George Roeder Master’s Symposium

May 9–10, 2012
Day One: 10:00 AM-4:00 PM
Day Two: 12:00 PM-4:00 PM
Gene Siskel Film Center
164 North State Street
Thank You

To the Department of Art Education
Faculty and Staff:

Faculty
Joy L. Bivins
Jim Elinski
Adam Greteman
Lourdes Guerrero
Jerry Hausman
Andrés Hernandez
Drea Howenstein
Rebecca Keller
Faheem Majid
Nicole Marroquin
Anne Elizabeth Moore
Angela Paterakis
Patricia Pelletier
Sharon Pelletier
John Ploof
Therese Quinn
Karyn Sandlos
Jerry Stefl
Ray Yang

Staff
Isak Applin
Tenesha Edwards
Elizabeth Morrison

Thanks Also To
SAIC Office of the Deans and Division Chairs
Jean de St. Aubin
Executive Director, Gene
Siskel Film Center

The 2012 Graduation Symposium Student Organizing Committee:
Lindsay Abramo
Paulina Camacho
Kris Hechevarria
Sarah Lesser
Kelsey Nelson
Rayshawn Nowlin
Jessica Rosenbaum
Carlos Ruiz

Program Schedule

Wednesday, May 9, 2012

10:00-10:15  Introductions

10:15-11:30  New Prescriptions: Where Art Education can Go From Here:
Panel Chair: Kelsey Nelson
Amber Yared
Kris Hechevarria
Carlos Ruiz
Mary Warbelow
Sarah Lesser

11:30-12:30  Curriculum, Storytelling and Autobiography: The Complexity of the Personal in Art Education
Panel Chairs: Kris Hechevarria and Lindsay Abramo
Nate Dorotiak
Rayshawn Nowlin
Gina Fulgieri
Lauren Goldstein

12:30–1:30  LUNCH (Wishbone!)

1:30-2:30  When Art Talks Back: Youth As Culture Jammers
Panel Chairs: Rayshawn Nowlin and Jessica Rosenbaum
Devan Picard
Catherine Brody
Jill Goldenstein
Vivian Alvarez

2:30-3:30  You Are Here: Place, Space and Environment
Panel Chair: Carlos Ruiz
Paulina Camacho
Veronica Stein
Abigail Rudner
Alana Wynes

3:00–3:45  Closing Remarks

Brochure Design: Mallory Qualls
Cover Photo: Rayshawn Nowlin

The cover photo was taken in Ester Pullman’s Multicultural Studies class at Hamilton Elementary. The project began as a way to keep tables clean during a project with pre-kindergarten students involving markers, but evolved into a collaborative freestyle mural involving every student in the school.
# Program Schedule

**Thursday, May 10, 2012**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12:00-12:15</td>
<td>Welcome</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 12:15-1:30 | **Extending the Conversation: Collaboration, Intervention and Meaning Making**  
Panel Chairs: Sarah Lesser and Paulina Camacho  
Kelsey Nelson  
Li Christoffersen  
Jessica Rosenbaum  
Christine Bespalec-Davis  
Kristen Cleaveland |
| 1:30–1:45  | Break                                                                |
| 1:45-3:00  | **EXTRAordinary: Identity, Transformation and Community**  
Panel Chair: Kelsey Nelson  
Lindsay Abramo  
Julianne Medel  
Mary Claire Angle  
Heather Smith  
Bailey Jacobson |
| 3:00-3:15  | Closing Remarks                                                      |

**Comment with #artedsymp**

Adding #artedsymp to your tweets allows others to follow the symposium discussion and participate in real-time.
Dialogues with Visual Art Educators on Social-Emotional Learning: Advocating for Art Education in a Period of Increased School Standardization

Educators struggle with the affects of school standardization, specifically the high-stakes testing requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act. Standardized testing often pushes out art classes in favor of subjects that are the focus of high-stakes assessment. This model of education reform relies solely on quantitative measurement, promotes positivist theories of education, and has been shown by the research to have utterly failed to improve the state of public education. Through my own research I seek to better understand the perspectives of teachers regarding the significance of social-emotional learning in art education, and how standardization is impacting teaching and learning. Prior research shows that students work on the social-emotional skills of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making through visual art. Simultaneously increasing pressures of standardization have upset the constructivist pedagogy that is often present in art education.

While teaching in public schools I observed how the environment of a constructivist art curriculum fostered the social-emotional growth of adolescent students. I longed for interaction with other teachers to discover if my experiences were isolated or common. I witnessed the increasing pressures of standardization upsetting the constructivist atmosphere prevalent in art education. I noticed educators pressured by the provisions of standardization and wondered if other communities were experiencing similar challenges.

Through phenomenological interviews with three art educators in Chicago Public Schools, this research explores the lived experiences of teachers working in tension between NCLB and art education in public schools. The main interview questions are: How has NCLB and standardized testing affected the art classroom and curriculum? What benefits do art educators observe in the practice of making art? In what ways do art educators describe how students relate to others in socially skilled, respectful, and constructive ways? How do art educators advocate for their programs?

Each interview was audio-recorded, transcribed, and coded for commonalities and differences. Participating educators expressed thorough disapproval for the mandates of standardization. Interviewees agreed that social-emotional learning occurs in art education, but disagreed on how this can be observed and the intentionality. Examples of school- and community-level advocacy methods for art education were explored. Recommendations for more overt recognition and application of social-emotional learning are suggested. Alternative and comprehensive structures of assessment are encouraged, and emergent examples of testing alternatives explored. This research advocates for the relevance, importance, and right for students to access art education in public schools.
Recasting “At Risk”: Reinterpreting Adolescent Resistance as an Informative Act of Critical Engagement

In this qualitative study I consider the constructive and supportive role that creativity can play in adolescent development, with a specific focus on youth who have been labeled “at risk.” “At risk” is an ambiguous, often racially coded term that is applied to adolescents who are perceived as resistant to academic and/or societal norms. I question the negative implications of the term “at risk” by seeking to recast risk taking as a fundamental aspect of adolescent creativity, imagination, and identity development. My research questions are: What challenges, tensions, and successes arise for the art educator who invites youth to explore their social and emotional experiences through visual, written, and performative storytelling? How can the art educator create curriculum that is relevant to the individual experiences that youths bring with them into the learning environment? How can art education support risk taking for students who are typically labeled “at risk”?

My fieldwork took place in a neighborhood community art center on Chicago’s west side, where I was assigned to co-teach a nine-week after-school arts program. Open and free for all sixth-, seventh-, and eighth-grade students living in the surrounding neighborhoods, the program functioned similarly to a drop-in center for youth. The youth who participated in my study would fit the stereotypical definition of “at risk.”

In order to better respond to issues pertinent to the youth in attendance on any given day, I quickly learned to adopt spontaneous and flexible approaches to each day’s lesson, weaving a wide range of mediums and formats into the broader context of personal narrative. From performance-based improvisation to collaborative cooking projects, these lessons placed concentrated interest on creative process. My data included: class discussions, observations recorded in field notes, subjective interpretations of student engagement, and informal conversations with students and co-teachers. Within this data I looked for areas where student resistance and critical engagement functioned as meaning-making tools, informing perceptions of “self” in the world.

During my field experience, I encountered resistance from students on a daily basis. By locating myself within my study as both a teacher and a student, I aimed to recognize this resistance as an aspect of critical engagement. I hope that my research will help other art educators to recognize resistance and boundary pushing as a critical part of the creative exploration that is central to adolescent development. By maintaining space within the learning environment for youth to participate in constructive risk taking, art educators can challenge youth to actively engage in learning in ways that are relevant to their lives.
In looking into educational programming offered by museums, I question ways in which these invaluable organizations can become further embedded within their immediate communities. I propose for museums to evaluate their community investment and suggest that they expand their avenues of engagement, specifically through partnerships with children’s hospitals. Through investigation, I explore how this type of partnership can be beneficial and meaningful for each organization as well as contribute to the well-being of pediatric patients and their families. For tangible data validating the importance of the arts in this environment, my research gathers data on existent arts initiatives within the health care sector.

Through fieldwork research, from June 2011 through February 2012, I documented a case study in-progress partnership between a Midwestern encyclopedic museum and a Midwestern children’s hospital. This particular partnership was under the umbrella of the hospital’s larger Creative Arts Program, which involved partnerships with twenty-one local cultural organizations that collaborated with the hospital on the interior design of its new facility, opening in May 2012.

Over the summer of 2011, I interned with the Midwestern encyclopedic museum, where I assisted the museum’s liaison with its hospital partnership. I instigated interviews with museum staff and hospital personnel directly working within the Creative Arts Program. I also interviewed an artist, art educator, and architect already contributing to the field of arts in health care.

My findings elaborate on the inherent values of this type of partnership and the benefits for both the cultural and health care organizations. For the museum, this partnership provided the opportunity to further the accessibility of its collection and make it more visible within the community. The hospital’s benefit comes from the incorporation of arts programming in its facility for patients and families, as the arts provide a healthy distraction and aid in visitors’ emotional well-being.

This research lays the foundation for the advancement of a body of work advocating for museum partnerships with hospitals. It documents a successful museum partnership with a children’s hospital and therefore sets an example for an emergent type of museum programming. I aim to encourage other museums to further contribute to their communities by adopting similar partnership models that utilize their cultural resources and collections to bring enrichment to pediatric patients and families, and, ultimately, encourage inspiration, creativity, and hope through the arts.
Eluding Identification: Defamiliarizing the Space of Education and the Role of Educators

In this study I explore and analyze relationships between the physical environment, processes of collaboration, and the roles of artists and art groups that work in education. While I am interested in these as distinct topics, I am equally drawn to investigating them as a group or construct where new knowledge about unconventional pedagogies can emerge. How are the roles of educators' expressed in their approaches to working with students? What possible modes of educator-student collaboration do unfamiliar spaces help to enable or disable? Several overlapping themes from scholarship on teaching and learning, art, and social theory are used to examine the collaborative work of practitioners with students and the spaces they inhabit: the unfamiliar, the third teacher, public pedagogy, the public amateur, art world collaborations, and Rancière's concepts of equality and knowledge.

I focus on four projects and organizations that aim for non-hierarchical approaches to education and that engage with participants in non-school spaces or use school space in unconventional ways: Future Academy, an international research project; the Stockyard Institute, a Chicago collective: Hidden Curriculum, an artwork by Netherlands-based artist Annette Krauss; and the Center for Urban Pedagogy (CUP), a Brooklyn organization. I interviewed leaders and educators of these entities and used quotations from the interviews in an offset print.

The creation of printed matter and performance art, in which I physically work through ideas, are integral elements of my methodology: I operate from a position of arts-based research. The metalogue—a dialogue in which form and content echo each other in a recursive cycle—is also important to understanding the ecology of my approach.

Interview data are interpreted through questions about identification, Shklovsky's theory of defamiliarization, and new understandings of the body. These lead to a discussion of both physical space and educators' titles as points of unfamiliarity. Spaces and titles, when enigmatic or constantly changing, help to elude clear identification, thus allowing for greater flexibility and continual transformation.

Based on my attempt to navigate the complex roles of artists and art groups who explore unconventional methods and spaces for education, I propose avoiding definitive titles for educators. Relocating through a variety of settings is another tactic against clear identification. Floating and flexible titles and physical spaces evince an invitation and opening to redefine and reinvent education.

Museums and Social Media: Extending the Learning Experience Outside of the Institutional Walls

From smartphones to iPads, how we communicate in the twenty-first century is constantly evolving and changing the way we live our lives, with social media emerging as a key mode of communication. Public institutions are quickly adapting and starting to communicate to their visitors via social media sites like Facebook, Twitter, and blogs. Can museums, specifically children's museums, use social media to create community, creativity, and communication with their audience outside of the institutional walls? Can learning and participation be extended outside of the museum, and if so how?

All of my information was gathered online. For three months I collected data from 119 participants representing 112 different museums. Most of the museums were from the United States and the U.S. territory of Puerto Rico. Other countries represented are Australia, Canada, Costa Rica, Hungary, Romania, Turkey, and the United Kingdom. The majority of participants came from children's museums. Other museums represented were science, history, and art museums.

While studying the ways social media can foster communication, it occurred to me that I could test out social media by using it as my main mode of gathering data. I made a simple online survey and used social media websites and tools like LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, and listservs to contact workers from museums. Participants started to roll in. I created a website, www.museumsocial.com, to communicate with the participants. The website included a blog detailing my thesis progress as well as corresponding research, contact information, and links to the survey and Facebook page.

When reviewing my data, the consensus gathered by my participants is that social media is still new in many ways and ever changing. Museums want to use social media sites to their fullest potential but are wary of navigating the issues that come with them. So, most museums progress toward participatory elements of social media but do so slowly and warily.

Museums can use social media sites to create a participatory community, where creativity, learning, and communication can be fostered between the museum and the audience. It is not easy, and it will require museums to take risks. If willing to put in the work and weigh the risks with the rewards, museums can create successful social-media-based extensions of themselves.
Kris Derek Hechevarria  Master of Arts in Art Education

Pedagogical Perspective and the Curatorial Process

Museums are bastions of culture with a responsibility to teach the public: they employ a variety of tools to teach, and the ones that reach the largest population are wall labels. The intention of these placards is to educate the public, and my research investigates this learning tool. In my experience, traditional wall labels in museums do not effectively teach a non-arts audience about art. This thesis investigates wall labels as a learning tool and proposes new considerations for museum interpretation.

