
>
> ...
>
> My Diva Mom is supposed to represent my kids because they are bi-racial babies, Jamaican Black mixed with White. I made the Diva Mom the same color as their dad to show them that there are different cultures in the world and that it's okay if one parent is Black and one parent is White. My Diva Mom is a cultural piece to show my kids that they are still loved even though they are mixed with Black, because some people are racist and don't like Black people or all types of other people. But I think that everyone is equal

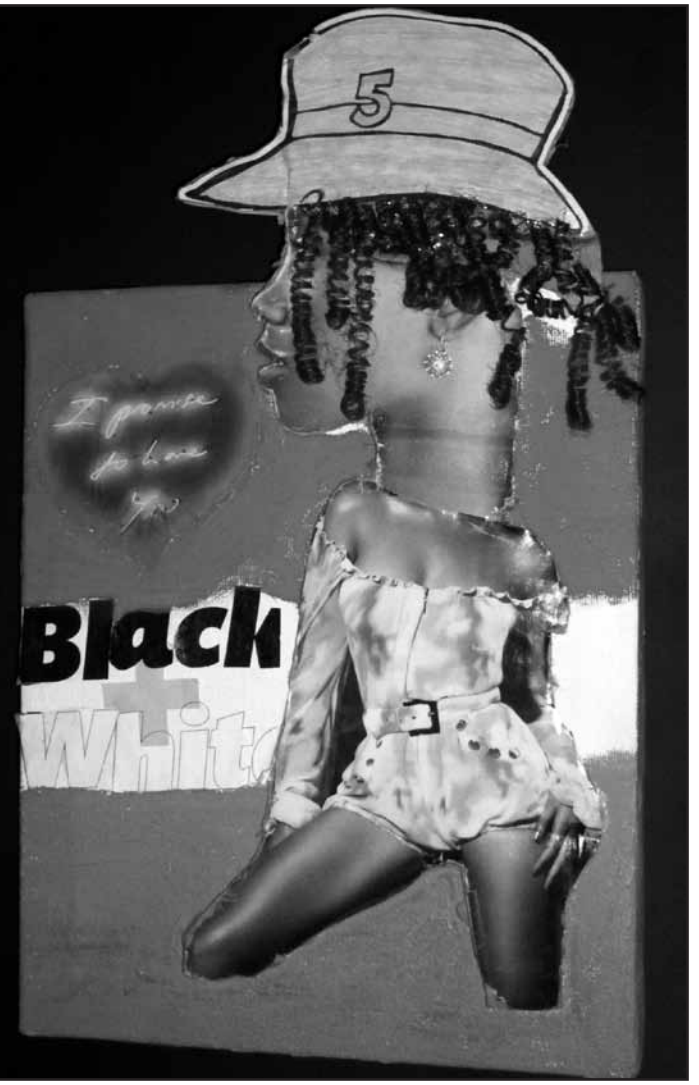

Figure 3. Diva Mom Art by Melissa. I Promise to love you. Black and White.

Text: "*Mommy's advice for her 3 sons: 1. Believe in who you are and others will believe in you. 2. Be a leader, not a follower. 3. Love yourself and you will be loved. 4. You are who you are and you can't change that. 5. Your color does not change you from the rest of the world. We are all equal… Rise above negativity and you will be a winner because love is lovely and war is ugly.*"

and that's what I want my kids to know. "I promise to love you" is for the kids, even though we are going through a hard time right now, I promise to love them. (See Figure 3.)

The discussion around the table as the participants worked on their divas reflected their reactions to the ways popular culture portrays teen pregnancy, and helped them articulate the ways they manage their lives as both mother or mother-to-be and teenager. The magazine clippings they used to construct their diva moms, for example, inspired a conversation around celebrity status, teenage motherhood, and privilege. The conversation went like this:

> Jamie-Lynn Spears[1] has everything in her lap, she has no hardship.
>
> …
>
> My sisters watch her show and think she is cool and then she gets pregnant. OK, it was a mistake, it happens in life and you have to deal with it, but I was hoping that she wouldn't abort the baby or feel like "Oh I am rich and my sister is rich and I could do whatever I want—I'll just get a nanny and I'll go party." I was hoping that she would stay with her baby and raise her right, because that is what we are doing. It would make me feel bad if she didn't because I am not on the big screen and I am taking care of my child all day, everyday day, at home and in school. It would have been an insult to me if she were to push her baby aside while she parties just because she has all that fame and fortune.
>
> …
>
> I thought it was hypocritical on her part because she put herself in a position where she is a role model to other children, to young teens. If you are putting yourself in a position to be somebody else's idol, somebody's guide in life, you should be more responsible.

> But at the end of the day it happened and it's a good thing that she didn't abort the baby. Kids who are in her situation will look up [to] her… at least she accepted her responsibility. Actually, it looks bad on Britney because her little sister got pregnant and is dealing with it better than she is with all her court orders. I wonder how she must feel being the older sister with a younger one who is more mature.

Another central feature of the Diva Mom activity was *a letter to my child for the future*, a message hidden on the back, glued to the inside of the canvas. Here is one example:

> I wish that my son grows up to be a respectful person, that he respects people and that people respect him. I hope that he is nice. I hope that he doesn't ever put his hands on any woman the wrong way. I hope that he has patience and I hope that he becomes something in life and that he's happy with his life. I hope that he never has to think about life in a bad way. I hope that he sees that although right now he's not living the best life that one day he can say, "My mother took care of me even though she was young. She made it and so can I. " When you get beaten down, your self-esteem gets beaten down too and sometimes you don't feel like you can

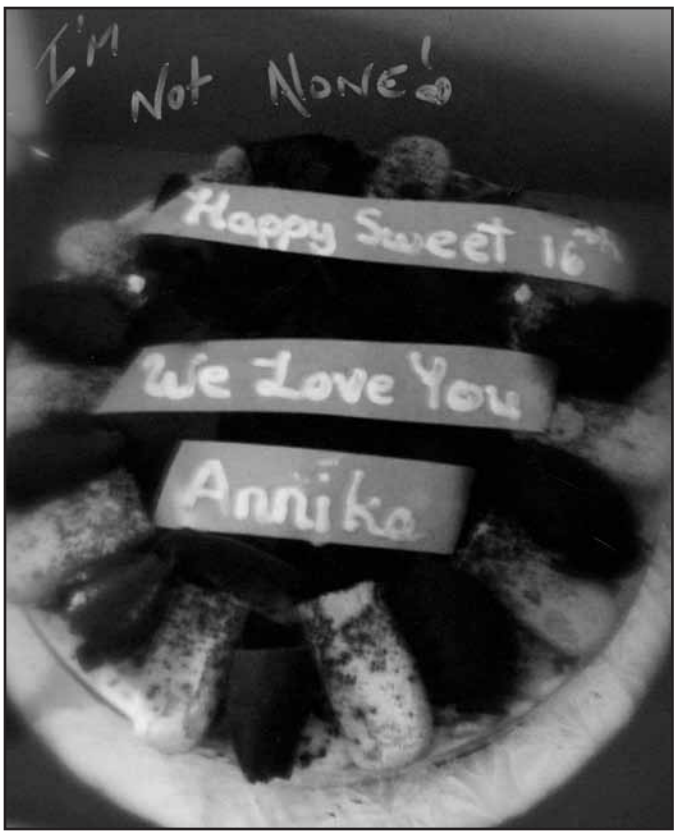

Figure 4. Curated Photo Album by Annika.

Text: "*I'm Not Alone! Mom, U've stuck with me through thick & thin, I know this wasn't what you had planned for me but I promise I won't let you down. I thank you, I love you.*"

Figure 5. Curated Photo Album by Taisha.

Text: "*Between 2 Worlds: People use to judge me because I had a baby at 14 years old… Now I'm trying to do my best to prove that I can be a good mom… But can my son see it…*"

Figure 6. Curated Photo Album by Christina.

Text: "*I didn't want nobody to see my face, my face was horrible, you wouldn't recognize me. It was so swollen. My cheeks were swollen, my eyes were swollen, my head was swollen. You couldn't see my face. I remember breastfeeding my son and I couldn't see him. I remember crying but my tears would just stay in my eyes because my cheeks were so swollen. I remember crying cuz I didn't think my son could recognize me. I wore big glasses for two weeks, I didn't take them off because I didn't want anyone to see my face.*"

make it—that's what I think happened to me. But I overcame it, and hopefully he won't ever have to feel that way.

Activity 3. Photography and curated photo albums (five workshops).

Participants took a workshop devoted to pointers about taking photographs with a digital camera. In a subsequent series of workshops, the participants had the difficult task of choosing for their photo album only nine of the hundreds of pictures they had taken with the cameras provided to them by the project. They wrote captions or accompanying text for each picture. Part of the challenge of this activity is in recognizing the potential significance of individual photographs as well as the links between them. Choosing which photographs to include from among the many taken is no easy matter. It forces the artist to consider and examine how to represent her lived experience. The combination of photos and words within the confines of a small album allows her to express or represent her views in a powerful way. There is an intimacy to the albums that draws the reader/viewer close (see Figures 4, 5, 6).

Activity 4. Writing on the body: Performance and photography.

During one of the workshops, and using differently colored lipstick and eyeliner, the participants wrote on each other's bodies, and on their own, in order to take photographs that would express their feelings in a different way (see Figure *7*). Some of the participants wrote on their children's bodies and took pictures of that too (see Figure 8).

Writing on body parts is different from writing on paper. Words written on a body take on an additional layer of meaning. The combination of words and body can make powerful and poetic statements we might otherwise not make. Embodying and photographing handwritten words calls attention to ideas and thoughts in a creative manner that makes us take notice. Here are examples of the words, phrases, and images the participants wrote and drew: *complex, "u shouldn't feel ashamed of who you are," good/bad, tear drops, "I'm a star," naked, passion, anxious, confused, depressed, hopeless, hurt, trapped, survival*, and *love*.

Activity 5. Object "pocket" portraits.

During one of the workshops, we asked the moms to remove all objects from their pockets and backpacks, and invited them to photograph these contents as symbolic self-portraits. Pocket portraits ask the question "What do the objects we carry say about us?" They involve arranging and photographing a "collage" of one's personal objects, usually the contents of pockets, purses, backpacks, or any other bag one happens to be carrying. The presentation of these objects reveals things about one's lifestyle, needs, priority, sense of organization, aesthetic, external image, use of technology, brand allegiance, economic status, attachments, and more. In displaying and photographing their objects (sometimes including themselves or an image of themselves), the participants see themselves from an unusual angle and learn to use a more abstract visual language to represent themselves and their ideas. (See Figure 9.)

Activity 6. Sharing work and preparing for the art exhibit (two workshops).

The final two workshops were devoted to presenting their work to each other, selecting the work they wanted to exhibit, and approving the material for exhibit. As the group worked on their curated photo albums, they sought each other's advice and help and offered encouragement and support in a way that educators cannot.

Presenting their work to each other during one of the final workshops, and then displaying these images taken from their lives at the exhibit at Elizabeth House, is a way of "going public" that encouraged them to articulate and take ownership of their images and ideas. Not only were they able to see how others react to their

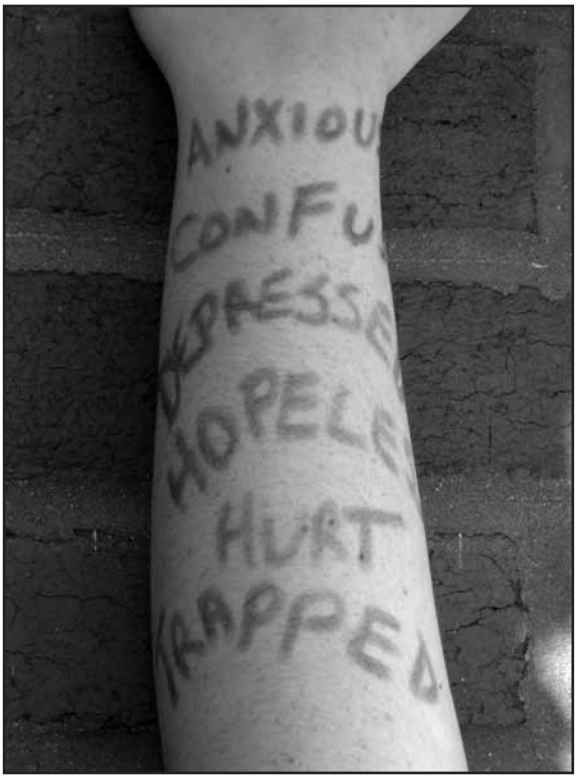

Figure 7. Body Writing Photography. Detail from: Anxious, Confused, Depressed, Hopeless, Hurt, Trapped.

Figure 8. Body Writing Photography by Isabelle. Naked, Passion

work, they were also compelled to step back and almost literally look at themselves.

The following is an excerpt from a conversation that took place during their presentations to each other; it illustrates the self-reflective, reflexive, and transformative nature that self-study as teaching and learning provokes:

> It was that intense fear that I had—that I was so young and not ready to have a baby. It was interesting to see how many of us have had the same fears… you are a child going into an adult life… everybody has their story, everybody has their past, and one thing I notice are the similarities between us even though we are all different. From my perspective, it's what led us each to decide that we were going to have a child and that this is the road we are going to go down. Ninety nine percent of the girls in our group are extremely supportive of each other. We try to go to each other's baby showers. If one of us doesn't have food for the baby, we'll provide for each other. We are a group that takes care of each other's children and takes care of each other. We make sure that we're not isolated and become that run down mother and that we don't end up in a dark place and feel like we're trapped. But we still act like kids! Even though we have strollers we still skip in the street. We do the same things that obnoxious teenagers do, we scream at cars, we play in the subway, except that when people look at us, they're like, "Whoa, they've got strollers."

Activity 7: Exhibit at Elizabeth House.

The project culminated in a large exhibition of the project work at Elizabeth House (see Figure 10). Attendees included friends, family, community representatives, social workers, healthcare providers, educators, administration, staff, volunteers, and board members. From the hundreds of pictures they took, the participants each selected only four photos to display in frames. The photos chosen have special

Figure 9. Pocket Portrait by Taisha.

Text: "*That's crazy, I am 16 years old, I have a 1 year-old kid, I am a student, I have bills to pay, and lots of responsibilities. And, not that much help.*"

meaning to the photographers, and make subtle and symbolic statements.

The framed texts beside each series of photographs—excerpts from transcripts of individual videotaped interviews with each mom—provide insight into the participants' lives, as well as advice or messages for other teens who may find themselves in similar circumstances. Hanging on hooks below the framed series of texts and photos are their curated albums, available for browsing.

The exhibit included:

- Blowups of the specific photographs selected for exhibition by the participants;
- Messages to their peers and other statements by the artists;
- Photo albums combining images and words that were curated by the participants;
- Panels displaying their body-word photographs;
- Diva MOM artwork: Letters to their children; and Activity 2, and Figure 2 & Figure 3; and
- A film screening of a video edited by Leanne Levy based on the moms' art, photography, and interviews to be used by Elizabeth House for future fundraising events.

When looked at or interpreted together, the photos and texts reveal courage, determination, intelligence, hope, and sometimes despair. The love and care they give to their children radiates throughout their work. This exhibit encourages older adults to treat pregnant teenagers and young mothers with the respect they deserve.

Figure10. Exhibition at Elizabeth House.

Overall Assessment of the Project

Through their fairly regular attendance (given their circumstances), their evident enthusiasm, their gestures of thanks and appreciation, but most of all through the work they produced, the teen participants indicated that they valued what they achieved through the project. For some of them, the satisfaction of finishing something worthwhile was in itself an accomplishment. For all of them, seeing that their work was meaningful to others was a deep source of satisfaction. Being labeled an artist or photographer gave them an additional source of pride and a different way of viewing themselves (a positive identity). The conversations around the table as they worked on their art revealed a growing ability to articulate and comment intelligently on their circumstances and on their hopes and plans. The participants developed their skills at taking good photographs, choosing interesting subjects, and using images metaphorically (see Figure 11). They also learned some of the vocabulary associated with art and media production, and learned what is involved in mounting an exhibit. In the questionnaires submitted at the end of the project, the staff rated the project as very good or excellent, and noted that they had observed concrete benefits to their clients with respect to self-esteem, self-expression, and a constructive attitude. The overwhelmingly positive response to the final exhibit by clients and their families and members of the staff, board, and community who attended the exhibit is another important indicator of Project TEEN M.O.M.'s success.

Figure 11. Metaphorical Photography by Melissa. Help Me.

Key Aspects of Successful Arts-Based Media Education in Community Settings

Although we certainly found it challenging, we found that teaching in a community organization setting has many advantages over school-based practice. Some of the lessons learned from this project could also inspire or translate into alternative approaches to media education within school settings.

Making access to education both easy and pleasurable should be a key consideration. Motivations for joining and staying in the project included the pleasure of doing art, taking photographs, getting a camera for free, the idea of participating in a project that would get their message out to others, the hope of helping other teenagers in similar situations, and the fun of hanging out with other teens associated with Elizabeth House *while knowing their children were safe and being cared for*.

The use of painting, drawing, collage, writing, and photography engaged the participants and *proved to be a source of relaxation* that enabled them to "let go" in a way that not only allowed their creativity to surface, but also encouraged them to become more reflexive in their art.

Providing *one-on-one support in addition to the group workshops* is a key factor to the success of the project. It allowed us to establish trust and provide individualized technical and creative advice along with a non-judgmental and attentive ear. Many of the participants valued the attention, respect, and time we gave them.

Teacher as friendly outsider is an ideal pedagogical stance. Because we were from "outside" of both the community center and the school, we were less likely to be associated with any negative views participants might hold of these institutions. We were not viewed as enforcers or authority figures to the extent that teachers usually are.

Curriculum flexibility outside of the school system is likely a key factor to the project's success. We were not part of the system teens so love to criticize (often with good reason). We did not have to grade or "judge" their work. Media production was voluntary. Freed from the constraints of a one-size-fits-all mandated school curriculum, we had the latitude to adapt our teaching to suit the situation, usually by demonstrating a technique or making a suggestion, and then getting out of the way and letting the participants do their thing. This was freeing not only to the youth we worked with, but also to us as teachers. What a luxury: to teach what you want and how you want without worrying about teaching to the test or criticism from administrators who do not share your pedagogical views.

For the participants*, sharing and critiquing each other's work* was empowering and led to insights and new ways to frame their situations. In what was the most powerful workshop of the series, each participant sat at the head of a long conference table and shared her album, page by page, reading aloud all the captions and statements she had written.[2] This was followed by questions and comments from the rest of the group. It was striking to note that even though they had been sitting side-by-side in previous workshops while working on these albums, and indeed, had helped each other choose pictures and captions, this activity of actually sitting and listening and looking at the presentation of the full album by each participant proved to be a revealing, meaningful, and deeply moving experience. Their support and compassion for each other was evident in their comments and reactions to each other's presentation. Some of them said they now saw each other in a different light. *The act of showing and presenting aloud was significant for the participants, acting as a mirror of sorts that reflected their situations and their lives back to them.*

The presence on the team of *different generations* with different experience and training may have played a significant role in creating *a safe space for critical art to emerge.* The age range of people in the room during the workshops ranged from 14 to 62 years. In some ways, Sandra Weber may have been perceived as a grandmother or mother figure, while Leanne Levy might have been seen as an older sister. The participants varied in age, and developed a sisterhood that embraced their age differences. Cross-generation dialogue within the workshops engaged everyone in sharing experiences and exchanging differing opinions.

Going Public: The exhibit that culminated the workshops was highly effective in many ways. *Seeing your work framed and on display is not the same as sharing it in workshops.* It was a source of pride and achievement for the participants. Some of them dressed up for the event, indicating that it was special to them. Some of them excitedly escorted their invited guests around, and even though they had already seen the film and each other's work, all attended the film screening at least twice. Most importantly, this was an occasion when *their views and their voices were heard*. Even those who know the participants well felt they gained new insight. The sister of one of the participants, for example, wrote in the guest book that she now understood why her sister needed to live at Elizabeth House. The exhibition quite eloquently expresses the artists'/photographers' hopes, fears, joys, pride, determination to succeed, and love for their children.

Lastly, there have been some welcome *ripple effects*. One of the outcomes was the interest shown by many staff members in the activities

we designed. This interest has already spilled over into their programming plans. Another welcome outcome was Elizabeth House's adoption of the exhibit as their permanent collection—one year later, all artwork and framed photographs and text remain on their walls—to welcome, inform, and encourage their youthful clients and the people who work at Elizabeth House. We were ecstatic when informed that the film the project produced is being used effectively at fundraising activities as a way to "put a face and personality" to their cause, as well a means to educate and share the results of the project with others in the community.

Concluding Remarks

Projects such as Project TEEN M.O.M. provide fruitful and meaningful ways of combining research, critical pedagogy, media and art education, and community activism. This project provided space for a multiplicity of voices, generations, and perspectives, bringing attention to the needs and viewpoints of community organizations and of girls and young women who are too often marginalized or silenced.

Expressing oneself through art is no panacea for social ills, but it can sometimes act as a political gesture or call to action. The transformative and emancipatory practice of producing meaningful media with the intent to examine and articulate one's situation inspires self-knowledge. Self-knowledge is power; sharing self-knowledge is empowering. When self-study reveals the connections between personal experience and social action and encourages others to look critically, it becomes a form of critical pedagogy and activism. The process and the ongoing dissemination of the project invite dialogue and provoke conversation and reflection in the public arenas of the community, the schools, and the Internet. In conclusion, we think that arts-based *media production in community centers can be a form of critical pedagogy* that can instigate pedagogical approaches used within the school setting to promote opportunities for life-long learning, and ignite students' feelings of connectedness with their school and their education**.**

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ENDNOTES

1 Jamie Lynn Spears is an American teen actress and singer, and is the younger sister of pop star Britney Spears. She plays Zoey Brooks in the Nickelodeon television comedy series *Zoey 101*. She announced her pregnancy in 2007, at the age of 16, which generated a lot of controversy in the media as she was accused of glamorizing teenage pregnancy.

2 See the project website to watch the video about the moms' presentation of their curated photo albums: www.teenmom.ca/Project_TEEN_MOM/Curated_Photo_Albums/Curated_Photo_Albums.html.

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"Rather than a wholesale transfer of methods and practices from the formal world to the museum world, we hope that a careful study of formal and informal spaces will help to identify and support the particular strengths of each."

Approaching Art Education as an Ecology: Exploring the Role of Museums

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In this article, we use two studies conducted in art museum settings as a means to discuss some of the opportunities and challenges for the field of informal art education. The first study explores artmaking processes that take place in a children's museum, highlighting the need to consider the social nature of learning in informal environments. Second, a study with families in an art museum explores art appreciation and interpretation. Taken together—the creating and the responding—these two studies are used to point out how we might trace disciplinary processes in art beyond schools into the informal learning environments of museums. By looking across settings, applying disciplinary content as a lens, we suggest an ecology of learning opportunities for the pursuit of an education in art. Further study and documentation of informal art education experiences is needed to better understand and support the needs and opportunities for art learners in non-school environments.

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By whatever name you choose to call it—out-of-school learning, informal learning, free choice learning, or lifelong learning—there exists a growing interest in better understanding the ways in which learning is supported in environments that lie outside the purview of schools or formal education. From our perspective, a focus on out-of-school learning should be seen as a complementary venue to expand opportunities for students (of all ages) to engage in powerful learning experiences.

In art education, the formal and informal have been working closely together for many years. A recent Rand report illustrated how community-based art educators have become key providers of both school-based educational experiences and teacher professional development. In addition, their work provides other out-of-school learning opportunities in the arts for a wide range of audiences (Bodily, Augustine, & Zakaras, 2008). While school-based art education provides access to a certain kind of structured learning experience, typically characterized by scaffolded and sequential instruction, informal organizations are often positioned to provide other forms of experience. We argue that formal and informal arts education organizations, in tandem, are a key component of a healthy lifelong learning ecology.

By ecology, we mean the landscape of art learning opportunities that exist across a network of informal and formal educational organizations (Russell, Knutson, Crowley, Kisa, & Steiner, 2010). By employing the language of ecology, we deliberately call attention to two properties. First, an ecological perspective emphasizes the strength of diversity. Just as biodiversity is a measure of the health of an ecosystem, diversity in the organizational forms that provide arts education programming in a region are indicative of a robust learning ecology. When diversity is viewed as an advantage, we can appreciate how institutions capitalize on their unique affordances rather than necessarily expecting that all learning should conform to a standardized notion of quality arts education. For example, museums can take advantage of their collections to create opportunities for learners to respond to and critique master works. Ceramics class in a high school can make use of classroom studio facilities and the expertise of the teacher to create opportunities for learners to develop their artmaking skills.

Second, the ecological perspective calls attention to the web or network of relations among constituent entities. By thinking carefully about the connections or interdependence of educational organizations, we can evaluate the extent to which a region provides a full range of art education experiences across institutions, rather than assuming that all components of an arts education be provided within the constrained resources and capacity of a single organization (e.g., schools).

While rarely studied in the arts education sector (Bodily, et al., 2008), the distinct but complementary role of formal and informal education organizations has been taken up in science education. In a recent synthesis of the research literature on science education, the National Academies (National Research Council [NRC], 2009) suggest that while the formal and informal share some characteristics, informal learning environments are distinct from formal environments. They further suggest that each

environment is well suited to a particular type of activity and audience. Formal environments support regular systematic instruction within a domain, but they are perhaps less effective at responding to learner interests. Informal environments are better positioned to respond to lifelong learning interests and learner-directed experiences in a domain.

We believe that there is much to be learned by better understanding how learning takes place outside of the school environment, and how different kinds of educational experiences cumulate over time and across place within an educational ecology (Russell, et al., 2010). Informal art education experiences offer unique opportunities to engage with the discipline of art and have some specific, sometimes unique, affordances for learning. Yet to date, little research has been conducted in this area (Luke & Adams, 2008; Luke & Knutson, 2010). State standards in art education suggest a healthy arts education includes both creating and responding experiences with opportunities to develop skills across a range of media and disciplines (Pennsylvania Department of Education, 2003; Hetland, Winner, Veenema, & Sheridan, 2007). Informal art settings provide opportunities to see original works of art and support engagement with art facilitated by familial and social interaction. These are but two examples of the broad set of competencies within the scope of a formal art education agenda that can be explicitly supported in informal settings. However, we need to think more carefully about how to leverage and mediate these experiences, as well as how to articulate their role within a broader arts learning research agenda.

In this article, we draw on lessons learned in the context of two recent research studies (Knutson & Crowley, 2010; Knutson, 2004)[1] in order to make arguments about how to conceptualize and support authentic art experiences in informal settings in the context of an ecology of art learning opportunities across the life span. To illustrate the potential range in which we might study informal learning environments, we selected studies that focus on two important aspects of the formal art curriculum: creating and responding (Keiper, Sandene, Persky, & Kuang, 2009). One study examined a museum exhibit area focused on artmaking processes; other analyzed an exhibit that promotes aesthetic and art historical responses to art. Both studies address the question: What does disciplinary content learning look like in an informal museum context?