In order to evaluate the effectiveness of museums’ efforts in didactic interpretation, I implemented a case study at the National Museum of Mexican Art (NMMA). My analysis and critique is specific to the NMMA but represents the traditional ways that museums treat didactics. Performing gallery observations and time-tracking exercises at the NMMA allowed me to understand how people engage with texts within the galleries. I also orchestrated focus groups to create a dialogue on interpretation, which allowed me to hear firsthand accounts of individuals’ learning experiences.

I began this process attempting to discover a new format for the museum label. Through my research, I analyzed how museums already utilize standard formats and found them highly ineffective. The possibility of making art accessible to people is not in the label but rather the culture the label is created in.

This thesis proposes a shift in how museums present information and who is responsible for disseminating that information. The data I collected led me to four points that must be considered in the development of labels:

• Knowledge of audience—Know whom you are talking to and how to best reach them.
• Language use—Words and writing styles should be accessible to a broad audience.
• A clear objective—Know what this exhibition is trying to say and how each object supports that point.
• Attention to design—Move past the traditional block of text and consider a variety of presenting strategies.

Considering these findings, this thesis calls for curators to approach exhibition design as educators. They must assume a pedagogical perspective in order to better understand and be responsible for the viewers’ learning, and thus create a more welcoming and pleasurable museum experience.

Lindsay Abramo  Master of Arts in Teaching


Students are rarely given the opportunity to look within themselves and explore their emotions, dreams, wishes, and conflicts. My thesis explores how curriculum can engage students in self-inquiry and the process of identity formation. Through my action-based research project, I created a flexible curriculum that acknowledges how complicated identity development is for adolescents. I worked in collaboration with my students to explore how these critical and meaningful topics can be addressed within an art education classroom.

The questions that guided my research are: What occurs when students are invited to explore the way they see themselves in relation to how others see them? How can art making become a context for youth to explore the complexity of their identities? How can adolescents’ conflicts within identity formation be represented through the process of art making? How can I create exemplars of my own process of identity formation while maintaining a professional relationship with my students?

I conducted my action-based research at a large selective-enrollment public high school on the northwest side of Chicago, IL. The student population is 43.2% Latino/a and 30.5% white. For seven weeks I taught darkroom photography for students in grades nine through twelve.

The students used text and imagery to create visual journals and photographs that address the complicated process of identity formation. Each project encouraged students to be in control of deciding what they wanted to reveal or conceal. The students drew inspiration from the work of contemporary artists who integrate text within their photographs: Shirin Neshat, Dawoud Bey, Duane Michals, and Jeff Wolin. The data I collected came from reflections, visual journals, black-and-white photographs, and in-depth discussions with the students.

Through my thesis research, I learned how teaching lessons that ask students to think about identity formation can be a challenging and dynamic process. When the students and I began to explore these complex topics, I noticed that I was having difficulty navigating a complicated boundary of my own. I realized that the students and I were simultaneously discovering the challenges of revealing and concealing personal information through the process of making art. When exploring self-inquiry and identity formation, I recommend that art educators create a flexible curriculum that allows for an open exchange of ideas. I learned that, for both teachers and students, revealing parts of yourself to others is just as important as recognizing the parts of your identity that you choose to keep to yourself.
Regular education = curriculum + architecture.

The U.S. Department of Education focuses too much on what happens on the inside of the classroom. Its improvements in preparing high school students entering college and/or the workplace using standardized testing, performance-based strategies, and the banking concept are just one part of the equation. These efforts are driven by a set of alarming statistics exposing an increasing number of students graduating from high school poorly prepared for postsecondary education and/or work-readiness. These students need remediation and continued developmental education to reach their destinations after graduation.

The majority of our school facilities in the United States are outdated and ill-equipped. Where can responsive-based design contribute to creating new twenty-first-century learning environments that support twenty-first-century learning?

This thesis intends to examine twenty-first-century learning content and related learning environments through:

• A review of literature related to education, school architecture, and twenty-first-century skill development.
• Interviews with architects, administrators, teachers, parents, and students.
• Case studies of schools that illustrate unique approaches to the design of learning environments.
• Action based research engaging high school architecture students in a vocational setting.

The argument for the urgency of collaborative discourse on the effect that school architecture has on learning is the second part of the equation. This thesis identifies the need for an implemented vocational curriculum and flexible indoor and outdoor classrooms as components of a conceptual framework that could advance learning across the United States. Overall, the thesis plans to confirm the importance of a vocational approach, and moves to redefine the project-based curriculum in schools by introducing interdisciplinary approaches and strategies to advance knowledge and shared understanding of effective learning strategies and experiences.

Engaging in these discussions will lead to new ideologies that respond to what students are learning, the way they learn, and their motivation for learning. Architecture and its imaginative work on the ideal twenty-first-century school has only just begun.
Meaning Making Through the Arts: Arts Integration and Student-Centered Learning in Juvenile Detention Centers

Increasing numbers of youth throughout the United States are experiencing both incarceration and related gaps in their schooling. Art education can serve as a critical tool in helping to build a foundation of learning within juvenile detention centers (JDCs). In this study, I use action based research to answer the following questions: What occurs when Chicago arts-based educational programs are implemented into JDCs? In what way can the arts be meaningful in the lives of youth who are incarcerated?

I began my thesis project by volunteering with a Chicago-based art program that worked within a juvenile temporary detention center, and more specifically on a program that worked with incarcerated girls. During a two-month period I facilitated gender-specific art programming and observed the ways in which the program functioned within a JDC. Being a part of an all-women group greatly affected the way in which I thought about my research process. I explored feminist methodologies, and approached my thesis with a feminist research lens. For example, I conducted open-ended interviews with women who work with gender-specific art programming in JDCs, and these interviews allowed for an open exchange of ideas without a hierarchical structure. The findings from my data collection helped to compartmentalize the literature I explored throughout my thesis and the curriculum I am interested in developing.

Working at a temporary detention center posed many challenges to my volunteer work and research: time spent with the girls was limited, and the average stay of a youth in the temporary detention center was five to seven days, which made it difficult to establish relationships with the girls.

Despite the challenges, I began to see the art workshops as important within the juvenile detention center. Through the workshops we were able to create a space where girls could come to relax, make art, and be around women who listened to them. We did our best to create a safe and open place where girls were able to talk and share with one another freely. The art activity for the workshops often centered on crafts, and we engaged projects that surrounded themes of self, friendship, and family. These workshops were valuable because while prison restricts opportunities for youths to express emotions, in art-making sessions girls were encouraged to share emotions, which they said they valued. This study shows how the arts enhance learning opportunities, reduce recidivism rates, and contribute to skill building.
Food for Thought: Interdisciplinarity and Critical Thinking in Secondary Arts Education

The purpose of my research is to explore interdisciplinarity in art education as a strategy for facilitating students' critical thinking. In the current, highly structured school system, “subjects” are compartmentalized and often function for students in a fractured way. This limits students’ engagement with the connectivity of knowledge and issues, thereby hindering opportunities for their development of critical awareness. The arts, in particular, are considered by many to be separate and less important than other academic areas (“enrichment”). If the purpose of education is to prepare students to become critically engaged citizens, high school should be a time when critical connections are prioritized, rather than attenuated.

The arts and social studies are unique in the pedagogical space they create for critical interpretation. My research questions include: How can arts education contribute to meaningfulness in social studies education, and vice versa? What occurs when high school students conduct an interdisciplinary inquiry into their personal and public, contemporary and past histories? How might this “layering” of a variety of contexts and academic activities function to engage students in critical thinking? How can critical, meaningful, and transformative arts and social studies education be grounded in a food-related project?

My action research project took place over seven weeks at a selective-enrollment public high school outside of Chicago, with a population comprised mostly of African American and Latino students. I developed a curriculum that had students create a series of research-based artworks through which they critically explored food. Students engaged with a variety of relevant source material, including journalism, film, and contemporary art. Students’ projects were informed by artwork by Ron English, TrustoCorp, 14, Fallen Fruit, Free Soil, Tattfoo Tan, and Jef McDonough. I looked for data in many forms, collecting observations in field notes, photography, and videos of classroom interactions. Student-produced material is essential to my data, particularly artwork and written reflections.

Throughout my research, students showed me that my curriculum challenged their expectations for art education in its employment of research methods and source material. They also showed me that, when positioned as researchers of the food they eat, they were able to form connections among their everyday lives and larger social structures, and to create compelling artwork that can be used to prompt viewers to think critically. I recommend that educators embrace interdisciplinary arts curricula as a strategy to facilitate critical thinking. When implementing research-based arts curricula in the classroom, educators can explore and engage with student expectations, and illustrate the interdisciplinarity of contemporary arts methods through artist examples and process-driven lessons.

Kristen Cleaveland              Master of Arts in Art Education

Auto-photography and Writing in Art Education

For my thesis project, I created a curriculum for adolescents using photography and writing. My curriculum was based on personal narratives, cultural influences, status quo acceptance and denial, and self-awareness. I chose photography because it is the medium in which I work best, and I wanted to include writing in order for my students to delve deeper into their art-making process. I had seen how this combination had been effective in other youth media projects and was interested in the multilevel storytelling abilities it had to offer. Photography is a democratic medium to use for art making and is easily learned. I wanted to give my students the tools to become artists overnight. I had used photography as a young person to help express myself and also to capture the world around me in order to reflect and understand it better. Writing is also important to me as it can be very self-reflective and help the writer become more aware of themselves, including their beliefs and biases, and their location in the world.

The girls in my first fieldwork study were reluctant to be serious about the program, and its transformative and critical aspects weren’t actualized. I felt that a meaningful relationship was lacking, and in my eyes the data fell short. I created another program to be executed at a smaller, artist-run institution located in a nearby neighborhood. There were empty promises, and I felt that the people in charge had no respect for my research or person. The youngest girl’s mother attended each session, undoubtedly affecting participation. The children were not my target group. I had to revise my lesson plans after every session. Children five years of age have different skills and comprehension levels than older participants, which was something I hadn’t even considered going into the project but quickly learned. There was no connection to the participants or the institution. There was a lack of communication as well.

I realized that the data was more than the photographs and writing collected. I think that smaller institutions are struggling because they need more funding in order to succeed. They also need persistence, openness, democracy, and love. Otherwise, art education will continue to take the back burner on all fronts, even at those institutions whose mission is to foster art and artists, and help them thrive in this city.
Defining Safe: The Role of the Personal Narrative and Art Making in Transformative Community Education

This research evaluates how prior knowledge and life experience influence and enrich the process and outcomes of an art-based project focused on safety and community. My goal was to understand the meaning of what occurred when youth participants were encouraged to visually represent their definitions of safety and community, and to witness how personal narratives influenced the art-making process. I reflected on my role as an educator, developing new relationships with community arts organizations in the city of Chicago and the youth they serve. Through themes that emerged during the course of my fieldwork, I sought to explore how the project was critical, meaningful, and transformative to the individual, the surrounding community, and myself.

I spent the summer of 2011 working collaboratively with Beyondmedia Education to design and implement workshops at Chicago-area community arts organizations in Rogers Park, Pilsen, Humboldt Park, and the near South Side. Beyondmedia is a not-for-profit group whose mission is “to collaborate with underserved and under-represented women, youth and communities to tell their stories, connect their stories to the world around us, and organize for social justice through the creation and distribution of media arts” (www.Beyondmedia.org). I traveled to each organization to teach one- or two-day workshops to middle school- and high school-aged youth making art inspired by personal narratives.

First, participants established working definitions of the terms safety and community that could provide motivation for creating a meaningful work of art. Individual participants built a space—either real or imaginary—where they felt safe and that included symbolic imagery from their life story. The completed sculptures from all four organizations were installed at Beyondmedia’s Building Safe Communities Youth Summit in August. These safe spaces, originally made by individuals, began to speak to the desires of a community spread throughout the city and her neighborhoods.

Through this project I gained a greater understanding of teaching with diverse learning groups, respect for individual knowledge, and the impact of nontraditional spaces of education. Cultivating the personal narrative in the educational space promotes creative and critical thinkers, as well as investigative reasoning practices that build knowledge and inform the community. In this practice, it is the individual stories, needs, and wants unique to each person that inform the curriculum. This study has reacquainted me with the importance of a student/teacher relationship where personal narratives matter and making art communicates individual voices as part of transformative community education.
Out of the Classroom and Into the Spectacle: Exploration, Disruption, and Transformation of School Spaces Through Interventionist Art Practices

In our culture of educational reform, curriculum standardization, and pervasive test-based assessment, the school has become a place relegated to passive acceptance of prepackaged knowledge. My research used contemporary arts practices as a context for collaborative, student-driven research into the physical space and meaning of “school.” Using a site-specific pedagogy, I invited students to consider how place dictates expectations, connections between personal history and school, and ways to transform the school space. I investigated the following questions: What occurs when students explore contemporary, site-specific art practices within their school? How can a student-driven curriculum facilitate collaborative experiences of learning, research, and art making? How will my participation in a student-led project shape and affect my role as a student teacher?