These studies were conducted by the University of Pittsburgh Center for Learning in Out of School Environments (UPCLOSE), a university-based center that works in partnership with informal learning organizations (museums and community-based groups). In our study of learning in out-of-school environments, we are interested in how disciplinary practices (e.g., in art, science, natural history) are, and might be enacted, within informal learning experiences. We work collaboratively with our partners to identify core disciplinary practices and to examine how these practices connect to the core mission of the organization. We connect to the educational research within the academic discipline for guidance in thinking about how these practices create a learning trajectory in a subject area. For example, what might a casual museum conversation about art between a parent and a child suggest about developing skills and concepts relevant to the kinds of learning in art that take place in schools? Or, how can we trace developing expertise in concepts about evolution that emerge as a child talks about dinosaur fossils in a natural history museum (Palmquist & Crowley, 2007)? Through our research projects, we hope to illuminate the contribution and role that different organizations might play in a larger regional learning ecology. Our approach is not about testing or imposing a dominant approach or belief about what constitutes quality art learning. Rather,

our work suggests that there is not a single best approach to informal art education. By taking an ecological approach to art education, we begin to understand how unique opportunities to engage with art strengthen art learning in and out of school.

Creating Art as a Family

Our first research-informed example takes place at an arts-based children's museum. The museum has a large collection of original contemporary and historical artworks, and has a large art studio as one of its most popular exhibit areas. This museum does not offer artmaking classes per se; rather, artmaking stations (printmaking, painting, clay, papermaking) exist for visitors to sit and create for as long as they wish. Technical assistance is provided through instructional text panels, and through the presence of floor staff artists who demonstrate and facilitate artmaking. No formal curriculum is presented or followed. As in most informal settings, visitors choose the degree to which they wish to pursue any creative engagement with the activity stations, and indeed, whether they finish a project at all. Experiences can be fragmentary, momentary, and subject to the spontaneous engagement or disengagement of the participants.

One of the interesting challenges of a place like this museum art studio is that visitors often arrive in family groups. Many researchers have pointed out the inherently social nature of learning in informal environments (e.g., Gleason & Schauble, 2000; Leinhardt & Knutson, 2004; NRC, 2009). Informal learning environments are often encountered within social or familial groups. As such, the learning that takes place is seen as a group and not primarily as an individual activity. Research in other domains, such as literacy education, has also looked at out-of-school time and the role of familial influences on learning (Purcell-Gates, 2000).

Figure 1. "Real Stuff": Animated Earth (bubbling clay slip) Art Piece by Steve Eisenhauer, commissioned for the Children's Museum. Credit: Children's Museum of Pittsburgh.

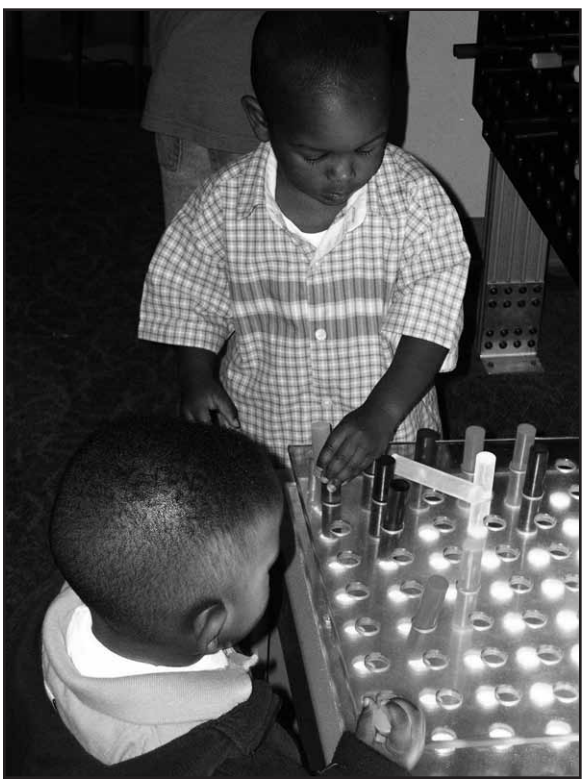

Figure 2. Children playing at a museum exhibit designed for exploring patterns and light. Children's Museum of Pittsburgh. ©Albert Vecerka/ Esto.

Collaboration is often part of the artmaking experience in the museum art studio, and the design of experiences for the museum setting requires somewhat of a reconceptualization of typical notions of artmaking. Children visit museums with their parents or adult caretakers, yet art-making activities are often designed to support primarily the creative pursuit of individuals. Additionally, children's museums were founded to support child-directed play, and they provide opportunities for children to engage with designed experiences that support both exploration and creativity. Within the notion of developmentally appropriate practice (Bredekamp, 1987), painting stations, clay tables, and other art activities are commonly seen in children's museums, alongside such early childhood favorites as cause-and-effect exhibits, water play areas, and kitchen and other pretend play activities such as grocery store exhibits (Maher, 1997). These activities support child-directed and peer-to peer exploration, and traditionally, the role of the parent in these settings is seen as secondary to the core mission.

At the children's museum in our study, staff were interested in understanding and rethinking the ways that creative practices were being supported within their art studio area. With a belief in a more socio-cultural approach to learning, staff wondered how they could develop exhibits that encouraged adults to be active learners and learning partners in the museum experience. As part of a reorganization of the art studio area, we conducted observation and interview studies to help staff think about how families were using the art studio, and how they might better support parents' roles within the studio (Knutson, 2004).

The studies of the art studio included interviews of 31 parents and 22 staff at the museum, and a video observation of 50 groups of parents and children in the art studio exhibit area. Study participants were parents and children visiting the museum, who were invited to participate in the study if they were in the art studio space. We asked parents about their beliefs about art and art education, as well as what they thought about the role of adults in children's artmaking at the museum and at home.

Findings from the video observation study suggested that most parents did not get directly involved in making art. Parents tended to stand back and observe their children, they helped to facilitate their child's work, and occasionally they offered directions or advice. Only 7% of parents spent time working on their own artworks. Staff agreed that parents should be more involved in the family's experience in the art studio, but they differed about what that involvement should look like. Some staff wanted parents to be involved and help to facilitate children's art making, feeling that ideally parents should make art themselves while they were in the art studio.

Interviews with parents and staff revealed mixed ideas about the ideal role of parents in the studio. Sixty-five percent of parents and 59% of staff felt that an adult should observe children and not get too involved, but to "just let them do their own thing." This reflects a traditional belief about the individual nature of the creative process, and a belief that adults should not interrupt or influence children's discovery. This belief was supported by another theme, that only 10% of parents and 23% of staff felt that adults should suggest ideas to children. The hands-off approach extends further for parents, with only 19% saying that an adult's role is to encourage children, while 55% of staff felt that encouragement is an important adult role. Moreover, 39% of parents and 55% of staff felt that adults should guide and facilitate children's art experiences, while 26% of parents and no staff commented specifically about the need to look out for children's safety during art experiences. And 60% of staff and 6% of parents mentioned the importance of parents being engaged as a learner and artist. These results suggest that parents did not

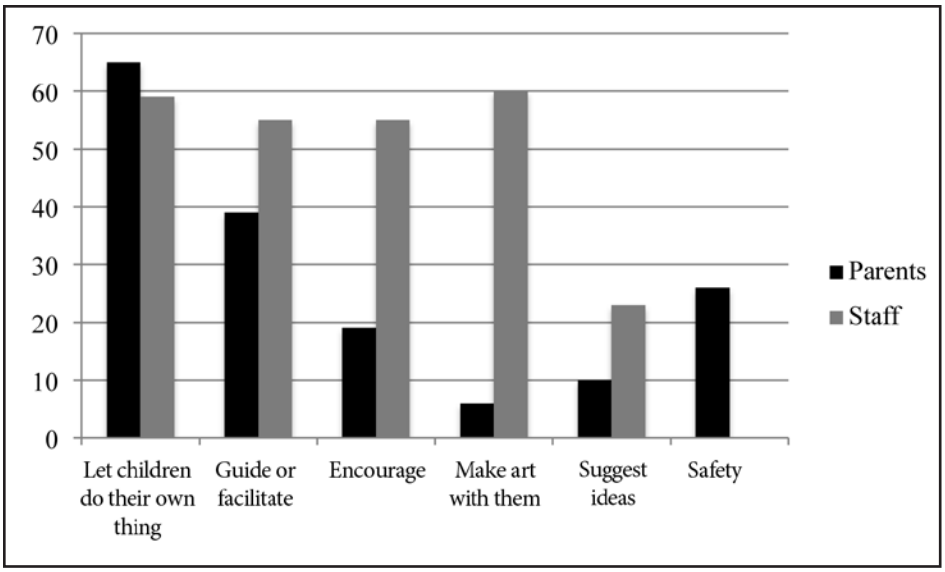

Figure 3. Parents and staff beliefs about the role of parents in the art studio.

currently have the tools at hand to help scaffold their children's learning, and they did not really see themselves as being invited by the museum to participate in artmaking themselves.

The interviews and observation studies were conducted early in the redesign process, and the results gave staff much to discuss. The authors sat in on these design team meetings, and together we discussed ways that the museum might be able to facilitate experiences that were more consistent with their beliefs about art making. Upper-level and managerial staff were more likely to have indicated that parents should be making art alongside their children, while floor staff (who worked day-to-day with visitors) wanted parents to work alongside children for different reasons. Floor staff felt that some parents tended to micromanage their child's process, and they really wanted parents to do their own work so that they would not hinder their child's process. This concern points to a tension surrounding the same kinds of deeply held beliefs about artistic creation that Efland (1988) has discussed in school-based art education settings. The results of the interview and observation studies helped the museum to address their differing assumptions about the creative process in order to move forward the museum's broader agenda for a socio-cultural based approach to learning.

The museum decided that they would try to move their practice towards a model of collaborative conversation and joint activity similar to that often promoted in science centers (Schauble, Gleason, Lehrer, Bartlett, Petrosino, Allen, Clinton, Ho, Jones, Lee, Phillips, Seigler, & Street, 2002; NRC, 2009), and counter to traditional practice in children's museums (Maher, 1997; Bredekamp, 1987). Learning, as considered in the children's museum art studio, challenges educators to rethink the role of parents as facilitators, collaborators, and even creators.

The first step was to make the space inviting to adults as well as children. The museum

redesigned the studio space and other exhibit areas in the museum using a concept they called "real stuff." This concept focused on using real objects and tools in an authentic way in settings that were inviting for adults and that could encourage joint activity. In the studio, this meant that real, as opposed to "crafty," materials were provided. For example, a selection of brushes, palettes, and colors replaced single brush pots at the easels. Easels were both child-sized and adult-sized. Prints and a historic puppet display from the museum's collections were hung in the space. The aesthetic of the space was carefully considered as part of the new philosophy, including natural light, hardwood floors, specially designed concrete tables created for the ceramics area, and a custom-built table for papermaking.

The next step was to design the experiences within the space with conversation and joint learning processes as a goal. Staff began to embrace the idea that parents should be seen as artists themselves, who would work side-by-side with their child, and encouraged to be more supportive and communicative about the creative process. Thus, the interactions of the floor staff and visitors, signage, demonstrations, and other forms of mediation were developed to help facilitate a collaborative adult/child experience.

Figure 4. "Real Stuff": Parent and child making paper together at the Children's Museum. Credit: Children's Museum of Pittsburgh.

The result of the redesign has been successful. The space now encourages more joint interaction and activity for parents and children. Our summative evaluations of the museum's exhibit areas indicate that the studio is a family favorite, consistently at the top of the most loved and valued exhibit areas in the museum. Of all the exhibit areas in the museum, families also spend the most time engaging in the art studio. Although we have some indications that the art studio is working in this case, and across art museums more generally, we have only scratched the surface of the research needed to better understand the kinds of learning that takes place in hands-on art experiences in museums.

As a case study for our consideration of an educational ecology for art education, the children's museum engages our thinking about the ways in which learning theory and research are applied to experiments with art experiences. The museum has been a leader in the use of evaluation and research to create innovative exhibits and experiences (Knutson & Crowley, 2005). By challenging their own assumptions, exploring new designs, and working to understand their audience, museums can serve as laboratories for innovation in art education. A research-driven process can help informal art education settings maximize the learning opportunities they are uniquely positioned to provide. At the same time, this process can help to broaden our understanding of what quality art education looks like across a range of settings within the educational ecology.

Appreciating Art as a Family

Our second illustrative example comes from a study of family conversations in an art museum. This work stemmed from questions that have been grappled with in the museum education field for many years. How do people talk about or interpret art? How can we empower visitors to feel confident making interpretations about art?

A widely used program has been developed to tackle just such questions: Visual Thinking Strategies (Visual Understanding in Education [VUE], 1998). This program is used by museums across the country, and it provides a way to get school groups to have non-threatening exploratory conversations about artworks, using visual evidence. Although the program is very popular and in widespread use across the United States, we are not alone in wondering how this empowerment may facilitate learning. For example, in cases where visitors are empowered to make their own meanings, are some meanings more valid than others? If all meanings are equally valid, what does a professional in the field have to offer? Why do we have curators and art educators in museums? Without the need (or access to) additional mediation or scaffolding, how might an average visitor build expertise in art over time and across visits? In short, how can we take visitors from personal reactions to disciplinary interpretation in the informal world? At one extreme, Meszaros (2006) suggests that the move into personal meaning making in programs such as VUE has resulted in what she calls the "whatever interpretation," an approach that does a disservice to the museum being called an educational institution. She argues that, wary of being perceived as being too authoritative, many museums allow their galleries to become an interpretive free-for-all. Under the guise of being respectful of a visitor's own meaning making activities, museums have backed away from the hard task of deciding what to say to visitors about the art. The well-informed visitor may still know enough about art and art history to construct rich interpretations during a visit, but what about the average visitor or family? Meszaros challenges the field to re-engage in the difficult task of helping all their visitors learn about art and art history in museums.

Science museums have long explored the conversations of visitors as a means to access developmental trajectories of science related processes, skills, and concepts (e.g., NRC, 2009). They have also spent many years designing mediation and analyzing visitor response to find out how they might begin to scaffold science-related conversations among families in museums (e.g. Allen, 2002; Allen & Gutwill, 2009). We wondered what we might learn if we began to look at conversations in art museums in a similar way.

To this end, we designed a study of the conversations of 50 family groups as they looked at four different artworks in a survey art museum. Each group consisted of one parent and one child between the ages of 8-11 years old. We asked families to visit and talk about the selected art objects as they normally would. We took families to the target objects and stood back while they conversed. Families wore cordless microphones, and their conversations were recorded and later transcribed and analyzed.

We were interested to examine the ways that families talked about art, but we also wanted to look for any differences that might exist between the kinds of conversations that different genres of art might encourage. We selected four artworks for the study, using VUE guidelines for being family-friendly (VUE, 1998). They included recognizable scenes and familiar settings with details to notice and discuss. We chose a large narrative painting with many characters in the scene of a crowd, painted in a colorful expressionist style. The second object was a landscape painting. This pastoral scene depicted cows, milkmaids, green hills, and trees in an Italianate landscape setting. We included a terracotta sculpture of a bust with a small figure

of a dog and child. The fourth object came from the decorative arts collection, a large ornate bed from the 17th century.

Prior research on art museum conversation focused on the structure of discourse, noting whether visitors were noticing, explaining, evaluating, and so on (Leinhardt & Knutson, 2004). This has been useful and tells us *how*[2] visitors talk. However, such coding does not account for *what* visitors are talking about. Are they engaging with art content? Are they learning about culture and context? We designed a coding scheme that would categorize talk related to select disciplinary categories relevant to art education.

With this in mind we came up with four broad categories: criticism, creation, context, and connections (Knutson & Crowley, 2010). These categories draw upon curriculum standards and notions of the art disciplines that appear in state standards (e.g., Pennsylvania Department of Education, 2003). *Criticism* refers to art criticism and relates to formal models of art criticism. This category notes when families noticed details and described or analyzed visual details in a work of art. *Creation* refers to the artist. Whenever families referred to techniques, intention, or skills that artists used or decisions that were made by someone in the process of creating the artwork, they were discussing the creation of the work. This talk may sound like talk captured in the criticism category, but it is distinguished by reference to someone creating the work. *Context* refers to the time and place in which an object was made. The *connections* category was created to account for the ways in which family members tried to draw upon prior experiences, or joint experiences, to make sense of the artwork. From prior museum learning research, and learning research more generally (NRC, 2009), we know that this is an important aspect of the learning process, and it is something that occurs a great deal in informal environments.

Table 1 shows the average number of times each category was coded in the talk of a subset of the 50 families in the study (16 families who looked at the same set of 4 artworks). Families talked most at the narrative painting, with an average of 25 coded comments, followed by the decorative art object, sculpture, and landscape painting. Most of this difference appears due to the large number of criticism comments at the narrative painting, as families spent much time noticing elements in the large and detailed crowd scene.

A second finding is that families used, on average, each category of talk at least once while viewing an object. Unsurprisingly, criticism is clearly the most common kind of talk at each object. Conversations about objects would necessarily involve noting details within the object and making sense of them with respect to the overall object. Context talk was the lowest category, except at the bed, where creation was lowest. When we designed the study, we thought that different kinds of objects might promote different kinds of art talk. It appears from Table 1 that it was easier, in this case, to think about the artist while looking at fine art, and harder to think about a creator when faced with a functional/decorative object like the bed.

This study helps us think about ways in which we might trace connections to the art disciplines in conversations about art in a museum. We hope that this kind of work might help to revive the debate in art education about what might count as a useful outcome for an art museum experience. While the informal is good at experimenting, it has not been terribly strong about committing to and assessing a clear set of outcomes. This conversational analysis provides a different vantage point into how we might think about the learning processes that take place in informal settings. Other work in the field, such as the *Quality of Qualities* report (Seidel, Tishman, Winner, Hetland, & Palmer, 2009) and *Studio Thinking* (Hetland et al., 2007), are also taking

	Criticism	Creation	Context	Connections	Total
Narrative painting	16	4	2	3	25
Landscape painting	5	2	1	2	10
Narrative sculpture	9	3	1	1	14
Decorative arts object	8	1	4	4	17

Table 1. Average number of family comments in each category of talk.

up the challenge of documenting outcomes for arts experiences in both formal and informal settings. While there are a diverse set of ways that people learn about art in and out of school, is there, or could there be, a common language for art education outcomes? Continuing work on outcomes for diverse art settings will help us to find a common language for what a powerful art learning experience might look like.

Conclusions

The nature and means by which learning might be supported is a topic of great interest for art educators in the informal sector. The informal educators with whom we work have always been interested in how their programs might connect with the work of schools and their curriculum. In recent years, such educators have become even more attuned to the needs of the formal system. The informal education system tracks curriculum standards and policies in the formal educational system, responding in immediate ways to each new policy that emerges. For example, No Child Left Behind quickly resulted in a national symposium called "No Museum Left Behind?" (2008), where discussion focused on how K-12 accountability pressures have created tensions, and even a sense of crisis, in the informal learning community. The policy put pressure on museums to make their experiences fit the curriculum, and to create more worksheets and tests for their field trips at the expense of the more affective, broad, and inquiry-based experiences they had traditionally offered.

However, an ecological view of the field suggests that there may be important implications that apply if one takes a broader view across the formal and informal parts of the ecology. Rather than a wholesale transfer of methods and practices from the formal world to the museum world, we hope that a careful study of formal and informal spaces will help to identify and support the particular strengths of each. For example, both studies in this article point toward the collaborative and social nature of experiences in the informal sector, as well as the role of learners' direction and interest in determining the way in which disciplinary content is picked up, or not.

Many of the large-scale efforts to study outcomes in arts education have been focused on instrumental outcomes (Bodily et al., 2008). While instrumental measures may have kept art in the school curriculum, they have not

helped to further the most needed conversations about what learning should look like and how to promote authentic learning in art. More recently, we see the afterschool community similarly focusing on instrumental academic outcomes. This too might be shortchanging its most powerful impacts by looking too closely after the needs of school-based outcomes, and not at the kinds of broader outcomes that are supported by informal learning experiences (Birmingham, Pechman, Russell, & Mielke, 2005; Bodily, & Beckett, 2008; Fashola, 1998; Little & Harris, 2003).

Prior research on informal and formal educational systems has mostly considered the two as separate worlds. We have argued in this article that important linkages exist between them, and that a more useful view would be to see them as interrelated parts of a regional education ecology. There are issue, resource, and stakeholder interdependencies. K-12 policy has ripple effects throughout the system. Charter schools, home schooling, and the school improvement industry have begun to challenge our notions of what is a legitimate part of the K-12 system. As key sources of funding, foundations play an important, though often invisible, role in shaping regional educational priorities. As the Rand study pointed out, informal art education providers are playing an important role within the formal art education sector (Bodily et al., 2008). There is a great need for research and policy discussion about the nature and kinds of learning that take place across both formal and informal art education sectors. By working more closely with our informal partners, we might begin to reinvigorate the discussion about the importance and value of art education for our students and citizens.

We feel that an ecological view of art education could become an important driver of change for the field of art education. Thinking about art education as an ecology implies that diverse niches within the field are a strength for art learning. Informal art education is unlike informal science education. Art museums have strongly supported the formal system, but institutionally, education has not been the primary driver (Meszaros, 2006). In the science education field-trip literature, we find evidence that school was the agenda, and so science museums tried to make themselves more like school (Anderson, Kisiel & Storksdieck, 2006; NRC, 2009).

As in any ecological system, we suggest that a healthy art learning ecology needs each institution to play to its strength. The goal is not to develop a monoculture of art where school experiences are grafted into informal settings, or vice versa; rather, we hope that each institutional type is able to develop their own powerful and authentic art experiences. Different experiences might then give the learner access to different perspectives on what art can be as they move across time and place. At the same time, an ecology is connected, and it is a system in balance. We think a closer conversation about what a powerful lifelong trajectory would look like in and out of school will promote coherence in the art education infrastructure.

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ENDNOTES

1 This article is not intended to provide a full description of the studies; rather, we employ the findings to make a conceptual argument about the power of diversity in a regional arts ecology. For a full description of study methodology and findings, see Knutson, 2004, and Knutson & Crowley, 2010.

2 Studying learning in informal settings poses its own set of challenges to researchers, and over the past 20 years, the field of informal learning research has blossomed (National Research Council, 2009). This research has been guided predominately by the influence of National Science Foundation and the hands-on science museum field, but studies have been conducted in all kinds of museums and other informally programmed and unprogrammed spaces. Finding ways to look for and assess learning in these settings is a particular methodological challenge, as many participants may not engage in the activity with learning as a primary motivation. Researchers have used novel observation techniques, such as timing and tracking, to unobtrusively measure behavior and engagement (Serrell, 1998). Other studies have tried to capture the nature of the experience itself by recording and analyzing conversational practices in museums (e.g., Leinhardt, Crowley, & Knutson, 2002). The goal has been to retain as much of the natural intention and experience as possible. In these settings, administering a formal assessment of learning (e.g., a test) is not aligned with the nature of the experience.

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"Our work suggests that structured, yet flexible art experiences work best for children in crisis."

Implementing an Art Program
for Children in a Homeless Shelter

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This article describes a qualitative research study designed to analyze the implementation of an art program for children in a homeless shelter. Using a socio-cultural lens and the framework of resilience theory, teacher researchers implemented community-art programs for children residing in a family emergency shelter. Data collection included field notes, artwork, analytical notes, and interviews with mothers and shelter staff. Research findings addressed three themes: redefining success, tensions in curriculum and implementation, and managing behavior. The findings indicate the importance of the cultural context for children living in crisis. Results also indicate that despite short-term implementation, art programs for children who are homeless can benefit the community and enhance teacher preparation by increasing knowledge about context. This article provides recommendations to guide educators teaching children in crisis, and suggests appropriate terminology for teaching art in informal learning contexts.

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May I take this home to show my mom?" Makisha (pseudonym), a third grader, asked as she held up her large, dripping watercolor. As teacher educators leading art in a shelter for homeless families, we were immediately struck by her use of the word "home" and the lack of space in the small rooms that families share in the homeless shelter. Even with experience teaching in a variety of non-school settings, we were increasingly aware of the particularities to implementing a program in this context. Art educators are encouraged to consider pedagogy in culturally and socially diverse contexts, and to address issues in relation to various settings and contexts in which art education occurs, such as community collaborations in out-of-school settings (Congdon, 1996; Stokrocki, 2004). This perspective includes considerations of the physical environment and socio-cultural factors (Stokrocki, 2004), and also suggests inquiry into the content related to context, culture, instructional settings, and community collaborations (Congdon, 1996). The assertion is that if the form, content, meaning, and value of art are determined by art's context, then it is important to understand how art is taught in culturally and socially diverse settings (Congdon, 1996; Stokrocki, 2004). The purpose of this article is to develop a better understanding of the role of context in the implementation of an art program in an emergency shelter for homeless families.

Community arts programs sometimes focus on children perceived as at-risk due to ongoing problems such as neighborhood violence or exposure to a traumatic event. For example, some have focused on the art of photography to address issues of stereotypes of urban neighborhoods, while others seek to benefit children with physical and mental challenges (Heise, 2007). Some programs focus on strengthening individual and community resilience by helping them cope with disaster. For example, Hurricane Katrina spawned art programs for evacuees residing in temporary shelters (Kim, 2005). Bleiker (2006) reported that art education provided avenues for individuals to come to terms with the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, and increased human capacity for understanding political challenges. Wexler (2004) used painting as a form of expression for those with traumatic brain injury. Art can help young people make sense of their experiences and be an effective form of communication (Heise & MacGillivray, 2010). For many, visual expression is easier than verbal expression (Appleton, 2001; Orr, 2007).

There is some research on the relationship between art and homeless adults. For instance, Feen-Calligan (2008) found that art can allow people to express their experiences of homelessness, to challenge negative stereotypes, and to show the contributions homeless people can make to society. Stokrocki, Andrews, and Saemondsdotter (2001) conducted Internet art programs that resulted in healing, increased self-respect, and social bonding. However, an online search of academic articles produced no empirical research on teaching art to children in homeless shelters. This article describes the key issues surrounding the implementation of an art

program in a shelter for homeless families. As university professors, one in art education and the other in literacy, we seek to inform teacher preparation for both school and community-based programs.

Background

An interest and background in out-of-school learning experiences brought us together to design, implement, and evaluate a program in an emergency homeless shelter in an urban area in the midsouthern United States. The program provided children positive interactions with print and exploration of art materials. This initiative offers the field of art education a better understanding of a homeless shelter as one kind of community setting. An art education undergraduate also participated as co-instructor in this engaged scholarship effort.