My research took place over the course of seven weeks at a diverse, academically elite Chicago public high school with students in grades 10-12 enrolled in a sculpture class. I explored with students the ways in which contemporary artists research, transform, and intervene in public and private space. The students undertook two large-scale, research-based projects. In the first, they created an “alternative atlas” of the school, which consisted of personal narrative maps and documentation of their foundational spatial research. The second consisted of several intervention projects, which were designed to alter the spatial experiences of the whole school. These artworks, in addition to student reflections, discussions, and blogging, provided me with a wide range of research data.

The students’ projects functioned as a literal transformation of the school space through performative and structural intervention projects. The school became a site of inquiry and a space to be investigated, questioned, and challenged through art-making practices. Situating an art curriculum in and around the meaning of “school” allowed students to transform the place of the school into a structure and system of power to be deeply examined.

I believe that an art curriculum, rooted in contemporary, site-specific practices offers students opportunities to explore art making that extends beyond the classroom, to make connections between their art practice and their daily life through arts-based research, and to build a critical vocabulary of space. Additionally, my research illustrated the ways in which an open-ended and interpretative curriculum can shift the position of the teacher from leader to facilitator. This shift places students in a position to generate their own meaning and content from projects, giving students the authority and power to develop their own expertise and knowledge in the classroom.
**Metacognition and the Use of Reflective Inquiry in the Classroom**

Educational research supports the cultivation of higher-order thinking skills. In the art classroom, students learn technical skills and fundamentals of design but also have the opportunity to cultivate higher-order thinking while creating new ideas, solving problems, analyzing what is seen, and translating concepts into a visual language. As an art educator, I am continuously seeking to engage more students in these challenging cognitive processes. For example, metacognition is the understanding of what we know and how we learned it. Introducing metacognitive practices helps students achieve awareness and control of their own learning. Reflective inquiry is a metacognitive practice that encourages students to pause and consciously question the choices they are making during the design and construction of art.

In this study, I asked: How did students’ artwork and their ability to understand their own intention change with the use of reflective inquiry? In what ways will the introduction of the study of metacognition and reflective inquiry affect my practice as a classroom art teacher? I am also interested in what can be observed from the practice of verbal inquiry and from the written inquiries and reflective writings of students.

By conducting action research through a qualitative study, I asked suburban high school students in an advanced sculpture course to examine their decision-making process through the study of metacognition and the use of reflective inquiry for a three-week period. Students began with the examination of a practicing artist’s mental process during a one-day visiting artist presentation and workshop. The study continued with sharing and recording their self-inquiry during the design and creation of sculpture. The phenomenological and written data gathered throughout this study showed that students thought deeply about the meaning of their artwork but had varying levels of awareness of the connection between their decisions and that meaning.

This action research strengthened my teaching practice by allowing me to hear directly from students. Not surprisingly, using a questioning method during individual conversations was an effective technique. Also, the motivational effect of having a visiting artist speak had a lasting effect on them. Introducing metacognitive practices helps students achieve awareness and control of their own learning. Reflective inquiry is a metacognitive practice that encourages students to pause and consciously question the choices they are making during the design and construction of art.

To imbed my autobiography in theories of curriculum and sexuality, I conducted research into the following areas: queer pedagogy; theories of gender, sexuality, and queer potentiality; histories of sexuality in school and society, focusing on social movements from the 1800s onward that make it possible to have a sexuality; and the Cold War persecution of gays and lesbians in federal government. This research has enabled me to articulate theorized autobiographies that contribute to the field of curriculum and sexuality.

The theorized autobiographies I have conducted based on my research are: “Coming Out’ as Explicit and Implicit Curricula,” “The Heterosexualizing Masculinization of Schooling,” and “Symptomatic Gender.” Respectively, these essays explore coming-out narratives as expected social script: reactions to a perceived feminization of schooling; and the focus on gender as indicator of sexuality.

Through this investigation, I conclude that there continues to be an urgent need for sustained analysis of the ways curriculum and sexuality intersect, and advocate for a queered notion of sexuality that circumvents the homo/hetero binary for the expansion of students’ futurity. While simultaneously promoting anti-oppressive education, schools and teachers must acknowledge the limiting reliance on this binary and offer more expansive modes of identification.
Cartography is more than a process of mapping a place, space, or coordinates to locations. Maps are subject to the whim of the mapmaker and, in this sense, cartography is emblematic of the power dynamics in society. Cartography can show us where we are, where we came from, and where we are going, but it can also give us the power to interpret the meaning of those life experiences along the way. Dominant narratives about urban teenagers portray lives that are chaotic, violent, and lacking direction. A critical practice of cartography can become a tool that adolescents use to challenge generalizations and stereotypes.

My action research project attempted to not only empower youth to tell their own stories of experience but also to give them the tools for assigning meaning to those experiences. The following questions were central to my project: What occurs when students explore personal life experiences through cartography and autobiographical storytelling? How can cartography and autobiographical storytelling be used to create new forms of visual literacy? How will the stories of my students change their view of themselves and any preconceived notions I may have about their lives (what's important, what's not important, what's significant, what's insignificant)?

My action research project was conducted in a low-income public high school on the west side of Chicago, where the student population is 90.6% African American, followed by 9.1% Hispanic. For seven weeks, my students and I explored how mapping can be used to represent experience. We looked at and found inspiration in the work of the artist Kehinde Wiley. By overlapping and tracing letters, students created their own symbols of power to represent a significant life experience. The method of cartography allowed students to tell a place-based story that was infused with personal meaning. This new form of cartography combined self-portraiture and body mapping.

Three specific challenges stand out in my action research. First, using the contemporary artist Kehinde Wiley was a challenge because Wiley does not inherently work with ideas around mapping. Second, both students and teachers had low expectations of the students’ ability to engage with a challenging art project. Third, once the project was complete, the students had difficulty recognizing the strengths of their work. These moments were instrumental in developing my understanding that if art educators are going to present students with an intellectually challenging curriculum, it is important that we set high expectations for student success. One way for art teachers to help students recognize their accomplishments is to provide students with a variety of ways to reflect on the process of learning and creating.
The Benefits of Theater and Performance in the Rehabilitation Process for Incarcerated Youth

The purpose of my research was to gain an understanding of the benefits of theater when used as a tool for rehabilitation among incarcerated youth. My research questions were: How can detained youth be rehabilitated through the act of performing and theater? What is the relationship between these youth and the society from which they have been separated? What does a theater and performance art curriculum look like in a juvenile detention center?

In order to research these questions, I worked with a nonprofit theater arts organization at a temporary juvenile detention center in a major city. Participants were males between the ages of 15 and 17 who were there awaiting trial or transfer to another facility. The goal of the organization was to have the youth express their life experiences through writing, producing, and performing musical theater. Through this creative process, the youth were able to view their life stories in a new way, which would allow them to make better choices in the future. As a volunteer teaching artist, my role was to be an active participant in the play and, in turn, a model for the youth. My research lasted a course of seven weeks, with rehearsals twice a week, ending with a staged musical performance by the participants and myself.

Data was compiled using an action research methodology. I conducted interviews, analyzed participant reflection sheets, and participated in a staged musical production with the youth for an audience of over 50 people.

At this stage of the research process I’ve discovered noticeable changes in the participants. Over time they have become more willing to communicate and articulate their feelings, while developing the ability to work through negative emotions and still participate in the program. Participant relationships with one another also improved, and the youth began to support one another in meeting the artist goal set for each rehearsal.

While I am still reflecting on my experience and continue to analyze the data, I have come to see the undeniable benefits of participation in a theater arts program for incarcerated youth. By the end of my seven weeks spent at the detention center, the participants were able to come together and create a community among themselves through the act of reflection and performance. In that community space that emerged, they began to find their voice and a sense of agency around their lives and situation.
Photography and Autoethnography: The Role of Currere in Processing Memories of Abuse

My project is an example of the power of personal narrative and the use of telling one’s story to learn about the self. I used the personal narrative as a tool to discover the self and recover histories while concurrently performing an autoethnographic study in order to explore how my specific memories surrounding abuse may hold broader significance for others. I utilized both of the aforementioned tools to explore these questions: What occurs when a survivor of abuse employs personal reflection, learning, and storytelling in an effort to explore memory? How can my personal process of creating photographs from memory inform future collective or personal research?

To answer my questions I used the method of currere, an autoethnographical process that encourages thoughtful consideration of the personal past and present. I merged this technique with memory work, a process involving detailed reflection on specific memories. The method of creation was based strongly in phototherapy techniques, in which I reenacted my memories for the camera over a period of six weeks.

I began by depicting gestures that had been common in the relationship with my abuser, which led me to further explore other memories, strictly considering myself as the subject matter. My photographs became my data. I reflected on each scene I had re-created, and the significance of both the memory and the visual product.

Creating scenes from memory for the camera allowed me to insert myself back into the past, and to critically reflect on each memory’s hold on my present. My path to the creation of these works was infused with hesitation, but once I was making photos I started to remember more about my experience with abuse. This significant finding indicated that I was achieving the personal learning that I had set out to discover.

This project has allowed me to explore the use of autoethnography through the medium of photography, and the experience has proven the power of the personal narrative to uncover the self within this framing. I recommend the methods of this study as tools for investigating the self, as I found this study useful to my process. This study highlights the importance of student-centered learning within the context of art making, and provides a framework for future collective or personal research.
Exploring the Meaning of Home Through Text and Clay: The Dynamics That Shape Adolescents’ Internal and External Interpretations

Where is your home and what constructs your definition of home? Homes are destroyed, altered, moved, and constantly redefined. Youths need a space where they can process issues surrounding the ongoing reformation of home. I began my research by asking: How will students’ artistic representations of home reflect personal experiences associated with place and distinct feelings surrounding the inconcrete concept of home? What role, if any, do class, race, and social conditions play in students’ understanding of home? How will their personal views of this structure affect my preconceived understanding of my own home? Home has endless definitions, which my students and I explored over a seven-week period and have translated through clay, written reflections, discussions, and interviews.

My research was conducted at an urban high school on the west side of Chicago with a population of primarily Puerto Rican, Mexican, and African American students. I worked within an extremely challenging environment with ninth- to twelfth-grade students. After my first day there, I was at a point of defeat. However, with each passing day, I learned about the lives of my students, which in turn helped me to understand them and become a better teacher by recognizing their individual needs.

I started the project by introducing contemporary artists, including Sana Musasama and Joshua Harris. After several group discussions, students were invited to create conceptual clay sculptures to represent their ideas of home. I left the project open-ended, with just enough structure to get students started by implementing a few technical guidelines that had to be followed. As a result, the reflections and sculptures became extremely potent and inseparable in context, which generated invaluable data.

Students’ personal commitment to this project translated into authentic sharing of their lives in the form of art. There was no longer a need to hide, as the classroom served as their safeguard. Their trust and openness helped me better understand the obstacles I faced in this classroom and why students had put up barriers to protect themselves.

Increasing awareness of students’ homes serves as guidance for educators. Students’ experience of the concept of home impacts how they behave, learn, and identity themselves. Issues surrounding this concept are often not discussed in school settings, and I hope that my research will provide further evidence of the significance of this conversation.
“Building Meaning” stems from my rich childhood experiences making art with my family in the 1970s, pre-computers. It explores my motivations for my practice as artist/art educator from youth, raised in a creative environment. It engages teens in a curriculum that involves a variety of art and storytelling practices.

My deep concern over the disappearance of art education in American schools, along with my experiences as a digital media educator, motivated me to create a storytelling curriculum focused around play and community space. I was led to question what happens when young people are given the challenge of imagining, creating, and telling about change in their communities, using a combination of traditional and digital media tools.

My research site was a private school in the Chicago suburbs. My study was done with two groups of eighth graders. Each group contained eleven students, with a 60% male to 40% female ratio. The participants were of various races and were middle to upper-middle class.

Invested in the importance of my own personal engagement and its authenticity, and to codify its development, I chose to pursue the methods I was teaching to my students by planning, making a diorama, building a SketchUp model, and creating final story videos. Pre- and post-project surveys, along with student statements, revealed considerable shifts in students’ awareness of their worlds on multiple levels.

Upon completion, students were opened to new ways of thinking about space, gained increased understanding of their physical worlds, and came away with an expanded awareness of the social and emotional needs of themselves and others, as well as new design thinking skills key to human development in these times. Most significantly, students expressed that what they had designed had become real to them.

In their final self-interviews, students spoke of their projects in the present tense. Remarks included, “Now, we have a pool” and “Now we have a place to go after school.” Lastly, through this learning process, students strengthened critical thinking skills and gained basic understanding of tools including 3-D modeling software, video production, storytelling, and animation.

By creating the project and its components alongside of my students, I strengthened my skills and gained deeper cultural understanding.