The unaddressed needs of children who are homeless led us to focus on this population. The numbers of children and families who are homeless are staggering. Thirty-nine percent of the 3.5 million Americans who are homeless are children (National Alliance to End Homelessness, 2007). Currently, a third of families looking for shelter each night are turned away nationwide (United States Council of Mayors, 2009). Although the catalysts for homelessness are many, children face poor mental and physical health, academic challenges, and uncertain futures (National Coalition for the Homeless, 2009).

We sought to better understand the setting. Shelters for families who are homeless can differ substantially, but there are some commonalities. Families must adhere to many rules in order to maintain their place at a shelter, often consisting of only one room and a bath (sometimes communal). Additionally, mothers typically must follow strict mandates including requirements to stay clean and sober; be employed or actively pursue employment; make sure the children follow the rules; and stay away from the shelter when the children are in school (MacGillivray, Ardell, & Curwen, 2009; 2010; MacGillivray, 2010). Living in shelters, although perhaps a better alternative to the street, often brings with it specific problems, such as lack of privacy, rigorous guidelines and rules, shared bathroom facilities, and a need to cope with the behaviors of other children and adults (Boxill & Beaty, 1990; MacGillivray, Ardell, & Curwen, 2009; 2010).

The majority of after-school and shelter-based programs focus primarily on academics in the form of support with homework and/or tutoring. Often, children are mandated by shelter rules to go to supervised homework or tutoring sessions in the evening while their mothers attend meetings. For some children, this means an additional one to two hours of a school-like setting after a full day of school and after-school care (MacGillivray, Ardell, & Curwen, 2009; 2010).

Framing the Study

Due to the duration of the study and the transiency of the population, our research focused on the issues surrounding implementation of a program in a homeless shelter rather than efficacy. However, it is important to note that we felt that the program was successful based upon comments of parents, children, and staff. For example, one mother said that the program "opens their [her children's] minds up to a whole lot of different things" (personal interview, April 23, 2009). While dropping off and picking up their children, mothers often reported their child's enjoyment of the program. The children enthusiastically shared their work with their mothers at the end of each session, and many expressed a strong desire to return the next week.

Socio-cultural Theory

Socio-cultural theory is the interaction of people and contexts (Rogoff, 2003; Wertsch, 1993). This perspective positions learning as

grounded in cultural practices and student interests. Sleeter (2008) encourages teachers to understand students' cultural context and link student knowledge to academics. Using the framework of a socio-cultural lens, text and art events gain meaning through specific contexts and are grounded in social practices (Stokrocki, 2004; Wertsch, 1993). Within this perspective, literacy is more than letters and their sounds, and art is more than lines and shapes on paper. In order to gain meaning, objects are situated in the context within which they are created. These social and cultural practices often are the focus of community-based programs, with attention to the relationship between art and daily life (Bastos, 2002). When attended to, the context of teaching, learning, reading, and art-making can inform teacher education and bring an increased understanding of the larger issues surrounding community-based programs. This study offers insights into the rarely explored context of an art program in a shelter for homeless children.

Resilience Theory

Resilience theory played a critical role in the design, implementation, and analysis of our program. Resilience is the belief in the ability of every person to overcome adversity if important protective factors are present in that person's life (Bosworth & Walz, 2005; Krovetz, 1999). Protective factors include a nurturing, caring environment; high expectations and purposeful support; and ongoing opportunities for meaningful participation (Krovetz, 1999). Researchers have identified several characteristics that foster resiliency, including creativity, positive relationships, humor, independence, positive view of personal future, flexibility, joy of learning, self-motivation, competence or mastery, self-worth, and perseverance (Benard, 1991; Bosworth & Walz, 2005; Krovetz, 1999).

Researchers advocate an asset model instead of deficit or damage paradigm (Bosworth & Walz, 2005; Smilan, 2009). A damage model focuses on the deficits of troubled and dysfunctional families and communities, and assumes the passive "victim" status of youth. In contrast, an asset or resiliency paradigm recognizes young people may be exposed to hardship and can be empowered to overcome adversity. Instead of focusing on the trauma, they are called upon to focus on opportunity, and are challenged to respond to adversity positively and creatively (Heise, in press). These successions of pre-emptive responses can build a positive sense of self and create lasting resiliencies. Hutzel (2007) proposed art curriculum for community-based programs that focus on community assets and foster social change. Bastos (2002) suggested a social-activist approach to community art-based art education to address the community's needs through recognizing its social capital. With particular attention to context, our study used art and literacy to foster resilience; help homeless children express their feelings; and empower them through articulating, acknowledging, and celebrating individual strengths such as creativity, positive relationships, humor, perseverance, and vision for future.

Methodology

Qualitative methodology was used to investigate a six-week art program in an emergency homeless family shelter in the midsouth that allows mothers and their children a place to stay for up to three months. Participants were children 5 to 13 years of age. We divided the children into two age groups: 5-8 and 9-13. Class size varied between two to ten, depending on the shelter's census. The weekly one-hour sessions for the younger children began immediately after dinner, followed by a session for older children. As required by the shelter, mothers escorted their children to and from class.

There was a high turnover rate, which reflected the shelter's mission to help mothers improve their credit, find a job, and locate housing as quickly as possible. There were

often new participants in class each week, some potentially having arrived at the shelter a few hours prior. The numerous children—some running, screaming, laughing, or crying—often made for chaotic transitions.

Researchers collaborated on inquiry into this learning context. Donalyn is an art educator in a university whose research focuses on art for fostering resilience. Laurie is a literacy professor with a particular interest in literacy and homelessness. We share an interest in out-of-school programs for underserved populations. Both of us have taught in elementary public schools. We directed an undergraduate whose primary role was assisting with the curriculum and instruction.

Data Collection Methods

As teacher researchers, we gathered the following data: field notes; analytical notes; lesson plans; interviews with parents, children, and shelter staff; and analysis of children's art. Each week during the class, we took notes on the children's verbal and nonverbal responses, our perceptions of the program, and content of each session. We photographed the children's artwork and analyzed their work in relation to understandings of concepts and processes. We met weekly to share our reflections and engage in ongoing conversation about the relationship between art, literacy, and what constitutes effective teaching practices for children in crisis. The lesson plans and revisions were integral to these conversations. Interviews with mothers and homeless shelter staff focused on the children's art habits and the children's responses to the program. We checked and confirmed themes by reading across sources of data.

Interview transcripts, our reflections, the analysis of art work, and our analytical notes were entered into NVivo, a qualitative computer software application. In addition to the software analysis, we manually coded the data. NVivo helped us with an initial search and analysis of reoccurring concepts. Repeated rounds of coding with NVivo and our manual manipulation allowed us to hone and revise our analysis of implementation and the role of context.

Curriculum

We developed an interdisciplinary curriculum designed to address the issues faced by children who are homeless through the overarching theme of identity. The curriculum included a variety of art media and children's literature, and focused on understanding of the connection between media and meaning. This art curriculum used individual and collective identity to address protection, interdependency, and personal narrative. Using resilience theory as a guiding framework, we used sources of strength as inspiration for ideation. Rather than focusing on deficits, we articulated our assets, using the following essential questions to guide instruction and learning: (1) Who am I?; (2) Who can we be?; (3) What makes us strong?; (4) What protects us?; and, (5) Who are we?

We integrated literature related to these essential questions, and led movement activities to encourage the children to express ideas and feelings in a variety of ways. Some activities were exploratory in nature, representing breadth, while others were more structured and focused on depth of content and processes. Sources for information included art prints representing multiple cultures, the Internet, and picture storybooks related to themes. For example, when we were exploring "Who am I?", we discussed the creatures in Jenkins's (2007) beautifully illustrated *Living Color,* and read aloud the classic *A Color of His Own* (Lionni, 1975). The children created two- and three-dimensional works of art using a variety of art media, including crayons, tempera paint, collage, foam, and clay. Their artwork was displayed in the shelter cafeteria each week.

In addition to artmaking, the children engaged in aesthetic activities, art interpretation, and art history using visual thinking strategy (VTS). VTS is a learner-centered approach to

aesthetics, allowing all students a voice through direct observation and interaction with works of art guided by open-ended questions (Housen, 2002). Used in formal and informal instructional settings, VTS develops flexible and rigorous thinking skills, including observing, reasoning with evidence, speculating, reflecting, and revising. Children looked at art prints and participated in guided aesthetic discussions using the prompts: (1) What is happening in this work of art?; (2) What do you see that makes you think that?; and, (3) What else do you see? VTS can improve literacy skills and personal connections with art, in addition to helping to build self-respect, confidence, and willingness to participate in group activities (Housen, 2002).

Using materials that encouraged diverse responses was successful in encouraging the voices of all the children. For example, we discussed story quilts and engaged in visual thinking strategies using the artwork of Faith Ringgold and Harriet Powers. Some children created visual stories by cutting and composing shapes using colorful sheets of foam material. Others created three-dimensional stories, sculpted clay figures, and constructed environments for their creations.

We de-emphasized the literacy elements of the program once we began to plan. We quickly realized that in a six-week program, we had to prioritize either art or literacy—but not both—or we would have difficulty creating momentum. As predicted, by the second session, children came in with expectations of art activities. This atmosphere offered a stable event that proved valuable for children living in a world of constant changes. Once we settled on the art medium of the week, books were selected for reading aloud before and/or at the end of our time together. The books related to our weekly investigation.

Findings

In our analysis of implementation, we discerned three key issues to teaching art in this homeless shelter: redefining success, tensions in curriculum and implementation, and managing the children's behavior. We suggest that these are integral to implementation in many contexts; here, we situate them in the particular context of an emergency shelter for homeless families.

Redefining Success

In school-based instruction, indicators of success primarily rest upon grades based on academic standards. Even though we were from divergent disciplines, as classroom teachers, we shared assumptions about the success of a lesson. We needed to redefine success in this out-of-school setting. Grades were obviously not appropriate; moreover, due to the high level of transiency in this population, attendance was not a good measure, either. We observed the children's interactions with art materials and the content and process of art education. Three characteristics were integral to our evolving concept of success in this context: (1) physical signs of engagement, (2) art creation and pride in the activities, and (3) positive attitude.

Physical signs of engagement. First, physical signs of engagement often reflected positive interaction with curriculum. When an individual child or an entire class physically engaged or participated in the activity, we considered the activity successful. For instance, one girl's visual and verbal communication improved drastically over the six-week program. During the first session, children were instructed to create a double-sided nametag using colors and symbols. One side expressed how they felt on a good day; the other side of their nametag indicated how they felt on a bad day. We directed children to reveal the side of the nametag that communicated how they felt that day. One girl expressed her sadness by coloring both sides of her nametag black, and explained that all her

days were bad. Over the weeks, she continued to engage in meaningful ways and expressed a brighter outlook. Amidst the chaos of the shelter, we created a safe space where children could freely express themselves. We saw her willingness to share her feelings and physical signs of engagement as one indicator of success. We valued this because of the belief that opportunities for meaningful engagement in a nurturing environment can provide important protective factors that foster resilience (Krovetz, 1999).

Artistic creation and pride. Second, artistic creation and pride in the activities was critical to our evolving understanding of success. Children eagerly engaging in materials and exhibiting pride in their artistic creations were observable acts of success. This was evident when a child went beyond the instructed task and created works of art representing complexity. For example, during one session, a girl created three paintings representing abstract expressionism, symbolism, and realistic representation. She painted with a variety of media, using brushes, twigs, crumpled paper, and finger-painting to make marks on the paper. She reflected, "I liked it when we got to paint. And when I painted like different things. And if there's one thing about art, like if you mess up you can make another thing up out [of] it" (personal interview, April 28, 2009).

A younger child also exhibited success with color and composition. He embraced an aesthetic approach, focusing intently as he mixed colors and created impressive compositions using circular symbols in a variety of sizes and colors (Figure 1). Children's pride in their creative accomplishments was demonstrated when they wanted to show their artwork to their siblings or their mother immediately upon completion. Pride was also evident when children lingered after the session pointing to their artwork exhibited on the bulletin board in the dining hall.

Positive attitude. Third, data indicated that positive feedback was integral to teaching and learning in this setting. Since there was pressure from the staff and mothers to attend class, we did not include attendance as a measure of success. But we inferred success from children's desire to stay or return to the sessions and their level of engagement. In one instance, a child told his mom he did not want to come to the first session, yet when his mother returned to pick him up, he did not want to leave. A mother of two shared that "They get mad when they can't stay longer, or they wish they could stay a little longer than what they had been staying" (personal interview, April 23, 2009). Some children wanted to attend both sessions each night, and expressed sadness when they found out the program was ending.

Shelter staff wanted us to extend the program. They spoke highly of its benefits and shared families' disappointment on nights of the week when we were not present. There were also more-basic needs. One staff member shared that safety was a priority, as well as engaging the children in meaningful activities. She explained a desire to have "something planned every day for the children, [because] they are so caught up in this whole stressful experience [of homelessness]" (personal interview, May 7, 2009). We used this feedback to refine curriculum, and included activities that focused on the theme of safety, engaging the children in brainstorming their assets, things that keep them safe.

In personal interviews, parents also expressed support for the program, stating that they felt art was a great way for kids to express themselves. We hoped to give mothers an additional reason to be proud of their child, to provide opportunities for joy, and to celebrate their child's success. Comments from mothers indicated that, among other things, they enjoyed the art program because it gave them a break from the children. A mother connected one role of the program to the realities of staying in the shelter. She shared her experience: "One room is, wow! I wouldn't wish that on my enemy… That's

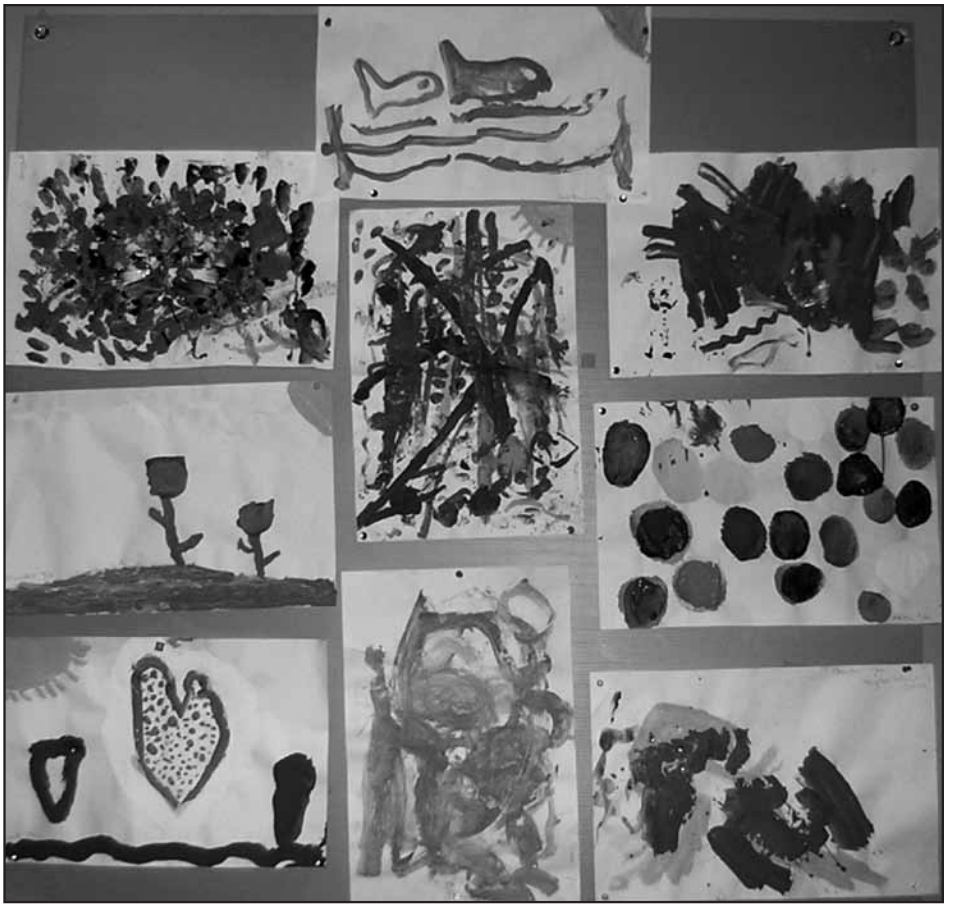

Figure 1. A display of student products. Photograph by Donalyn Heise.

why we [are] so happy for that one hour that I do get without them. I love my kids but, you know, we need space every now and then" (personal interview, April 23, 2009). A mother of two shared that, "I mostly love to bring them down here. I was going to take them from out of it [be] cause grades had started dropping, but I think they need to be in here. And she took more interest in art at school then she was at first. And he has, too" (personal interview, April 23, 2009).

Tensions in Curriculum and Implementation

The second key finding related to tensions specifically related to instructional goals. Navigating relationships and expectations of curricular content were two areas that reflected the tensions in implementation.

Navigating the relationship between the three instructors became paramount to implementing the program. Two operated in dual roles as teachers and researchers, and one served as instructor and initial lesson planner. As part of an independent study, the preservice teacher's task was to help create and implement the initial curriculum. As researchers with experiences teaching in schools and community settings, we assumed flexibility was critical. Lesson

plans were starting points that we would adjust and refine as necessary. This assumption contrasted with the preservice teacher, for whom implementing the lesson plans as designed was central. Tacit expectations, assumptions, and power dynamics influenced these relationships.

Expectations related to curricular content differed among us, as captured in field notes and weekly meeting summaries. Initial lessons resembled school-based learning, with direct instruction and step-by-step instructions for creating artifacts. For example, in the second session, the children made elephant masks and listened to facts read aloud. Even though we had looked at the lesson plan, our interpretations of implementation differed from the preservice teacher. The two teacher researchers planned student-centered experiences with art and text using the guiding question *Who can we be?* Using literacy and art as a structure for visual and verbal dialog, we anticipated moments of silence, and focused on active listening to learn from the children. The didactic approach to instruction embedded in the first draft of the lesson seemed to discourage children's individual expressions and our goal of learning about the context of the children's lives. Therefore, changes were made to provide activities that were more exploratory in nature. As we moved from more structured, prescriptive instruction to an exploratory approach, children more freely experimented with art media and processes as they engaged in aesthetic activities.

Another tension demonstrated the need for responsive planning relevant to the context of the population. As indicated in interviews with shelter staff and parents, homeless families have often lived in fear and violence, and many have experienced domestic and sexual abuse. This was a consideration when selecting images for curriculum. The children were particularly drawn to Bruegal's *Children's Games* (1560). Having witnessed this image used in many classrooms across the country, and knowing children's typical responses related to adjectives and adverbs related to contemporary children's games, we were struck by these children's responses. When asked "What is happening in this painting? What do you see that tells you that? What else do you see?", typical responses have often been, "kids playing baseball, someone ringing a school bell, someone ringing a church bell." We expected similar responses from children in this setting. However, in the shelter, children thought someone was ringing a police siren. Instead of responding that a group was playing baseball, they thought it depicted someone beating someone with a stick. Other responses included, "they are standing in line for food"; "that person just shot that one"; and "they are a gang and are beating him up."

In our effort to be responsive to the children, we selected materials that invited interaction. We were pleased when one child reported using art to cope with stress. She explained, "Like that clay, I took it to school that day. And then, like every time the kids [in her class at school] made me mad, I just started squeezing the clay, and it kind of relieved frustration with them" (personal interview, April 28, 2009). In this program, we utilized the therapeutic properties of art education to foster resilience, or the ability to cope in challenging times. Dunn-Snow and D'Amelio (2000) encourage the field of art education to utilize the therapeutic aspects of art to help students express their needs, concerns, hopes, and fantasies. Although the context of homelessness has potential for explicit therapy, we chose to focus on the pedagogy of play and the creation of art as a vehicle for understanding. As educators, we used academic standards as a guide for curriculum development, emphasizing content and processes of art education for learning about art and its connection with life. We encouraged expression, but did not act as art therapists. Our goals were not to assess and diagnose, as is the task of mental-health professionals.

We also experienced tensions in navigating relationships with shelter staff and parents. On one occasion, while we were teaching class, a staff member mopping the floor leading to the gymnasium turned away a child hoping to attend the class. Additional problems included lack of a designated space for our program and a secure, accessible space to store supplies. In addition, we looked for opportunities to develop relationships with the mothers. Physical configurations, time constraints, and shelter rules made this more difficult.

Managing the children's behavior

The issue of the children's behavior was central to implementation. Challenges in behavior management led us to talk explicitly about what constitutes appropriate behavior. In contrast with the previous art program we had conducted at the shelter, disruptive behavior such as yelling, pushing, and running sometimes occurred and created tensions in program implementation. As experienced teachers, we are troubled that misbehavior was an issue. We write this with a desire not to perpetuate stereotypes of children who are homeless, but in order to recognize misbehavior can be an issue in nonschool settings—especially with children in crisis.

Figure 2. With no desks or tables available, the author works with students on the floor of a reception area.

Space shaped children's behavior. As mentioned, there was no designated physical space for the program; therefore, we sometimes conducted class in a small lounge area or in the gymnasium. When in the gymnasium, children naturally began to run when they came through the doors. We allowed this behavior early in the program, but realized this made it difficult for them to calm down. This also brought up issues surrounding safety, since running often moved into hitting and tackling. We struggled with the benefits of physical activity and its relation to our planned art activity.

The relationship between behavior and instruction informed our plans each week. When there was an introduction or numerous directions to follow, some children began talking or poking each other. As expected, when children were allowed to engage immediately in hands-on approaches, behavior improved.

We successfully redirected sessions in which children initially seemed disinterested. For example, one day when the children were particularly energetic and unfocused, we read a book and guided them in movement exercises in response to the reading. When the making of art trumped temptations to act inappropriately, we considered it a success.

Children did not always gravitate to the activities we valued the most. For example, on one occasion, we focused on the theme of protection by introducing children to artist Abbott Thayer and the art of camouflage. Children seemed more focused on the coloring sheets than the planned art activity. Complicated art products were difficult for some children to execute, and repetitive tasks such as coloring sheets kept their attention. In that instance, we followed their lead and continued having them color, but encouraged attention to art learn-

ing relative to placement, color, repetition, and dialog related to the theme.

The context of the homeless shelter also affected behavior. The maximum 90-day residency of this shelter resulted in a population that is highly transient, resulting in different dynamics each week. Another consideration is that the children live with groups of families that are all in crisis. Many of the children had experienced violence, neglect, or abuse. This context, combined with the voluntary nature of our program, discouraged us from using punitive measures for handling inappropriate behavior. Instead, we chose to use positive reinforcement, engaging curriculum, and pedagogy of play to make learning fun and to ensure safety. We were pleased to hear how our program was having a positive impact on one child's behavior in the art program at school. One mother described the change: "He was like 'I don't want to go to art [at school] cause they [the school] use to call me every day [due to his disruptive behavior]. I don't want to go to art, Mom. I don't want to go to art.' But now he goes" (personal interview, April 23, 2009).

The content of the children's talk was also an issue. As teachers, we had a clear sense of what comprised appropriate language in a public school. While there was not much profanity and the children treated us with respect, they said harsh things to each other at times. Because we did not want to re-create a school atmosphere with punitive measures, we did not apply the same rules related to offensive language. Instead, we tried to understand the dynamics and positively influence the children's talk. Many times, we simply pulled aside a child and talked with them about their actions. Again, this emphasizes the role of context.

Discussion

Our work suggests that structured, yet flexible art experiences work best for children living in crisis. Consistent with previous research (Orr, 2007), we found that offering fewer instructions and flexible programming encouraged diverse responses and helped facilitate visual expression and art for creating narratives. Through use of a resilience frame and a strengths approach, we encouraged the children to see themselves as change agents, rather than victims of circumstance. Using assets as sources of inspiration and providing opportunities for reflection, problem solving, and creative expression can promote protective factors that may help children cope with adversity.

In addition to strengthening resilience, the program addressed community need for meaningful academic programming in a safe, nurturing environment for children living in crisis. The interdisciplinary approach provided avenues for observing, studying, learning, and expressing through the disciplines of art. Using VTS encouraged viewer participation and validated multiple perspectives.

Understanding the context can inform teaching. The dynamics of the context of a shelter permeated all our work. The physical environment and the emotional tension for homeless families shaped each session. The complexity surrounding the relationship between children living in crisis and learning may lead to misunderstandings. Some teachers have trouble understanding the actions of their students. This community collaboration allowed teacher researchers, a preservice teacher, and children living in crisis opportunity to listen, learn from, and work with each other. Over time, we learned more about life in this shelter, recognizing that while shelters for homeless families share some traits, all have their own dynamics.

The physical configuration of the shelter, staffing issues, and stressful family dynamics were striking and directly related to the extreme pressures of living in an emergency shelter. The families' schedule was crowded, filled with time restraints of predetermined meal, bath, and chore time; there was limited opportunity to play. One child explained, "Cause like, a whole bunch of kids is more stressful [than a few],

School-based programs	Informal settings
Curriculum	Program
Lesson	Activity/Exploration
Class	Session
Students	Children
Teacher	Facilitator
Grades	Successes
Classroom	Multipurpose room
Product	Artwork

Figure 3. Terminology for school-based programs and informal learning settings.

The following list may guide educators teaching in community settings:
1. Meet regularly before and during implementation to discuss process and future plans.
2. Analyze the setting and storage options. Consider the ramification of how the space is used at other times.
3. Discuss the roles, resources, and goals of all persons involved. Do not assume a shared perspective.
4. Expect last-minute changes in schedules and locations.
5. Attend to the specific context: Do not assume the process and outcomes of activities based upon work with other populations or in other settings.
6. Facilitate a caring environment with active listening.
7. Consider the living situation of participants and create culturally responsive curriculum.
8. Analyze the relationship between your goals for the program and your language, and adjust as necessary.

Figure 4. Recommendations for teaching in community settings.

cause like, when there be a whole lot of yelling it makes me kind of frustrated… all those kids yelling in your ear" (personal interview, April 28, 2009).

Our growing awareness of the stress the families live in to avoid being put out of the shelter affected the way we interacted with the mothers. For example, sending a child back to his/her mother for misbehavior became an option we preferred not to take. In terms of curriculum, each artmaking activity had to be completed in one session because there were few storage options, and the transiency of the population prevented multiple-session projects. We were also respectful in sending work "home" since families had little space in their rooms.

During implementation, we became increasingly aware of the vocabulary and potentially loaded words of informal programs. We were hyper-aware of implicating homelessness. For example, we cringed after saying, "take this home," fearing this language would be uncomfortable to children residing in a shelter. This language captured our awareness of the power of words as we studied our own teaching. Ironically, even as we positioned ourselves as teacher researchers, we fought against framing our program as a "classroom program" simply being implemented in an out-of-school setting.