Using my method, educators in various disciplines can tailor these twenty-first-century pedagogical concepts and practices into their own lessons. Further, this multimodal teaching strategy is suited to collaborative lesson building in team-teaching settings.
Learning to (Re)Imagine Learning: Critical Imaginary as a Pedagogical Project

This study investigates how educators and students may cocreate ideal learning conditions in order to benefit cognitive development. For the purposes of this study, the concept of “disruption” is re-framed as “a creative pause.” Through the (re)negotiation of learning conditions, “disruption” offers opportunities for enhanced academic achievement and student engagement. Critical Imaginary (C.I.) builds upon the work of Australian scholar Shannon Brincatt’s (2009) concept of the “critical imaginary.” Research questions include: what happens when “disruption” is privileged in order to (re)assess students processes of learning?; what happens when C.I. as a pedagogical project performs to teach learners how to self-advocate for their unique learning needs?; and what may be lost from a learning community when a “disruptive” member is eliminated?

Field work sites for this arts-based, auto-ethnography include both a public elementary school in Chicago’s Lincoln Park neighborhood and a public secondary school in Chicago’s Englewood neighborhood where I was employed as an art instructor in 2012, and the Chicago-area institute where I completed graduate school. In order to understand the implications of this study, this investigation analyzes my history as a learner and how my ability to overcome academic obstacles was achieved through the gained understanding of my unique cognitive processes. Through an analysis of specific phenomenological experiences, this study will demonstrate how gender, class, sexuality, race, level of education and student voice intersect to shape how students navigate hierarchies of power and achieve academic success.

This study finds that by entering Critical Imaginary as a pedagogical project, students who once portrayed a resistance to learning, as demonstrated through disengagement, disrespect and incited distractions, transformed into fundamental assets to the learning community. Such transformations were demonstrated through heightened levels of engagement, thorough understanding of course content, reciprocated respect, and a willingness to contribute to the learning community. In effect “disruptive” students assumed responsibility for their own learning.

This study recommends educators enter Critical Imaginary as a pedagogical project in order to enhance academic achievement, student engagement, and initiate self-motivated learning. This project relies upon the co-creation of non-threatening learning communities through direct student/educator interactions. In order to (re)enter Critical Imaginary as a pedagogical project, educators must be willing to (re)enter peculiar and unfamiliar territory. In effect, Critical Imaginary re-frames the North American practice of critical pedagogy.

The Culture of Cool: Responding to Media through Tee Shirt Production

Having cool stuff isn’t just important to adolescents, and being cool goes beyond the context of high school. Yet, being cool is identified as so important to youth that “coolness” is used as a tool to aggressively advertise products to them, a primary market demographic that yields billions of dollars in capital each year. My action research project investigates the cultural artifacts created for the youth market to consume, and the culture that young people create for themselves. I was interested in thinking with students about whether “coolness” can be purchased along with goods. I wanted to know how the culture produced by youth is valued by its makers.

The questions that guided my ethnographic inquiry were: How do youth use visual culture to inform their methods of self-expression? What happens when students engage in critical discussions about youth visual culture and their own consumer behavior? How might the students’ process of participating in a T-shirt-making project employing media literacy and appropriation enhance my understanding of the opportunities I am afforded as a teacher who practices social justice pedagogy?

The field site for my qualitative project was a military high school in Chicago. The participants were primarily low-income African American students from a range of neighborhoods across the city. Participants created designs, which they printed on T-shirts. The final day of class, they were allowed to wear these shirts instead of their uniforms. This public exhibition revealed to the participants of the project, as well as to the school community, aspects of students’ identities that were underrepresented by the media depictions of what it means to be “cool” within youth culture.

The data indicates that these youth were motivated to participate in this art project. Students engaged the project with patience and careful consideration of process. Through our collaboration in the art classroom, students described how they came to understand themselves as valuable participants in cultural production within the larger context of society. This qualitative study suggests that students are interested in learning about art-making tools and processes with which they can challenge the dominant representations of youth culture in the media. It indicates that print-based, identity-focused projects can offer youth, along with educators, ways to explore and reveal their subjectivities in and outside of the classroom.
Globalization in Art Education: How Educators and Students Respond to Visual Culture by Exploring Identity

Globalization is inaccurately seen as a force that is creating a hybrid culture where societies are mutually influencing one another and growing together as one. Students today are bombarded with visual images at instant rates influencing their visual culture and identity. In my research project, I investigated the following questions: What are the benefits and challenges to educators in the era of globalization? What occurs when students explore their own local visual culture? How can students explore global perspectives in the art classroom?

My critical action research took place over two months with two groups of students. The first group of students was from a public charter high school in Chicago serving predominately low-income Latino students. The second group was from a private international high school in Cairo, Egypt, serving a majority of the elite Egyptian class of Cairo. Methods I used in my data collection included fieldwork notes, interviews with cooperating teachers and students, videotaped critiques and discussions, pre-assessments, post-assessments, reflections, and students’ artwork. The students completed the unit by participating in a live Skype critique.

Through the collection of data I discovered that the students’ ability to develop global perspectives was produced by their critical analysis of their local visual culture and how it affects their personal and national identity in a globalized world. From this understanding they were able to critique and compare other students’ visual culture in relation to their own, which generated a dialogue around globalization. My results suggest that if students are allowed to participate in meaningful critical pedagogy, then students will be able to engage in the discourse of globalization and visual culture in an art classroom.

In an era of global uncertainty, it is essential that students learn and connect with one another worldwide in order to better understand different cultural complexities and how these global connections influence their surroundings. Through critical discussion and reflection of the students’ lived experiences of globalization and visual culture, the art classroom can become a place for students to participate in global interactions that can contribute to productive world citizenship.

Excavating Personal Palimpsest: A Critical Investigation of Identity and Culture Through Situated Pedagogy

Community is a dense term and holds a multiplicity of meanings depending on the researcher. My thesis research examined the malleable and interconnected relationship between identity and culture as a way of developing a critical understanding of community. I included an investigation of space as a way to examine the various power structures that impact space and the way it may or may not influence identity and culture formation. I also used the concept of palimpsest, the layering or reuse of an existing site or text, to expand my understanding of identity and culture as nonlinear and nonformalnic. My research questions include: How do young people define community? How do physical surroundings play a role in shaping students’ views of themselves and others? What happens when students map their surroundings from an emotional standpoint? How will my students and I collaborate as co-researchers to create meaning from our urban surroundings through a site-specific art project executed within a fixed time frame?

I conducted my action research over seven weeks at a predominantly Latino, low-income, urban public high school located in Chicago’s lower west side. I developed two multipart lessons for Art Survey students. During the first lesson, students created layered self-portraits exploring their personal palimpsest. Students developed a symbolic legend mapping memorable and meaningful events from their past over photographs of themselves. Students used text to elaborate meaning and offer additional details. For the second lesson, students created a triptych exploring their immediate surrounding and examining who they are in context to the people and spaces they frequent. Students used mixed media including watercolor, tape transfers, collage, and printmaking. My data included student artwork, class discussions, students’ written reflections, observations, and informal conversations with students and my cooperating teacher.

Through my research I have learned that explorations of identity and culture require a significant amount of reflection, patience, and time. I let go of original lesson plans and made adaptations for our particular set of circumstances, allowing the students’ pace and interest to guide the curriculum. The shifts in my curriculum development were necessary because after the first lesson I realized, with the help of my students, that delving into the many complex layers of our personal palimpsest can be a challenging process for some. Many students preferred to continue to examine aspects of their identity and cultural identifications rather than move on to analyzing the role space might play in that process. I came away from this experience with a better understanding that being flexible in my curriculum development supports and engages student learning by creating a safe space for students to explore topics that are most meaningful to them.
Research that explores printmaking with preteens in combination with a focus on social engagement is scarce. Current literature focuses almost exclusively on printmaking projects involving high school or college students or on printmaking tutorials. This action research project investigated what occurred when preteens participated in a socially engaged printmaking experience centered on their community. It examined how students reinterpreted existing images in visual culture and how personal meaning was constructed via this process. Consequently, I learned about facilitating a critical, meaningful, and engaging art-making experience that reflected youth’s voice onto the community in which they live and learn.

I facilitated a printmaking workshop in autumn of 2011, with 118 sixth-grade students from two middle schools in Oak Park, Illinois. The project took place in five classrooms over five weeks and yielded a small edition of screen prints from each participant. The methodology was informed by postmodern principles and constructivist theories of art education. Student understanding of civic participation, investigation of social issues, and individual and group authorship were essential to the project. Data collection included student writing and reflections, drawing and prints, documentary photographs, and my written reflections following each work session.

Throughout the process, the students became creators of their knowledge. They gained awareness of the possibilities of personal creative production aimed at provoking social interactions and change. Students were challenged to collaborate to determine themes for the work, as well as to constructively critique peer work as a means to better understand, interpret, and add to visual culture. The repeated process of discussion, making, and reflection created an engaged learning experience and sense of ownership over project results. Drawing on Bishop’s (2006) writing, this project sought “original and distinctive voices” in creating socially engaged art to gauge student involvement, not just creativity. While these students were involved in creatively exploring a personal meaning-making process, they were sometimes “limited by acceptable social issues” (Krensky and Lowe Steffen, 2009) recalling themes and subject matter they had presumably been exposed to in the past.

This project encourages teaching artists to investigate collaborative learning processes as ways of connecting preteens, visual culture, and the community. It suggests potentials for exchanging visual production between divergent groups as a means of creating meaningful social connections and engagement. And it lays the groundwork of investigation for teaching artists who wish to facilitate meaningful links between preteens, their communities, and visual culture authorship.
[Autobiographic] Novels on Desires of Self-Morbidity:
Teen Memoirs of Resilience, Wit & Courage

The topic of this research is personal and meaningful as my teen sister revealed that experiencing desires of self-morbidity is common to her as well as her peers. This occurred as we discussed graphic novelists, inspiring me to use graphic novels as a transformative medium. For the purposes of my research, self-morbidity is defined as a state of critical thought that explores contemplations of life and death. Adults often have difficulty responding to thoughts of self-morbidity, labeling it suicidal and consequently applying stigmas that repress teen emotions.

Contemporary graphic novels reflecting on teens' personal struggles are written by adults. And despite there being numerous suicide prevention resources, none address how to have healthy dialogues about thoughts of self-morbidity. While these resources are effective, the goal of this research was to make teens authors of their own contemporariness and engage in healthy dialogue. In utilizing graphic novels as autobiographic reflective tools, teens created [autobiographic] novels exploring these questions: Do thoughts of self-morbidity necessarily mean thoughts of suicide? Do teens feel stigmatized by adults? Can teens navigate commonalities of the pathology in this subject?

A case study was carried out with teens, ages 17-18, both males and females, from local nonprofit youth arts organizations. Participants were selected indiscriminately based on self-morbidity tendencies and ethnicities. Two accelerated summer arts-based workshops were conducted at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. Each workshop was gender-focused and consisted of four attendees.

Research data was gathered from student graphic novels, short reflective essays, student dialogues and interviews, audio recordings, and personal note taking. Two advisors were readily available in the event of expressed at-risk behaviors. Workshop and mentorship trainings were received from local youth development professionals and scholars. Cartooning applications were based on my twenty-five years of studio practice in painting and drawing, and took inspiration from the works of Lynda Barry and Marjane Satrapi.

This research yielded two conclusions: teens are in a critical state of mind in the process of making meaning of experiences that trigger desires of self-morbidity; and self-morbidity is normal given that life and death are prevailing facts of life.

Based on the results of this research, I recommend educating adults in reinterpreting self-morbidity, as it can directly influence the potential onset of depression and suicide in teens. Furthermore, I propose the establishment of arts-based workshops that foster [autobiographic] graphic novels—created by teens for teens—as coping resources in order to harness teens' voice and break the cycle of stigma as they head into adulthood.
[Autobio]graphic Novels on Desires of Self-Morbidity: Teen Memoirs of Resilience, Wit & Courage

The topic of this research is personal and meaningful as my teen sister revealed that experiencing desires of self-morbidity is common to her as well as her peers. This occurred as we discussed graphic novelists, inspiring me to use graphic novels as a transformative medium. For the purposes of my research, self-morbidity is defined as a state of critical thought that explores contemplations of life and death. Adults often have difficulty responding to thoughts of self-morbidity, labeling it suicidal and consequently applying stigmas that repress teen emotions.

Contemporary graphic novels reflecting on teens’ personal struggles are written by adults. And despite there being numerous suicide prevention resources, none address how to have healthy dialogues about thoughts of self-morbidity. While these resources are effective, the goal of this research was to make teens authors of their own contemporariness and engage in healthy dialogue. In utilizing graphic novels as autobiographic reflective tools, teens created [autobio]graphic novels exploring these questions: Do thoughts of self-morbidity necessarily mean thoughts of suicide? Do teens feel stigmatized by adults? Can teens navigate commonalities of the pathology in this subject?

A case study was carried out with teens, ages 17-18, both males and females, from local nonprofit youth arts organizations. Participants were selected indiscriminately based on self-morbidity tendencies and ethnicities. Two accelerated summer arts-based workshops were conducted at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. Each workshop was gender-focused and consisted of four attendees.

Research data was gathered from student graphic novels, short reflective essays, student dialogues and interviews, audio recordings, and personal note taking. Two advisors were readily available in the event of expressed at-risk behaviors. Workshop and mentorship trainings were received from local youth development professionals and scholars. Cartooning applications were based on my twenty-five years of studio practice in painting and drawing, and took inspiration from the works of Lynda Barry and Marjane Satrapi.

This research yielded two conclusions: teens are in a critical state of mind in the process of making meaning of experiences that trigger desires of self-morbidity; and self-morbidity is normal given that life and death are prevailing facts of life.

Based on the results of this research, I recommend educating adults in reinterpreting self-morbidity, as it can directly influence the potential onset of depression and suicide in teens. Furthermore, I propose the establishment of arts-based workshops that foster [autobio]graphic novels—created by teens for teens—as coping resources in order to harness teens’ voice and break the cycle of stigma as they head into adulthood.
More Than Just Pretty Pictures: Critical, Meaningful and Socially Engaged Printmaking with Preteens

Research that explores printmaking with preteens in combination with a focus on social engagement is scarce. Current literature focuses almost exclusively on printmaking projects involving high school or college students or on printmaking tutorials. This action research project investigated what occurred when preteens participated in a socially engaged printmaking experience centered on their community. It examined how students reinterpreted existing images in visual culture and how personal meaning was constructed via this process. Consequently, I learned about facilitating a critical, meaningful, and engaging art-making experience that reflected youth’s voice onto the community in which they live and learn.

I facilitated a printmaking workshop in autumn of 2011, with 118 sixth-grade students from two middle schools in Oak Park, Illinois. The project took place in five classrooms over five weeks and yielded a small edition of screen prints from each participant. The methodology was informed by postmodern principles and constructivist theories of art education. Student understanding of civic participation, investigation of social issues, and individual and group authorship were essential to the project. Data collection included student writing and reflections, drawing and prints, documentary photographs, and my written reflections following each work session.

Throughout the process, the students became creators of their knowledge. They gained awareness of the possibilities of personal creative production aimed at provoking social interactions and change. Students were challenged to collaborate to determine themes for the work, as well as to constructively critique peer work as a means to better understand, interpret, and add to visual culture. The repeated process of discussion, making, and reflection created an engaged learning experience and sense of ownership over project results. Drawing on Bishop’s (2006) writing, this project sought “original and distinctive voices” in creating socially engaged art to gauge student involvement, not just creativity. While these students were involved in creatively exploring a personal meaning-making process, they were sometimes “limited by acceptable social issues” (Krensky and Lowe Steffen, 2009) recalling themes and subject matter they had presumably been exposed to in the past.

This project encourages teaching artists to investigate collaborative learning processes as ways of connecting preteens, visual culture, and the community. It suggests potentials for exchanging visual production between divergent groups as a means of creating meaningful social connections and engagement. And it lays the groundwork of investigation for teaching artists who wish to facilitate meaningful links between preteens, their communities, and visual culture authorship.
Globalization in Art Education: How Educators and Students Respond to Visual Culture by Exploring Identity

Globalization is inaccurately seen as a force that is creating a hybrid culture where societies are mutually influencing one another and growing together as one. Students today are bombarded with visual images at instant rates influencing their visual culture and identity. In my research project, I investigated the following questions: What are the benefits and challenges to educators in the era of globalization? What occurs when students explore their own local visual culture? How can students explore global perspectives in the art classroom?

My critical action research took place over two months with two groups of students. The first group of students was from a public charter high school in Chicago serving predominately low-income Latino students. The second group was from a private international high school in Cairo, Egypt, serving a majority of the elite Egyptian class of Cairo. Methods I used in my data collection included fieldwork notes, interviews with cooperating teachers and students, videotaped critiques and discussions, pre-assessments, post-assessments, reflections, and students’ artwork. The students completed the unit by participating in a live Skype critique.

Through the collection of data I discovered that the students’ ability to develop global perspectives was produced by their critical analysis of their local visual culture and how it affects their personal and national identity in a globalized world. From this understanding they were able to critique and compare other students’ visual culture in relation to their own, which generated a dialogue around globalization. My results suggest that if students are allowed to participate in meaningful critical pedagogy, then students will be able to engage in the discourse of globalization and visual culture in an art classroom.

In an era of global uncertainty, it is essential that students learn and connect with one another worldwide in order to better understand different cultural complexities and how these global connections influence their surroundings. Through critical discussion and reflection of the students’ lived experiences of globalization and visual culture, the art classroom can become a place for students to participate in global interactions that can contribute to productive world citizenship.

Excavating Personal Palimpsest: A Critical Investigation of Identity and Culture Through Situated Pedagogy

Community is a dense term and holds a multiplicity of meanings depending on the researcher. My thesis research examined the malleable and interconnected relationship between identity and culture as a way of developing a critical understanding of community. I included an investigation of space as a way to examine the various power structures that impact space and the way it may or may not influence identity and culture formation. I also used the concept of palimpsest, the layering or reuse of an existing site or text, to expand my understanding of identity and culture as nonlinear and nonformulaic. My research questions include: How do young people define community? How do physical surroundings play a role in shaping students’ views of themselves and others? What happens when students map their surroundings from an emotional standpoint? How will my students and I collaborate as co-researchers to create meaning from our urban surroundings through a site-specific art project executed within a fixed time frame?

I conducted my action research over seven weeks at a predominantly Latino, low-income, urban public high school located in Chicago’s lower west side. I developed two multipart lessons for Art Survey students. During the first lesson, students created layered self-portraits exploring their personal palimpsest. Students developed a symbolic legend mapping memorable and meaningful events from their past over photographs of themselves. Students used text to elaborate meaning and offer additional details. For the second lesson, students created a triptych exploring their immediate surrounding and examining who they are in context to the people and spaces they frequent. Students used mixed media including watercolor, tape transfers, collage, and printmaking. My data included student artwork, class discussions, students’ written reflections, observations, and informal conversations with students and my cooperating teacher.

Through my research I have learned that explorations of identity and culture require a significant amount of reflection, patience, and time. I let go of original lesson plans and made adaptations for our particular set of circumstances, allowing the students’ pace and interest to guide the curriculum. The shifts in my curriculum development were necessary because after the first lesson I realized, with the help of my students, that delving into the many complex layers of our personal palimpsest can be a challenging process for some. Many students preferred to continue to examine aspects of their identity and cultural identifications rather than move on to analyzing the role space might play in that process. I came away from this experience with a better understanding that being flexible in my curriculum development supports and engages student learning by creating a safe space for students to explore topics that are most meaningful to them.
Learning to (Re)Imagine Learning: Critical Imaginary as a Pedagogical Project

This study investigates how educators and students may co-create ideal learning conditions in order to benefit cognitive development. For the purposes of this study, the concept of “disruption” is re-framed as “a creative pause”. Through the (re)negotiation of learning conditions, “disruption” offers opportunities for enhanced academic achievement and student engagement. Critical Imaginary (C.I.) builds upon the work of Australian scholar Shannon Brincatt’s (2009) concept of the “critical imaginary”. Research questions include: what happens when “disruption” is privileged in order to (re)assess students processes of learning?; what happens when C.I. as a pedagogical project performs to teach learners how to self-advocate for their unique learning needs?; and what may be lost from a learning community when a “disruptive” member is eliminated?

Field work sites for this arts-based, auto-ethnography include both a public elementary school in Chicago's Lincoln Park neighborhood and a public secondary school in Chicago's Englewood neighborhood where I was employed as an art instructor in 2012, and the Chicago-area institute where I completed graduate school. In order to understand the implications of this study, this investigation analyzes my history as a learner and how my ability to overcome academic obstacles was achieved through the gained understanding my unique cognitive processes. Through an analysis of specific phenomenological experiences, this study will demonstrate how gender, class, sexuality, race, level of education and student voice intersect to shape how students navigate hierarchies of power and achieve academic success.

This study finds that by entering Critical Imaginary as a pedagogical project, students who once portrayed a resistance to learning, as demonstrated through disengagement, disrespect and incited distractions, transformed into fundamental assets to the learning community. Such transformations were demonstrated through heightened levels of engagement, thorough understanding of course content, reciprocated respect, and a willingness to contribute to the learning community. In effect “disruptive” students assumed responsibility for their own learning.

This study recommends educators enter Critical Imaginary as a pedagogical project in order to enhance academic achievement, student engagement, and initiate self-motivated learning. This project relies upon the co-creation of non-threatening learning communities through direct student/educator interactions. In order to (re)enter Critical Imaginary as a pedagogical project, educators must be willing to (re)enter peculiar and unfamiliar territory. In effect, Critical Imaginary re-frames the North American practice of critical pedagogy.

The Culture of Cool: Responding to Media through Tee Shirt Production

Having cool stuff isn’t just important to adolescents, and being cool goes beyond the context of high school. Yet, being cool is identified as so important to youth that “coolness” is used as a tool to aggressively advertise products to them, a primary market demographic that yields billions of dollars in capital each year. My action research project investigates the cultural artifacts created for the youth market to consume, and the culture that young people create for themselves. I was interested in thinking with students about whether “coolness” can be purchased along with goods. I wanted to know how the culture produced by youth is valued by its makers.

The questions that guided my ethnographic inquiry were: How do youth use visual culture to inform their methods of self-expression? What happens when students engage in critical discussions about youth visual culture and their own consumer behavior? How might the students’ process of participating in a T-shirt-making project employing media literacy and appropriation enhance my understanding of the opportunities I am afforded as a teacher who practices social justice pedagogy?

The field site for my qualitative project was a military high school in Chicago. The participants were primarily low-income African American students from a range of neighborhoods across the city. Participants created designs, which they printed on T-shirts. The final day of class, they were allowed to wear these shirts instead of their uniforms. This public exhibition revealed to the participants of the project, as well as to the school community, aspects of students’ identities that were underrepresented by the media depictions of what it means to be “cool” within youth culture.

The data indicates that these youth were motivated to participate in this art project. Students engaged the project with patience and careful consideration of process. Through our collaboration in the art classroom, students described how they came to understand themselves as valuable participants in cultural production within the larger context of society. This qualitative study suggests that students are interested in learning about art-making tools and processes with which they can challenge the dominant representations of youth culture in the media. It indicates that print-based, identity-focused projects can offer youth, along with educators, ways to explore and reveal their subjectivities in and outside of the classroom.
“Building Meaning” stems from my rich childhood experiences making art with my family in the 1970s, pre-computers. It explores my motivations for my practice as artist/art educator from youth, raised in a creative environment. It engages teens in a curriculum that involves a variety of art and storytelling practices.

My deep concern over the disappearance of art education in American schools, along with my experiences as a digital media educator, motivated me to create a storytelling curriculum focused around play and community space. I was led to question what happens when young people are given the challenge of imagining, creating, and telling about change in their communities, using a combination of traditional and digital media tools.

My research site was a private school in the Chicago suburbs. My study was done with two groups of eighth graders. Each group contained eleven students, with a 60% male to 40% female ratio. The participants were of various races and were middle to upper-middle class.

Invested in the importance of my own personal engagement and its authenticity, and to codify its development, I chose to pursue the methods I was teaching to my students by planning, making a diorama, building a SketchUp model, and creating final story videos. Pre- and post-project surveys, along with student statements, revealed considerable shifts in students’ awareness of their worlds on multiple levels.

Upon completion, students were opened to new ways of thinking about space, gained increased understanding of their physical worlds, and came away with an expanded awareness of the social and emotional needs of themselves and others, as well as new design thinking skills key to human development in these times. Most significantly, students expressed that what they had designed had become real to them.

In their final self-interviews, students spoke of their projects in the present tense. Remarks included, “Now, we have a pool” and “Now we have a place to go after school.” Lastly, through this learning process, students strengthened critical thinking skills and gained basic understanding of tools including 3-D modeling software, video production, storytelling, and animation.

By creating the project and its components alongside of my students, I strengthened my skills and gained deeper cultural understanding.

Using my method, educators in various disciplines can tailor these twenty-first-century pedagogical concepts and practices into their own lessons. Further, this multimodal teaching strategy is suited to collaborative lesson building in team-teaching settings.
Exploring the Meaning of Home Through Text and Clay: The Dynamics That Shape Adolescents’ Internal and External Interpretations

Where is your home and what constructs your definition of home? Homes are destroyed, altered, moved, and constantly redefined. Youths need a space where they can process issues surrounding the ongoing reformation of home. I began my research by asking: How will students’ artistic representations of home reflect personal experiences associated with place and distinct feelings surrounding the inconcrete concept of home? What role, if any, do class, race, and social conditions play in students’ understanding of home? How will their personal views of this structure affect my preconceived understanding of my own home? Home has endless definitions, which my students and I explored over a seven-week period and have translated through clay, written reflections, discussions, and interviews.

My research was conducted at an urban high school on the west side of Chicago with a population of primarily Puerto Rican, Mexican, and African American students. I worked within an extremely challenging environment with ninth- to twelfth-grade students. After my first day there, I was at a point of defeat. However, with each passing day, I learned about the lives of my students, which in turn helped me to understand them and become a better teacher by recognizing their individual needs.

I started the project by introducing contemporary artists, including Sana Musasama and Joshua Harris. After several group discussions, students were invited to create conceptual clay sculptures to represent their ideas of home. I left the project open-ended, with just enough structure to get students started by implementing a few technical guidelines that had to be followed. As a result, the reflections and sculptures became extremely potent and inseparable in context, which generated invaluable data.