We noticed that the use of school-related words may have ramifications for situational learning. Loaded words typically used in school settings include "lesson plans," "classroom," and "teacher." The use of these words had implications across the program. So we created a list of terminology that we perceived as more appropriate to teaching and learning in an informal setting, with words such as "activity," "multipurpose room," and "facilitator" (see Figure 3). This was helpful in our planning and analysis, yet the need to consider context was still important. There are times when referring to "students" emphasizes the power of a teacher over students; at other times, it is used as a synonym

for "children." Referring to ourselves as teachers emphasized the need to impart knowledge and remain in control. In contrast, as facilitators, we pictured ourselves supporting learning and creating a safe and productive community. We are not suggesting that any specific words are required, but instead urge educators and others working in informal settings to become more conscious of the terminology used, and to consider the connotations that school-based terms may have in an informal setting.

As a result of this research, we learned the importance of effective communication and collaboration with respect to all persons involved. We also recognized the benefit of responsive curriculum that links learning to life. Recommendations for teaching children in a community setting are listed in Figure 4.

Conclusions

Understanding the context of our students' lives is one of the first steps in supporting their educational needs. Teacher standards, in general, include the ability to create learning experiences that make subject matter meaningful and to support students' intellectual, social, and personal development, as well as knowing how students differ in their approaches to learning. They also include teachers' ability to create instructional opportunities that are appropriate for diverse learners, and require that teachers be reflective practitioners. This study may help preservice and master teachers better understand what it means for their students to share small quarters with family and strangers, cope with the psychological aspects of not having a regular place to call their own, and live side by side with other traumatized children. In addition, it provides insights into implementing meaningful learning for children in homeless shelters and for teaching populations in crisis.

Several issues emerged relevant to quality arts education for populations in crisis, and deserve further investigation. This research raised questions related to teaching art in out of school settings, such as: *How can the arts serve children living in crisis?* and *What is the relationship between formal and informal learning contexts?*

The issues surrounding this community art program can inform other programs in homeless shelters, as well as community centers and youth organizations. It is through long-term implementation that we can reach homeless children, as well as demonstrate attributes of successful teacher education programs that encourage academic learning and the importance of context with specific attention to issues and needs of all children.

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COMMENTARY

Art All Day: Distinction and Interrelation of School-Based and Out-of-School Arts Learning

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Manchester Craftsmen's Guild

Quality arts learning can be a vehicle for personal transformation. For more than 40 years, an unwavering belief in the possibility of such transformation has sustained the nationally recognized after-school Apprenticeship Training Program (ATP) at Manchester Craftsmen's Guild (MCG). Within school walls, academic standards position the arts as a distinct discipline expected to incorporate historical and cultural context, critical analysis, and aesthetic judgment into art production, exhibition, or performance (Pennsylvania Board of Education, 2002). By contrast, the arts-rich environment that MCG creates outside of those walls transforms students' sense of self, as well as nurtures a passion for learning through creative thinking and practice. Of course, arts learning within school hours also changes students, but our experience tells us that in-school and out-of-school arts learning transforms students in different ways. Following a brief description of the MCG organization, we will detail these differences between in-school and afterschool learning.

Manchester Craftsmen's Guild

The desire for arts education that extends beyond the school building and school day originated in the personal experience of MCG founder and CEO, Bill Strickland. As an African American teenager in a disadvantaged Pittsburgh neighborhood during the 1960s, Strickland developed a life-changing relationship with his high school art teacher, Frank Ross. Strickland describes his first encounter with Ross absorbed in his work at a potter's wheel as a "radiant and hopeful image of how the world

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ought to be" (as cited in Terry, 1998, p. 173). As Strickland worked with his art teacher, he developed his skills as a potter, as well as an interest in jazz, architecture, and other aspects of culture to which he had never been exposed. Soon, Strickland's perception of the possibilities for his future began to change, and he also noticed that others were beginning to see him differently—as an individual with aspirations and the passion to learn and grow. In 1968, while a college student, Strickland founded Manchester Craftsmen's Guild to extend the same opportunity to area teens for transformation through the arts. Strickland (2007) reminisces that "in just a few years, the Guild had become one of the brightest points of light in the neighborhood, a source of hope and direction for hundreds of disadvantaged kids, in its modest way helping to transform the world" (p. 69).

Manchester Craftsmen's Guild grew from one man's vision into a nationally recognized model for Out-of-School Time (OST) learning through the visual arts. As Strickland's vision blossomed into a formal program with a physical facility, systems were designed to support its operations. Currently, MCG's team of teaching artists work in four specialized, richly-equipped studios—Ceramics, Design Arts, Digital Arts, and Photography—to offer a dynamic array of 10-week courses. Students enroll in up to four distinct courses per week, with many also choosing to attend an open studio session on Fridays.

In-School and After-school: Divergences and Partnerships

Schools tend to focus on the tangible results of instruction to assess individual student performance. In arts education, this assessment often takes the form of quantifiable results derived from normative rubrics. Manchester Craftsmen's Guild's ATP began with a school-based relationship, and continues to enjoy a productive partnership with local schools. However, after 40 years, we firmly believe that the typical ways that schools track student achievement are not well-suited to measure success in afterschool learning environments. Over the years, demands from external stakeholders and shifts in educational policy toward quantitative evidence of success have required MCG to devote significant human resources to data-driven assessment. Although we can now report statistics about participating students' development, MCG feels that these numbers lack the ability to describe the powerful transformations of students as individuals and contributing members of MCG's learning community. Afterschool arts programs like ATP also aim to improve students' technical and artistic skills, and we too value craftsmanship and design. However, our assessments extend to intangibles—like representation of identity, interpersonal collaboration, personal resiliency—present in the artwork, and artmaking process, of our students.

The artistic process is particularly suited to key outcomes of personal growth and interpersonal connection due to its integration of discussion and critical reflection in the context of individual and group learning. Whether taking place through individual or collective acts of creation, the artistic process is inherently learner-centered. Rather than molding students to external standards, effective OST promotes personalized learning through an environment that emphasizes physical and psychological safety, that foregrounds healthy relationships among adults and peers, and that involves students in their own learning process. ATP provides opportunities for teens to work creatively, ultimately aiming to develop their capacities to act with a sense of agency and vision in their lives. ATP shares the qualities of other OST learning, including a climate that promotes physical and emotional safety as well as caring relationships. In addition, the program exemplifies other characteristics that researchers identify as excellence in OST learning: challenging and new activities; the opportunity to belong to the group; support

for efficacy and mattering; opportunities for skill building; and integration of family, school, and community (Bridglall, 2005; Durlak & Weisberg, 2007; Little, 2007; Mahoney, 2005; Piha, 2006).

Through a 2009 residency with Brooklyn-based performance artist Julia Mandle, ATP students collaborated with neighboring nonprofits to create a work for public space that engaged the community. The project involved teens in every phase of production that was required to make shoes with soles of green chalk that would leave temporary traces of paths walked from cultural sites to a gathering place in a public park. From blending and adding pigmentation to the chalk medium to casting forms and sewing Velcro straps, students encountered design decisions, solved problems, and honed techniques in the context of a studio-based miniature factory. But for the artist, the real takeaway was witnessing a transformation of students' sense of agency in their community. Student Nour Q. said about the experience, "I really liked meeting the artist and learning from Julia how to blend art with creating change. I felt like I was part of something important" (personal interview, April, 2009).

ATP creates transformative experiences for students like Nour by enlisting them as active participants in the learning culture. This role shifts from that of learner to that of leader and visionary. Regular examples of leadership occur when students who acquire a skill seek out opportunities to share their expertise and insights with other students within a course. (In order to systematize this kind of student-as-mentor role, MCG even created a student internship experience within ATP that has accelerated students' leadership development.) Although possibilities for learner-driven education exist in school, the unique learning environment of an afterschool program such as ATP allows for students to take a more participatory role in their education—and thus, value it more than test results might reveal.

Figure 1. As part of artist Julia Mandel's residency at Manchester Craftsmen's Guild, after-school students created molds and cast chalk shoes. Photo Courtesy of Manchester Craftsmen's Guild.

Figure 2. Manchester Craftsmen's Guild's after-school students are partnered to walk in chalk shoes with staff from a network of cultural, educational, and recreational organizations in Pittsburgh called the "Charm Bracelet." The students and staff leave trails of their journeys together in chalk as they walk towards Pittsburgh's West Park. Photo Courtesy of Manchester Craftsmen's Guild.

Although in-school and afterschool programs often diverge in their educational methods and goals, their relationship is symbiotic rather than oppositional. Schools remain a vital partner to OST learning, just as afterschool programs can play a helpful role in advancing schools toward institutional goals. The recognition of mutual benefit results in essential support from school administration and educators alike. Public and charter school contracts and philanthropic support allows APT to remain free-of-cost to the vast majority of students. Just as valuable as the financial support, educators welcome MCG teaching artists to share information about the program's opportunities with students. The encouragement of schoolteachers often is critical in motivating students to take advantage of the opportunities MCG offers outside of school. For example, eleventh-grade student Alexus C. recalls that an art teacher at school told her to attend MCG because it is "a nice place to go to express yourself more through art" (personal interview, July 2, 2010). Alexus's teacher clearly recognized that quality afterschool visual arts programs are not competition for art classes in school, but instead provide students opportunities to deepen their engagement in the arts.

Of her experiences within ATP, Allison Spatz Levine, currently a second-year medical school student, explained, "The staff at MCG mentored

me. They gave me responsibilities, accountability, and leadership roles that weren't available at my high school… I learned that the skills and interests I developed at MCG applied to academics as well as art" (as cited in Reuter, 2010, p. 2). In the highly regulated and testing-obsessed context of contemporary education, interactions between students and teachers like the one shared by a young Bill Strickland and his mentor are nearly impossible for schools to support. MCG applauds and benefits from those that work within schools to design and provide quality arts learning. Today's OST arts learning is equally important, and distinctly different from that practiced within schools. The complex challenges and stresses that teens face in their local and global communities require us to work cooperatively towards a vision of arts practice that supports learners as social and emotional beings with the capacity to create and experience change.

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MEDIA REVIEW

The PostSecret Project

PostSecret, http://www.postsecret.com

The Secret Lives of Men and Women: A PostSecret Book

Frank Warren. New York, NY: William Morrow. ISBN-10: 0061198757.

JENNIFER L. MOTTER

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The PostSecret project is an ongoing community mail art project that includes an online social networking site and several hard-copy publications. From use of the PostSecret website (www.postsecret.com) in a graduate art education class, students raised several questions.

- What potential does PostSecret have as an approach to art education?
- How can art educators integrate PostSecret into the curriculum?
- How might students benefit from PostSecret if used as an instructional tool in the classroom?

This media review focuses on PostSecret's affordances for identity exploration via anonymity, reflexivity, collaborative knowledge construction, and *currere*, i.e., lived curriculum. These themes are significant to the field of art education because their consideration may lead to meaningful and empowering art education.

In this media review, I introduce the PostSecret project and consider its significance to the field of art education. I critique the PostSecret website and books in order to identify how PostSecret may be integrated in college-level art education curriculum. I discuss my usage of the PostSecret website when I facilitated an activity, Challenging Gender Stereotypes, in the graduate-level art education curriculum. I also discuss David Darts's (2005) *College Confessions: The Art of Telling Secrets*, a website inspired by PostSecret, as a project that demonstrates further currere opportunities for art education.

Frank Warren launched PostSecret in November 2004 after he distributed 3,000 self-addressed postcards inviting the public to mail in a secret. People initially returned only 100 postcards to Warren;

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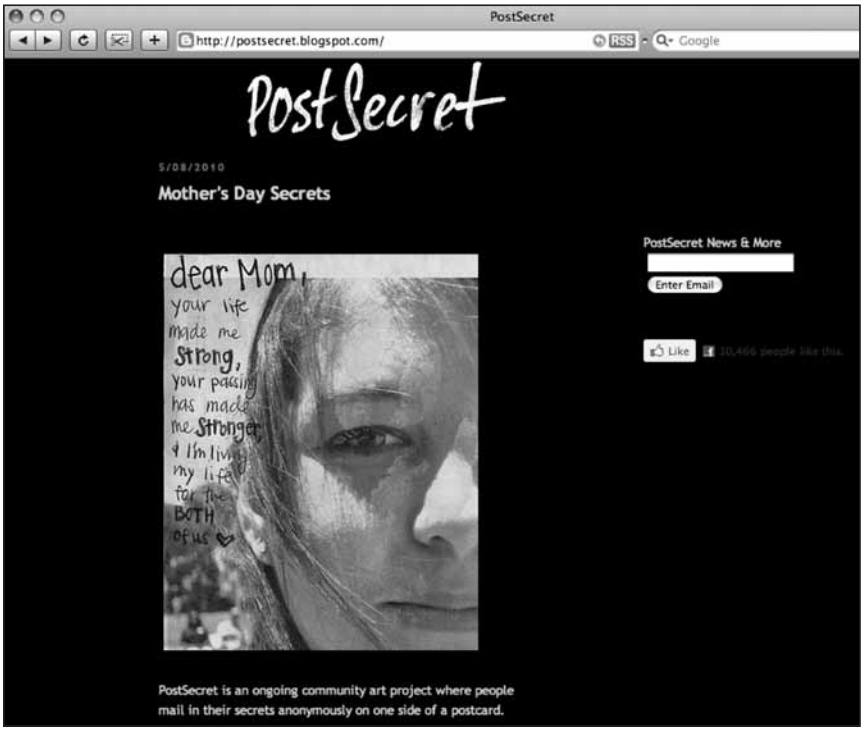

Figure 1. A screenshot of the PostSecret website.

the responses contained intimate revelations visually and textually represented. Over time, the return number of mail art postcards grew to more than 100,000 by 2007 (Warren, 2007a), and the PostSecret project continues today with the participation of individuals around the world (PostSecret, n.d.). PostSecret is open to anyone who is willing to share a secret. Through the PostSecret project website and books, Warren intends to create a safe place for the public's intimate revelations.