Students’ personal commitment to this project translated into authentic sharing of their lives in the form of art. There was no longer a need to hide, as the classroom served as their safeguard. Their trust and openness helped me better understand the obstacles I faced in this classroom and why students had put up barriers to protect themselves.

Increasing awareness of students’ homes serves as guidance for educators. Students’ experience of the concept of home impacts how they behave, learn, and identity themselves. Issues surrounding this concept are often not discussed in school settings, and I hope that my research will provide further evidence of the significance of this conversation.
Lauren Goldstein  
Master of Arts in Art Education

Photography and Autoethnography: The Role of Currere in Processing Memories of Abuse

My project is an example of the power of personal narrative and the use of telling one's story to learn about the self. I used the personal narrative as a tool to discover the self and recover histories while concurrently performing an autoethnographic study in order to explore how my specific memories surrounding abuse may hold broader significance for others. I utilized both of the aforementioned tools to explore these questions: What occurs when a survivor of abuse employs personal reflection, learning, and storytelling in an effort to explore memory? How can my personal process of creating photographs from memory inform future collective or personal research?

To answer my questions I used the method of currere, an autoethnographical process that encourages thoughtful consideration of the personal past and present. I merged this technique with memory work, a process involving detailed reflection on specific memories. The method of creation was based strongly in phototherapy techniques, in which I reenacted my memories for the camera over a period of six weeks.

I began by depicting gestures that had been common in the relationship with my abuser, which led me to further explore other memories, strictly considering myself as the subject matter. My photographs became my data. I reflected on each scene I had re-created, and the significance of both the memory and the visual product.

Creating scenes from memory for the camera allowed me to insert myself back into the past, and to critically reflect on each memory's hold on my present. My path to the creation of these works was infused with hesitation, but once I was making photos I started to remember more about my experience with abuse. This significant finding indicated that I was achieving the personal learning that I had set out to discover.

This project has allowed me to explore the use of autoethnography through the medium of photography, and the experience has proven the power of the personal narrative to uncover the self within this framing. I recommend the methods of this study as tools for investigating the self, as I found this study useful to my process. This study highlights the importance of student-centered learning within the context of art making, and provides a framework for future collective or personal research.
The Benefits of Theater and Performance in the Rehabilitation Process for Incarcerated Youth

The purpose of my research was to gain an understanding of the benefits of theater when used as a tool for rehabilitation among incarcerated youth. My research questions were: How can detained youth be rehabilitated through the act of performing and theater? What is the relationship between these youth and the society from which they have been separated? What does a theater and performance art curriculum look like in a juvenile detention center?

In order to research these questions, I worked with a nonprofit theater arts organization at a temporary juvenile detention center in a major city. Participants were males between the ages of 15 and 17 who were there awaiting trial or transfer to another facility. The goal of the organization was to have the youth express their life experiences through writing, producing, and performing musical theater. Through this creative process, the youth were able to view their life stories in a new way, which would allow them to make better choices in the future. As a volunteer teaching artist, my role was to be an active participant in the play and, in turn, a model for the youth. My research lasted a course of seven weeks, with rehearsals twice a week, ending with a staged musical performance by the participants and myself.

Data was compiled using an action research methodology. I conducted interviews, analyzed participant reflection sheets, and participated in a staged musical production with the youth for an audience of over 50 people.

At this stage of the research process I've discovered noticeable changes in the participants. Over time they have become more willing to communicate and articulate their feelings, while developing the ability to work through negative emotions and still participate in the program. Participant relationships with one another also improved, and the youth began to support one another in meeting the artist goal set for each rehearsal.

While I am still reflecting on my experience and continue to analyze the data, I have come to see the undeniable benefits of participation in a theater arts program for incarcerated youth. By the end of my seven weeks spent at the detention center, the participants were able to come together and create a community among themselves through the act of reflection and performance. In that community space that emerged, they began to find their voice and a sense of agency around their lives and situation.
Cartography is more than a process of mapping a place, space, or coordinates to locations. Maps are subject to the whim of the mapmaker and, in this sense, cartography is emblematic of the power dynamics in society. Cartography can show us where we are, where we came from, and where we are going, but it can also give us the power to interpret the meaning of those life experiences along the way. Dominant narratives about urban teenagers portray lives that are chaotic, violent, and lacking direction. A critical practice of cartography can become a tool that adolescents use to challenge generalizations and stereotypes.

My action research project attempted to not only empower youth to tell their own stories of experience but also to give them the tools for assigning meaning to those experiences. The following questions were central to my project: What occurs when students explore personal life experiences through cartography and autobiographical storytelling? How can cartography and autobiographical storytelling be used to create new forms of visual literacy? How will the stories of my students change their view of themselves and any preconceived notions I may have about their lives (what's important, what's not important, what's significant, what's insignificant)?

My action research project was conducted in a low-income public high school on the west side of Chicago, where the student population is 90.6% African American, followed by 9.1% Hispanic. For seven weeks, my students and I explored how mapping can be used to represent experience. We looked at and found inspiration in the work of the artist Kehinde Wiley. By overlapping and tracing letters, students created their own symbols of power to represent a significant life experience. The method of cartography allowed students to tell a place-based story that was infused with personal meaning. This new form of cartography combined self-portraiture and body mapping.

Three specific challenges stand out in my action research. First, using the contemporary artist Kehinde Wiley was a challenge because Wiley does not inherently work with ideas around mapping. Second, both students and teachers had low expectations of the students’ ability to engage with a challenging art project. Third, once the project was complete, the students had difficulty recognizing the strengths of their work. These moments were instrumental in developing my understanding that if art educators are going to present students with an intellectually challenging curriculum, it is important that we set high expectations for student success. One way for art teachers to help students recognize their accomplishments is to provide students with a variety of ways to reflect on the process of learning and creating.
Metacognition and the Use of Reflective Inquiry in the Classroom

Educational research supports the cultivation of higher-order thinking skills. In the art classroom, students learn technical skills and fundamentals of design but also have the opportunity to cultivate higher-order thinking while creating new ideas, solving problems, analyzing what is seen, and translating concepts into a visual language. As an art educator, I am continually seeking to engage more students in these challenging cognitive processes. For example, metacognition is the understanding of what we know and how we learned it. Introducing metacognitive practices helps students achieve awareness and control of their own learning. Reflective inquiry is a metacognitive practice that encourages students to pause and consciously question the choices they are making during the design and construction of art.

In this study, I asked: How did students’ artwork and their ability to understand their own intention change with the use of reflective inquiry? In what ways will the introduction of the study of metacognition and reflective inquiry affect my practice as a classroom art teacher? I am also interested in what can be observed from the practice of verbal inquiry and from the written inquiries and reflective writings of students.

By conducting action research through a qualitative study, I asked suburban high school students in an advanced sculpture course to examine their decision-making process through the study of metacognition and the use of reflective inquiry for a three-week period. Students began with the examination of a practicing artist’s mental process during a one-day visiting artist presentation and workshop. The study continued with sharing and recording their self-inquiry during the design and creation of sculpture. The phenomenological and written data gathered throughout this study showed that students thought deeply about the meaning of their artwork but had varying levels of awareness of the connection between their decisions and that meaning.

This action research strengthened my teaching practice by allowing me to hear directly from students. Not surprisingly, using a questioning method during individual conversations was an effective technique. Also, the motivational effect of having a visiting artist speak had a lasting effect on students and helped me to hear directly from students. Not surprisingly, using a questioning method during individual conversations was an effective technique. Also, the motivational effect of having a visiting artist speak had a lasting effect on students and helped me to hear directly from students.

Inquiry in the Classroom

Metacognition and the Use of Reflective Inquiry in the Classroom

Educational research supports the cultivation of higher-order thinking skills. In the art classroom, students learn technical skills and fundamentals of design but also have the opportunity to cultivate higher-order thinking while creating new ideas, solving problems, analyzing what is seen, and translating concepts into a visual language. As an art educator, I am continually seeking to engage more students in these challenging cognitive processes. For example, metacognition is the understanding of what we know and how we learned it. Introducing metacognitive practices helps students achieve awareness and control of their own learning. Reflective inquiry is a metacognitive practice that encourages students to pause and consciously question the choices they are making during the design and construction of art.

In this study, I asked: How did students’ artwork and their ability to understand their own intention change with the use of reflective inquiry? In what ways will the introduction of the study of metacognition and reflective inquiry affect my practice as a classroom art teacher? I am also interested in what can be observed from the practice of verbal inquiry and from the written inquiries and reflective writings of students.

By conducting action research through a qualitative study, I asked suburban high school students in an advanced sculpture course to examine their decision-making process through the study of metacognition and the use of reflective inquiry for a three-week period. Students began with the examination of a practicing artist’s mental process during a one-day visiting artist presentation and workshop. The study continued with sharing and recording their self-inquiry during the design and creation of sculpture. The phenomenological and written data gathered throughout this study showed that students thought deeply about the meaning of their artwork but had varying levels of awareness of the connection between their decisions and that meaning.

This action research strengthened my teaching practice by allowing me to hear directly from students. Not surprisingly, using a questioning method during individual conversations was an effective technique. Also, the motivational effect of having a visiting artist speak had a lasting effect on students and helped me to hear directly from students. Not surprisingly, using a questioning method during individual conversations was an effective technique. Also, the motivational effect of having a visiting artist speak had a lasting effect on students and helped me to hear directly from students.

In this study, I asked: How did students’ artwork and their ability to understand their own intention change with the use of reflective inquiry? In what ways will the introduction of the study of metacognition and reflective inquiry affect my practice as a classroom art teacher? I am also interested in what can be observed from the practice of verbal inquiry and from the written inquiries and reflective writings of students.

By conducting action research through a qualitative study, I asked suburban high school students in an advanced sculpture course to examine their decision-making process through the study of metacognition and the use of reflective inquiry for a three-week period. Students began with the examination of a practicing artist’s mental process during a one-day visiting artist presentation and workshop. The study continued with sharing and recording their self-inquiry during the design and creation of sculpture. The phenomenological and written data gathered throughout this study showed that students thought deeply about the meaning of their artwork but had varying levels of awareness of the connection between their decisions and that meaning.

This action research strengthened my teaching practice by allowing me to hear directly from students. Not surprisingly, using a questioning method during individual conversations was an effective technique. Also, the motivational effect of having a visiting artist speak had a lasting effect on students and helped me to hear directly from students. Not surprisingly, using a questioning method during individual conversations was an effective technique. Also, the motivational effect of having a visiting artist speak had a lasting effect on students and helped me to hear directly from students.

In this study, I asked: How did students’ artwork and their ability to understand their own intention change with the use of reflective inquiry? In what ways will the introduction of the study of metacognition and reflective inquiry affect my practice as a classroom art teacher? I am also interested in what can be observed from the practice of verbal inquiry and from the written inquiries and reflective writings of students.

By conducting action research through a qualitative study, I asked suburban high school students in an advanced sculpture course to examine their decision-making process through the study of metacognition and the use of reflective inquiry for a three-week period. Students began with the examination of a practicing artist’s mental process during a one-day visiting artist presentation and workshop. The study continued with sharing and recording their self-inquiry during the design and creation of sculpture. The phenomenological and written data gathered throughout this study showed that students thought deeply about the meaning of their artwork but had varying levels of awareness of the connection between their decisions and that meaning.

This action research strengthened my teaching practice by allowing me to hear directly from students. Not surprisingly, using a questioning method during individual conversations was an effective technique. Also, the motivational effect of having a visiting artist speak had a lasting effect on students and helped me to hear directly from students. Not surprisingly, using a questioning method during individual conversations was an effective technique. Also, the motivational effect of having a visiting artist speak had a lasting effect on students and helped me to hear directly from students.

In this study, I asked: How did students’ artwork and their ability to understand their own intention change with the use of reflective inquiry? In what ways will the introduction of the study of metacognition and reflective inquiry affect my practice as a classroom art teacher? I am also interested in what can be observed from the practice of verbal inquiry and from the written inquiries and reflective writings of students.

By conducting action research through a qualitative study, I asked suburban high school students in an advanced sculpture course to examine their decision-making process through the study of metacognition and the use of reflective inquiry for a three-week period. Students began with the examination of a practicing artist’s mental process during a one-day visiting artist presentation and workshop. The study continued with sharing and recording their self-inquiry during the design and creation of sculpture. The phenomenological and written data gathered throughout this study showed that students thought deeply about the meaning of their artwork but had varying levels of awareness of the connection between their decisions and that meaning.

This action research strengthened my teaching practice by allowing me to hear directly from students. Not surprisingly, using a questioning method during individual conversations was an effective technique. Also, the motivational effect of having a visiting artist speak had a lasting effect on students and helped me to hear directly from students. Not surprisingly, using a questioning method during individual conversations was an effective technique. Also, the motivational effect of having a visiting artist speak had a lasting effect on students and helped me to hear directly from students.

In this study, I asked: How did students’ artwork and their ability to understand their own intention change with the use of reflective inquiry? In what ways will the introduction of the study of metacognition and reflective inquiry affect my practice as a classroom art teacher? I am also interested in what can be observed from the practice of verbal inquiry and from the written inquiries and reflective writings of students.

By conducting action research through a qualitative study, I asked suburban high school students in an advanced sculpture course to examine their decision-making process through the study of metacognition and the use of reflective inquiry for a three-week period. Students began with the examination of a practicing artist’s mental process during a one-day visiting artist presentation and workshop. The study continued with sharing and recording their self-inquiry during the design and creation of sculpture. The phenomenological and written data gathered throughout this study showed that students thought deeply about the meaning of their artwork but had varying levels of awareness of the connection between their decisions and that meaning.

This action research strengthened my teaching practice by allowing me to hear directly from students. Not surprisingly, using a questioning method during individual conversations was an effective technique. Also, the motivational effect of having a visiting artist speak had a lasting effect on students and helped me to hear directly from students. Not surprisingly, using a questioning method during individual conversations was an effective technique. Also, the motivational effect of having a visiting artist speak had a lasting effect on students and helped me to hear directly from students.
Panel 2
Curriculum, Storytelling and Autobiography: The Complexity of the Personal in Art Education

Jessica Rosenbaum
Master of Arts in Teaching

Out of the Classroom and Into the Spectacle: Exploration, Disruption, and Transformation of School Spaces Through Interventionist Art Practices

In our culture of educational reform, curriculum standardization, and pervasive test-based assessment, the school has become a place relegated to passive acceptance of prepackaged knowledge. My research used contemporary arts practices as a context for collaborative, student-driven research into the physical space and meaning of “school.” Using a site-specific pedagogy, I invited students to consider how place dictates expectations, connections between personal history and school, and ways to transform the school space. I investigated the following questions: What occurs when students explore contemporary, site-specific art practices within their school? How can a student-driven curriculum facilitate collaborative experiences of learning, research, and art making? How will my participation in a student-led project shape and affect my role as a student teacher?

My research took place over the course of seven weeks at a diverse, academically elite Chicago public high school with students in grades 10-12 enrolled in a sculpture class. I explored with students the ways in which contemporary artists research, transform, and intervene in public and private space. The students undertook two large-scale, research-based projects. In the first, they created an “alternative atlas” of the school, which consisted of personal narrative maps and documentation of their foundational spatial research. The second consisted of several intervention projects, which were designed to alter the spatial experiences of the whole school. These artworks, in addition to student reflections, discussions, and blogging, provided me with a wide range of research data.

The students’ projects functioned as a literal transformation of the school space through performative and structural intervention projects. The school became a site of inquiry and a space to be investigated, questioned, and challenged through art-making practices. Situating an art curriculum in and around the meaning of “school” allowed students to transform the place of the school into a structure and system of power to be deeply examined.

I believe that an art curriculum, rooted in contemporary, site-specific practices offers students opportunities to explore art making that extends beyond the classroom, to make connections between their art practice and their daily life through arts-based research, and to build a critical vocabulary of space. Additionally, my research illustrated the ways in which an open-ended and interpretative curriculum can shift the position of the teacher from leader to facilitator. This shift places students in a position to generate their own meaning and content from projects, giving students the authority and power to develop their own expertise and knowledge in the classroom.
Defining Safe: The Role of the Personal Narrative and Art Making in Transformative Community Education

This research evaluates how prior knowledge and life experience influence and enrich the process and outcomes of an art-based project focused on safety and community. My goal was to understand the meaning of what occurred when youth participants were encouraged to visually represent their definitions of safety and community, and to witness how personal narratives influenced the art-making process. I reflected on my role as an educator, developing new relationships with community arts organizations in the city of Chicago and the youth they serve. Through themes that emerged during the course of my fieldwork, I sought to explore how the project was critical, meaningful, and transformative to the individual, the surrounding community, and myself.

I spent the summer of 2011 working collaboratively with Beyondmedia Education to design and implement workshops at Chicago-area community arts organizations in Rogers Park, Pilsen, Humboldt Park, and the near South Side. Beyondmedia is a not-for-profit group whose mission is “to collaborate with under-served and under-represented women, youth and communities to tell their stories, connect their stories to the world around us, and organize for social justice through the creation and distribution of media arts” (www.Beyondmedia.org). I traveled to each organization to teach one- or two-day workshops to middle school- and high school-aged youth making art inspired by personal narratives.

First, participants established working definitions of the terms safety and community that could provide motivation for creating a meaningful work of art. Individual participants built a space—either real or imaginary—where they felt safe and that included symbolic imagery from their life story. The completed sculptures from all four organizations were installed at Beyondmedia’s Building Safe Communities Youth Summit in August. These safe spaces, originally made by individuals, began to speak to the desires of a community spread throughout the city and her neighborhoods.

Through this project I gained a greater understanding of teaching with diverse learning groups, respect for individual knowledge, and the impact of nontraditional spaces of education. Cultivating the personal narrative in the educational space promotes creative and critical thinkers, as well as investigative reasoning practices that build knowledge and inform the community. In this practice, it is the individual stories, needs, and wants unique to each person that inform the curriculum. This study has reacquainted me with the importance of a student/teacher relationship where personal narratives matter and making art communicates individual voices as part of transformative community education.
Food for Thought: Interdisciplinarity and Critical Thinking in Secondary Arts Education

Sarah Lesser  Master of Arts in Teaching

The purpose of my research is to explore interdisciplinarity in art education as a strategy for facilitating students’ critical thinking. In the current, highly structured school system, “subjects” are compartmentalized and often function for students in a fractured way. This limits students’ engagement with the connectivity of knowledge and issues, thereby hindering opportunities for their development of critical awareness. The arts, in particular, are considered by many to be separate and less important than other academic areas (“enrichment”). If the purpose of education is to prepare students to become critically engaged citizens, high school should be a time when critical connections are prioritized, rather than attenuated.

The arts and social studies are unique in the pedagogical space they create for critical interpretation. My research questions include: How can arts education contribute to meaningfulness in social studies education, and vice versa? What occurs when high school students conduct an interdisciplinary inquiry into their personal and public, contemporary and past histories? How might this “layering” of a variety of contexts and academic activities function to engage students in critical thinking? How can critical, meaningful, and transformative arts and social studies education be grounded in a food-related project?

My action research project took place over seven weeks at a selective-enrollment public high school outside of Chicago, with a population comprised mostly of African American and Latino students. I developed a curriculum that had students create a series of research-based artworks through which they critically explored food. Students engaged with a variety of relevant source material, including journalism, film, and contemporary art. Students’ projects were informed by artwork by Ron English, TrustoCorp, 14, Fallen Fruit, Free Soil, Tattfoo Tan, and Jef McDonough. I looked for data in many forms, collecting observations in field notes, photography, and videos of classroom interactions. Student-produced material is essential to my data, particularly artwork and written reflections.

Throughout my research, students showed me that my curriculum challenged their expectations for art education in its employment of research methods and source material. They also showed me that, when positioned as researchers of the food they eat, they were able to form connections among their everyday lives and larger social structures, and to create compelling artwork that can be used to prompt viewers to think critically. I recommend that educators embrace interdisciplinary arts curricula as a strategy to facilitate critical thinking. When implementing research-based arts curricula in the classroom, educators can explore and engage with student expectations, and illustrate the interdisciplinarity of contemporary arts methods through artist examples and process-driven lessons.

Kristen Cleaveland  Master of Arts in Art Education

Auto-photography and Writing in Art Education

For my thesis project, I created a curriculum for adolescents using photography and writing. My curriculum was based on personal narratives, cultural influences, status quo acceptance and denial, and self-awareness. I chose photography because it is the medium in which I work best, and I wanted to include writing in order for my students to delve deeper into their art-making process. I had seen how this combination had been effective in other youth media projects and was interested in the multilevel storytelling abilities it had to offer. Photography is a democratic medium to use for art making and is easily learned. I wanted to give my students the tools to become artists overnight. I had used photography as a young person to help express myself and also to capture the world around me in order to reflect and understand it better. Writing is also important to me as it can be very self-reflective and help the writer become more aware of themselves, including their beliefs and biases, and their location in the world.

The girls in my first fieldwork study were reluctant to be serious about the program, and its transformative and critical aspects weren’t actualized. I felt that a meaningful relationship was lacking, and in my eyes the data fell short. I created another program to be executed at a smaller, artist-run institution located in a nearby neighborhood. There were empty promises, and I felt that the people in charge had no respect for my research or person. The youngest girl’s mother attended each session, undoubtedly affecting participation. The children were not my target group. I had to revise my lesson plans after every session. Children five years of age have different skills and comprehension levels than older participants, which was something I hadn’t even considered going into the project but quickly learned. There was no connection to the participants or the institution. There was a lack of communication as well.

I realized that the data was more than the photographs and writing collected. I think that smaller institutions are struggling because they need more funding in order to succeed. They also need persistence, openness, democracy, and love. Otherwise, art education will continue to take the back burner on all fronts, even at those institutions whose mission is to foster art and artists, and help them thrive in this city.
Increasing numbers of youth throughout the United States are experiencing both incarceration and related gaps in their schooling. Art education can serve as a critical tool in helping to build a foundation of learning within juvenile detention centers (JDCs). In this study, I use action based research to answer the following questions: What occurs when Chicago arts-based educational programs are implemented into JDCs? In what way can the arts be meaningful in the lives of youth who are incarcerated?

I began my thesis project by volunteering with a Chicago-based art program that worked within a juvenile temporary detention center, and more specifically on a program that worked with incarcerated girls. During a two-month period I facilitated gender-specific art programming and observed the ways in which the program functioned within a JDC. Being a part of an all-women group greatly affected the way in which I thought about my research process. I explored feminist methodologies, and approached my thesis with a feminist research lens. For example, I conducted open-ended interviews with women who work with gender-specific art programming in JDCs, and these interviews allowed for an open exchange of ideas without a hierarchical structure. The findings from my data collection helped to compartmentalize the literature I explored throughout my thesis and the curriculum I am interested in developing.

Working at a temporary detention center posed many challenges to my volunteer work and research: time spent with the girls was limited, and the average stay of a youth in the temporary detention center was five to seven days, which made it difficult to establish relationships with the girls.

Despite the challenges, I began to see the art workshops as important within the juvenile detention center. Through the workshops we were able to create a space where girls could come to relax, make art, and be around women who listened to them. We did our best to create a safe and open place where girls were able to talk and share with one another freely. The art activity for the workshops often centered on crafts, and we engaged projects that surrounded themes of self, friendship, and family. These workshops were valuable because while prison restricts opportunities for youths to express emotions, in art-making sessions girls were encouraged to share emotions, which they said they valued. This study shows how the arts enhance learning opportunities, reduce recidivism rates, and contribute to skill building.
Effective education = curriculum + architecture.

The U.S. Department of Education focuses too much on what happens on the inside of the classroom. Its improvements in preparing high school students entering college and/or the workplace using standardized testing, performance-based strategies, and the banking concept are just one part of the equation. These efforts are driven by a set of alarming statistics exposing an increasing number of students graduating from high school poorly prepared for postsecondary education and/or work-readiness. These students need remediation and continued developmental education to reach their destinations after graduation.

The majority of our school facilities in the United States are outdated and ill-equipped. Where can responsive-based design contribute to creating new twenty-first-century learning environments that support twenty-first-century learning?

This thesis intends to examine twenty-first-century learning content and related learning environments through:

- A review of literature related to education, school architecture, and twenty-first-century skill development.
- Interviews with architects, administrators, teachers, parents, and students.
- Case studies of schools that illustrate unique approaches to the design of learning environments.
- Action based research engaging high school architecture students in a vocational setting.

The argument for the urgency of collaborative discourse on the effect that school architecture has on learning is the second part of the equation. This thesis identifies the need for an implemented vocational curriculum and flexible indoor and outdoor classrooms as components of a conceptual framework that could advance learning across the United States. Overall, the thesis plans to confirm the importance of a vocational approach, and moves to redefine the project-based curriculum in schools by introducing interdisciplinary approaches and strategies to advance knowledge and shared understanding of effective learning strategies and experiences.

Engaging in these discussions will lead to new ideologies that respond to what students are learning, the way they learn, and their motivation for learning. Architecture and its imaginative work on the ideal twenty-first-century school has only just begun.

Students are rarely given the opportunity to look within themselves and explore their emotions, dreams, wishes, and conflicts. My thesis explores how curriculum can engage students in self-inquiry and the process of identity formation. Through my action-based research project, I created a flexible curriculum that acknowledges how complicated identity development is for adolescents. I worked in collaboration with my students to explore how these critical and meaningful topics can be addressed within an art education classroom.

The questions that guided my research are: What occurs when students are invited to explore the way they see themselves in relation to how others see them? How can art making become a context for youth to explore the complexity of their identities? How can adolescents’ conflicts within identity formation be represented through the process of art making? How can I create exemplars of my own process of identity formation while maintaining a professional relationship with my students?

I conducted my action-based research at a large selective-enrollment public high school on the northwest side of Chicago, IL. The student population is 43.2% Latino/a and 30.5% white. For seven weeks I taught darkroom photography for students in grades nine through twelve.