According to Warren (2007a), the attraction of participating in this mail art project suggests that "motives are as raw and complicated as the secrets themselves" (p. 1). Warren (2007a) cannot confirm that all secrets are true, but believes that the postcards should be interpreted as works of art where the categories of "fact" and "fiction" are undetermined and not of particular importance. Much like narrative inquiry methodology, the visual/textual postcard creations tell stories. The stories told through visuals and text could run the gamut of interpretations, including confessions of life, death, crime, justice, or women's issues such as body-image portrayal in media and abortion. Each Sunday, 20-30 new digitized postcards appear on the PostSecret website (see Figure 1). Several PostSecret hard-copy publications containing digitized anonymously submitted postcards are also available, including: *PostSecret: Extraordinary Confessions from Ordinary Lives* (Warren, 2005); *My Secret: A PostSecret Book* (Warren, 2006); *The Secret Lives of Men and Women: A PostSecret Book* (Warren, 2007a); *A Lifetime of Secrets: A PostSecret Book* (Warren, 2007b); and *PostSecret: Confessions on Life, Death, and God* (Warren, 2009). The major themes that I find useful for art educators to consider based on my analysis and interpretation of the PostSecret website and books are anonymity and online identity, reflexivity and collaborative knowledge construction, and *currere*.

Anonymity and Online Identity

Because postcards are submitted without attribution, the PostSecret site allows for anonymous multiple identity exploration (Turkle, 2005). Due to anonymity, an individual may

experiment with identities that he or she may not perceive to be his or her own at a given moment. Warren's intention is to create a non-judgmental safe space available to the public where individuals do not need to reveal themselves and risk a social cost of exposing their intimate revelations to millions (Warren, 2007a). In discussing PostSecret, Birchall (2007) states, "The fine balance between the desire to reveal one's secrets and conceal one's identity is perfectly captured" (p. 1). Individuals may use the PostSecret project and website for identity exploration by creating postcards and posting comments that do not reflect their lived experiences, or by creating community chat profiles, a social function of the website, that do not reflect how they see themselves.

Reflexivity and Collaborative Knowledge Construction

The PostSecret website facilitates dialogue among participants that may lead to reflexivity and collaborative knowledge construction. For example, on April 18, 2010, Frank Warren, founder of PostSecret, posted five postcards related to abortion on the PostSecret website (see Figure 2). These postcards generated many strong and controversial comments by PostSecret community members regarding Warren's aesthetics and values, interpretations of the postcard artworks, and abortion debates. Individual interpretations of the postcard art varied. In some cases, individual opinions may challenge and sway how one views the postcards in terms of whether they are pro-life or pro-choice. As a result of participating in the PostSecret community, members may reflect on their beliefs and collaboratively construct knowledge through the comments and chat features of the website. Accordingly, I find the PostSecret website to be of more educational significance than the books, because it offers a greater potential for collaborative knowledge formation by diverse users. The PostSecret books are more of a collector's item for those fascinated with the PostSecret website.

Figure 2. A postcard that is seemingly about abortion.

Currere Opportunities for Art Educators

Postcard Art: Meaningful Making from Everyday Life

Pinar (2004) advocates *currere*, a form of cultural criticism, which emphasizes lived curriculum of a particular moment. Creation of postcards for PostSecret is an example of an autobiographical exercise that may allow students to participate in currere by capturing specific moments of their lived experiences through visual and textual form. Thus, art-making is meaningful by allowing students to represent their personal lives and interests by promoting reflection of lived experiences and drawing on memory. The art tells an autobiographical story in a visual manner. Garramone (2008) calls for students to participate in currere through the creation of postcards that tell their own everyday life stories. Effectively, through postcard creation, students can critically investigate their personal educational experience.

I agree with Garramone's (2008) suggestions: Multilayered construction of autobiography

Figure 3. A screenshot of the Challenging Gender Stereotypes activity.

represented visually and textually on postcards can be an empowering endeavor for students. Further, the anonymity of non-signed postcards allows students freedom of expression and provides for an outlet for self-exposure outside of potential consequences for disclosing emotions, fears, dreams, and truths. Sharing of anonymous postcard creations that are autobiographical via online display allows for an in-between space where public and private are blurred.

Art Interpretations: Exploring Identity and Stereotypes

My interest in how PostSecret could be woven into art curriculum led me to conduct my own empirical research project. I facilitated a Challenging Gender Stereotypes activity that required graduate students to consider the identity of the creators of postcards featured on the PostSecret site during a particular week. Students used Diigo, a Web 2.0 tool that can be used to add sticky notes and page comments to webpages, to annotate the site based on their gender identity assumptions of the postcard senders (see Figure 3). After preliminary annotation of the PostSecret site, the students then read "Turing Game: Exploring Identity in an Online Environment" (Berman & Bruckman, 2001). Berman and Bruckman's article (2001) describes a study that reveals assumptions that online participants made about those they interacted with in virtual space based on their behavior. After finishing the reading, students revisited the PostSecret site to comment reflectively on previous posts. This activity helped me to further consider how PostSecret can be used in the classroom to address sociocultural issues such as identity and stereotypes (Motter, 2010).

Online Display: Sharing the Personal May Awaken the Political

Art educator David Darts (2008) displayed his college students' 101 anonymous postcard creations publicly in virtual space. Darts (2005) created *College Confessions: The Art of Telling Secrets* (http://collegeconfessions.org, Darts, 2008), modeled after PostSecret. Darts's interest in how the ideology behind PostSecret translates to a smaller community led him to ask college students in his course, Exploring Art and Visual Culture, at the University of Arizona to voluntarily create an anonymous postcard that visually and textually represented a secret never previously told to anyone (Ory, 2006). According to the school's newspaper, "Students said seeing their classmates' 'visual secrets' made them feel closer, gave a sense of community and the chance to learn something they wouldn't have otherwise and made them realize that they often had the same secrets"

(Ory, 2006, ¶ 10). By viewing their peers' secrets online, the students perhaps discovered that they shared personal issues that are political in nature (Hanisch, 1969).

User-centered sites, such as PostSecret and College Confessions, that publicly display artwork containing intimate revelations provide a space for participants where, due to anonymity, participants can feel comfort in sharing the private publicly. Websites that display anonymous artworks and provide a community chat, such as PostSecret, allow multiple identity exploration (Turkle, 2005), reflexivity, collaborative discourse development, and potentials for currere and student empowerment. Art educators should consider websites like PostSecret as informal learning sites, potentially useful in formulating art curriculum for college students and others.

Potential Student Empowerment

As an art educator, consider if and how the sharing of secrets through visual and textual postcard creations can be empowering. How might such artmaking lead to positive personal and perhaps social transformation when postcard creators realize political aspects of shared personal issues? Warren (2007a) claims he received an e-mail from a sender who decided to destroy the postcard he or she created and made life changes instead. This participant's story is an example of Warren's (2007a) argument that "courage can be more important than training or technique in creating meaningful art" (p. 3). Like the participants of the PostSecret project, art educators and college students may realize an important opportunity for meaningful, and perhaps transformative, freedom of artistic expression.

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MEDIA REVIEW

Concrete, Steel & Paint

T. Heriza (Co-Director, Co-Producer) & C. L. Burstein (Co-Director, Co-Producer). (2009). *Concrete, Steel & Paint* [Documentary]. United States of America: New Day Films. ISBN-978-1-57448-250-8.

RACHEL MARIE-CRANE WILLIAMS

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The United States incarcerates more people than any nation on earth. We are a nation that nurtures the cycle of crime and punishment through the ongoing construction of more and more prisons. On the other side of these impenetrable walled warehouses are families, friends, communities, and victims of crime, abuse, and addiction. Each element in the cycle of crime and punishment is part of a larger complex picture filled with ambiguity, empathy, prejudice, abuse, addiction, guilt, remorse, violence, emptiness, and resilience.

The documentary *Concrete, Steel & Paint* shares a moving story about the role of murals, storytelling, image making, and the use of the arts to bear witness to humanity's capacity for resilience, forgiveness, and understanding. Produced and directed by Cindy Burstein and Tony Heriza, this film weaves all of these disparate elements together in a dramatic story about the creation of murals by the men at the State Correctional Institution in Graterford, Pennsylvania (SCI-Graterford), in collaboration with the famous Mural Arts Program of Philadelphia.

Rich and visually textured street scenes and urban vignettes of Philadelphia contrast starkly with views of the bare walls and guard towers of SCI-Graterford, cell blocks, the yard, and intimate spaces within one of the largest and oldest prisons in the United States. There are approximately 4,000 men housed at Graterford under maximum-security conditions. Graterford is a small city revolving around the economy of crime and punishment.

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Shooting documentaries about difficult subjects such as crime is hardly easy; negotiating to bring a camera into a maximum-security prison to film candid moments over months of work, meetings, and studio sessions is miraculous. Through candid interviews, the viewer is taken inside and outside the walls of the prison to see the complex relationships between people who are victims of crime and people who have perpetrated criminal acts against others. We are led to see the interior lives of men who help create the murals that are one of the subjects of the film under the direction of two talented artists: Jane Golden, founder of the Mural Arts Project, and Cesar Viveros, the lead artist for this project. The incarcerated men featured in the film openly share their crimes, histories of abuse, and family lives with viewers.

The filmmakers are invisible throughout the film; this makes viewers feel less of a sense of distance between themselves and the "subjects" of the film. Sometimes the viewer's visual space is so intimate that it is possible to count the hairs on the chin of some of the men who are interviewed in prison. Viewers see the inside of the cells in which these men spend their lives. The filmmakers portray the vulnerability of these men and the importance of art in their lives.

These intimate interviews with men who are incarcerated are balanced by equally candid interviews with victims of violent crimes and victims' advocates. One powerful character within the documentary featured at various points is Victoria Greene. Her son, Emir, was shot and killed as a young man. Her presence within the film embodies a person who is resilient and open to the possibility that people can change in unexpected ways. Viewers hear the painful details of her life and the life of her daughter after the death of her son. Through these heart-wrenching accounts, Burstein and Heriza have purposely placed viewers in an emotional quagmire. Viewers must face the question: Is it possible to have sympathy not only for the victims of violent crime but also for perpetrators?

Jane Golden, one of America's premier mural artists, is the human bridge in the film between SCI-Graterford and residents in Philadelphia. She believes creating such works of art offers people a way to sort out social and political issues. Sympathy that the film's viewers may feel for the men at SCI-Graterford is tempered by Golden's account of her first interaction with the men in prison. She confronts her stereotypes of people who are incarcerated. Not surprisingly, Golden's views change as she masterfully works elbow-to-elbow with these men painting.

The turning point for Golden came after she gave a lecture to the art class at SCI-Graterford. Afterward, she received letters from the men at SCI-Graterford asking her to consider doing a project with the art class at the prison. Golden knew that habitual incarceration played a role in the ebb and flow of many of the neighborhoods where the Mural Arts Program had worked tirelessly for years. Many of the residents of the neighborhoods of inner-city Philadelphia are affected by crime and punishment on a daily basis. It is more than an abstract concept or statistic; instead, it is a concrete part of their reality. Golden slowly transformed as a result of this project. In the film, we see men painting side-by-side in the gentle light of the auditorium at SCI-Graterford. Paintbrushes in back pockets, paint on the floor and their shoes, the scene looks more like a university art class than a prison. Later in the film, Golden no longer uses the word "prisoners," but instead refers to the art-class participants as men who relish the chance to work on a mural. She tells a touching story of how the men continuously painted over one section because they were afraid that the program would end when they finished the mural.

The men and Golden decide to create a mural that would be installed outside of the prison. The men who are incarcerated are the first to

Figure 1. The signature image for CSP. Photo by Tony Heriza.

Figure 2. The Healing Wall—Victim Journey. Photo by Jack Ramsdale.

Figure 3. Healing Wall—Prisoner journey. Photo by Jack Ramsdale.

bring up the victims of their crimes. They want to make amends. Here is where the story within the film really begins. Over the next few months, Golden brings together victims and victims' advocates with the men of SCI-Graterford. They engage in some tense, moving, and difficult conversations. While most films make viewers feel that everything is going to turn out well, it is not clear here that there will be a resolution. Viewers see Golden struggle. Within the documentary, there are moments where the men in prison and people from the outside, mostly women, emotionally address the ways in which crime has wrecked their lives. When confronted with their anger, resistance, and pain, Golden realizes what she knew when she began the project: that this undertaking is difficult and filled with ambiguity.

As Golden struggles with striking a compromise that recognizes the needs of both groups, she tries to create a safe environment within the prison and the community through painting and conversation. She successfully opens a space where both parties can paint side-by-side and have frank exchanges about their experience without feeling fear. She encounters resistance and masterfully works through it with community members, the men who are incarcerated, and the people who have survived in spite of their victimization. In the end, Golden recognizes that people embark on different journeys of healing.

What can viewers learn from this film? First and foremost, visual and time-based art can offer a powerful way to negotiate difference and represent experiences. In some instances, art can transform the way that people frame their lives and purpose. *Concrete, Steel & Paint* makes visible the stories and feelings of people who are incarcerated and their families, as well as the voices of people who have been affected by crime. The stories told within this film are rarely heard. This film also offers documentary filmmakers a model for the construction of difficult narratives through images, stories, and sound. People interested in criminal justice, social work, the arts, and education can gain valuable insight into the human heart through this documentary. It provides educators with a visually rich and morally perplexing opportunity for discussion and dialogue about justice and art. Although it purposefully leaves many questions unanswered, it gently invites viewers to embark on their own journey of interest about issues related to crime, prison, healing, and the arts.

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