The students used text and imagery to create visual journals and photographs that address the complicated process of identity formation. Each project encouraged students to be in control of deciding what they wanted to reveal or conceal. The students drew inspiration from the work of contemporary artists who integrate text within their photographs: Shirin Neshat, Dawoud Bey, Duane Michals, and Jeff Wolin. The data I collected came from reflections, visual journals, black-and-white photographs, and in-depth discussions with the students.

Through my thesis research, I learned how teaching lessons that ask students to think about identity formation can be a challenging and dynamic process. When the students and I began to explore these complex topics, I noticed that I was having difficulty navigating a complicated boundary of my own. I realized that the students and I were simultaneously discovering the challenges of revealing and concealing personal information through the process of making art. When exploring self-inquiry and identity formation, I recommend that art educators create a flexible curriculum that allows for an open exchange of ideas. I learned that, for both teachers and students, revealing parts of yourself to others is just as important as recognizing the parts of your identity that you choose to keep to yourself.

Pedagogical Perspective and the Curatorial Process

Museums are bastions of culture with a responsibility to teach the public: they employ a variety of tools to teach, and the ones that reach the largest population are wall labels. The intention of these placards is to educate the public, and my research investigates this learning tool. In my experience, traditional wall labels in museums do not effectively teach a non-arts audience about art. This thesis investigates wall labels as a learning tool and proposes new considerations for museum interpretation.

In order to evaluate the effectiveness of museums’ efforts in didactic interpretation, I implemented a case study at the National Museum of Mexican Art (NMMA). My analysis and critique is specific to the NMMA but represents the traditional ways that museums treat didactics. Performing gallery observations and time-tracking exercises at the NMMA allowed me to understand how people engage with texts within the galleries. I also orchestrated focus groups to create a dialogue on interpretation, which allowed me to hear firsthand accounts of individuals’ learning experiences.

I began this process attempting to discover a new format for the museum label. Through my research, I analyzed how museums already utilize standard formats and found them highly ineffective. The possibility of making art accessible to people is not in the label but rather the culture the label is created in.

This thesis proposes a shift in how museums present information and who is responsible for disseminating that information. The data I collected led me to four points that must be considered in the development of labels:

- Knowledge of audience—Know whom you are talking to and how to best reach them.
- Language use—Words and writing styles should be accessible to a broad audience.
- A clear objective—Know what this exhibition is trying to say and how each object supports that point.
- Attention to design—Move past the traditional block of text and consider a variety of presenting strategies.

Considering these findings, this thesis calls for curators to approach exhibition design as educators. They must assume a pedagogical perspective in order to better understand and be responsible for the viewers’ learning, and thus create a more welcoming and pleasurable museum experience.
Eluding Identification: Defamiliarizing the Space of Education and the Role of Educators

In this study I explore and analyze relationships between the physical environment, processes of collaboration, and the roles of artists and art groups that work in education. While I am interested in these as distinct topics, I am equally drawn to investigating them as a group or construct where new knowledge about unconventional pedagogies can emerge. How are the roles of educators expressed in their approaches to working with students? What possible modes of educator-student collaboration do unfamiliar spaces help to enable or disable? Several overlapping themes from scholarship on teaching and learning, art, and social theory are used to examine the collaborative work of practitioners with students and the spaces they inhabit: the unfamiliar, the third teacher, public pedagogy, the public amateur, art world collaborations, and Rancière’s concepts of equality and knowledge.

I focus on four projects and organizations that aim for non-hierarchical approaches to education and that engage with participants in non-school spaces or use school space in unconventional ways: Future Academy, an international research project; the Stockyard Institute, a Chicago collective; Hidden Curriculum, an artwork by Netherlands-based artist Annette Krauss; and the Center for Urban Pedagogy (CUP), a Brooklyn organization. I interviewed leaders and educators of these entities and used quotations from the interviews in an offset print.

The creation of printed matter and performance art, in which I physically work through ideas, are integral elements of my methodology: I operate from a position of arts-based research. The metalogue—a dialogue in which form and content echo each other in a recursive cycle—is also important to understanding the ecology of my approach.

Interview data are interpreted through questions about identification, Shklovsky’s theory of defamiliarization, and new understandings of the body. These lead to a discussion of both physical space and educators’ titles as points of unfamiliarity. Spaces and titles, when enigmatic or constantly changing, help to elude clear identification, thus allowing for greater flexibility and continual transformation.

Based on my attempt to navigate the complex roles of artists and art groups who explore unconventional methods and spaces for education, I propose avoiding definitive titles for educators. Relocating through a variety of settings is another tactic against clear identification. Floating and flexible titles and physical spaces evince an invitation and opening to redefine and reinvent education.

Museums and Social Media: Extending the Learning Experience Outside of the Institutional Walls

From smartphones to iPads, how we communicate in the twenty-first century is constantly evolving and changing the way we live our lives, with social media emerging as a key mode of communication. Public institutions are quickly adapting and starting to communicate to their visitors via social media sites like Facebook, Twitter, and blogs. Can museums, specifically children’s museums, use social media to create community, creativity, and communication with their audience outside of the institutional walls? Can learning and participation be extended outside of the museum, and if so how?

All of my information was gathered online. For three months I collected data from 119 participants representing 112 different museums. Most of the museums were from the United States and the U.S. territory of Puerto Rico. Other countries represented are Australia, Canada, Costa Rica, Hungary, Romania, Turkey, and the United Kingdom. The majority of participants came from children’s museums. Other museums represented were science, history, and art museums.

While studying the ways social media can foster communication, it occurred to me that I could test out social media by using it as my main mode of gathering data. I made a simple online survey and used social media websites and tools like LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, and listservs to contact workers from museums. Participants started to roll in. I created a website, www.museumsocial.com, to communicate with the participants. The website included a blog detailing my thesis progress as well as corresponding research, contact information, and links to the survey and Facebook page.

When reviewing my data, the consensus gathered by my participants is that social media is still new in many ways and ever changing. Museums want to use social media sites to their fullest potential but are wary of navigating the issues that come with them. So, most museums progress toward participatory elements of social media but do so slowly and warily.

Museums can use social media sites to create a participatory community, where creativity, learning, and communication can be fostered between the museum and the audience. It is not easy, and it will require museums to take risks. If willing to put in the work and weigh the risks with the rewards, museums can create successful social-media-based extensions of themselves.
Museum Partnerships with Children’s Hospitals: 
Bringing the Enrichment of Art to Pediatric Hospitals

In looking into educational programming offered by museums, I question ways in which these invaluable organizations can become further embedded within their immediate communities. I propose for museums to evaluate their community investment and suggest that they expand their avenues of engagement, specifically through partnerships with children’s hospitals. Through investigation, I explore how this type of partnership can be beneficial and meaningful for each organization as well as contribute to the well-being of pediatric patients and their families. For tangible data validating the importance of the arts in this environment, my research gathers data on existent arts initiatives within the health care sector.

Through fieldwork research, from June 2011 through February 2012, I documented a case study in-progress partnership between a Midwestern encyclopedic museum and a Midwestern children’s hospital. This particular partnership was under the umbrella of the hospital’s larger Creative Arts Program, which involved partnerships with twenty-one local cultural organizations that collaborated with the hospital on the interior design of its new facility, opening in May 2012.

Over the summer of 2011, I interned with the Midwestern encyclopedic museum, where I assisted the museum’s liaison with its hospital partnership. I instigated interviews with museum staff and hospital personnel directly working within the Creative Arts Program. I also interviewed an artist, art educator, and architect already contributing to the field of arts in health care.

My findings elaborate on the inherent values of this type of partnership and the benefits for both the cultural and health care organizations. For the museum, this partnership provided the opportunity to further the accessibility of its collection and make it more visible within the community. The hospital’s benefit comes from the incorporation of arts programming in its facility for patients and families, as the arts provide a healthy distraction and aid in visitors’ emotional well-being.

This research lays the foundation for the advancement of a body of work advocating for museum partnerships with hospitals. It documents a successful museum partnership with a children’s hospital and therefore sets an example for an emergent type of museum programming. I aim to encourage other museums to further contribute to their communities by adopting similar partnership models that utilize their cultural resources and collections to bring enrichment to pediatric patients and families, and, ultimately, encourage inspiration, creativity, and hope through the arts.
Recasting “At Risk”: Reinterpreting Adolescent Resistance as an Informative Act of Critical Engagement

In this qualitative study I consider the constructive and supportive role that creativity can play in adolescent development, with a specific focus on youth who have been labeled “at risk.” “At risk” is an ambiguous, often racially coded term that is applied to adolescents who are perceived as resistant to academic and/or societal norms. I question the negative implications of the term “at risk” by seeking to recast risk taking as a fundamental aspect of adolescent creativity, imagination, and identity development. My research questions are: What challenges, tensions, and successes arise for the art educator who invites youth to explore their social and emotional experiences through visual, written, and performative storytelling? How can the art educator create curriculum that is relevant to the individual experiences that youths bring with them into the learning environment? How can art education support risk taking for students who are typically labeled “at risk”?

My fieldwork took place in a neighborhood community art center on Chicago’s west side, where I was assigned to co-teach a nine-week after-school arts program. Open and free for all sixth-, seventh-, and eighth-grade students living in the surrounding neighborhoods, the program functioned similarly to a drop-in center for youth. The youth who participated in my study would fit the stereotypical definition of “at risk.”

In order to better respond to issues pertinent to the youth in attendance on any given day, I quickly learned to adopt spontaneous and flexible approaches to each day’s lesson, weaving a wide range of mediums and formats into the broader context of personal narrative. From performance-based improvisation to collaborative cooking projects, these lessons placed concentrated interest on creative process. My data included: class discussions, observations recorded in field notes, subjective interpretations of student engagement, and informal conversations with students and co-teachers. Within this data I looked for areas where student resistance and critical engagement functioned as meaning-making tools, informing perceptions of “self” in the world.

During my field experience, I encountered resistance from students on a daily basis. By locating myself within my study as both a teacher and a student, I aimed to recognize this resistance as an aspect of critical engagement. I hope that my research will help other art educators to recognize resistance and boundary pushing as a critical part of the creative exploration that is central to adolescent development. By maintaining space within the learning environment for youth to participate in constructivistic risk taking, art educators can challenge youth to actively engage in learning in ways that are relevant to their lives.
Dialogues with Visual Art Educators on Social-Emotional Learning: Advocating for Art Education in a Period of Increased School Standardization

Educators struggle with the affects of school standardization, specifically the high-stakes testing requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act. Standardized testing often pushes out art classes in favor of subjects that are the focus of high-stakes assessment. This model of education reform relies solely on quantitative measurement, promotes positivist theories of education, and has been shown by the research to have utterly failed to improve the state of public education. Through my own research I seek to better understand the perspectives of teachers regarding the significance of social-emotional learning in art education, and how standardization is impacting teaching and learning. Prior research shows that students work on the social-emotional skills of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making through visual art. Simultaneously increasing pressures of standardization have upset the constructivist pedagogy that is often present in art education.

While teaching in public schools I observed how the environment of a constructivist art curriculum fostered the social-emotional growth of adolescent students. I longed for interaction with other teachers to discover if my experiences were isolated or common. I witnessed the increasing pressures of standardization upsetting the constructivist atmosphere prevalent in art education. I noticed educators pressured by the provisions of standardization and wondered if other communities were experiencing similar challenges.

Through phenomenological interviews with three art educators in Chicago Public Schools, this research explores the lived experiences of teachers working in tension between NCLB and art education in public schools. The main interview questions are: How has NCLB and standardized testing affected the art classroom and curriculum? What benefits do art educators observe in the practice of making art? In what ways do art educators describe how students relate to others in socially skilled, respectful, and constructive ways? How do art educators advocate for their programs?

Each interview was audio-recorded, transcribed, and coded for commonalities and differences. Participating educators expressed thorough disapproval for the mandates of standardization. Interviewees agreed that social-emotional learning occurs in art education, but disagreed on how this can be observed and the intentionality. Examples of school- and community-level advocacy methods for art education were explored. Recommendations for more overt recognition and application of social-emotional learning are suggested. Alternative and comprehensive structures of assessment are encouraged, and emergent examples of testing alternatives explored. This research advocates for the relevance, importance, and right for students to access art education in public schools.
Program Schedule

Thursday, May 10, 2012

12:00-12:15  Welcome

12:15-1:30  Extending the Conversation: Collaboration, Intervention and Meaning Making
Panel Chairs: Sarah Lesser and Paulina Camacho
Kelsey Nelson
Li Christoffersen
Jessica Rosenbaum
Christine Bespalec-Davis
Kristen Cleaveland

1:30–1:45  Break

1:45-3:00  EXTRAordinary: Identity, Transformation and Community
Panel Chair: Kelsey Nelson
Lindsay Abramo
Julianne Medel
Mary Claire Angle
Heather Smith
Bailey Jacobson

3:00-3:15  Closing Remarks

Comment with  #artedsymp
Adding  #artedsymp  to your tweets allows others to follow the symposium discussion and participate in real-time.
Thank You

To the Department of Art Education
Faculty and Staff:

Faculty
Joy L. Bivins
Jim Elniski
Adam Greteman
Lourdes Guerrero
Jerry Hausman
Andrés Hernandez
Drea Howenstein
Rebecca Keller
Faheem Majid
Nicole Marroquin
Anne Elizabeth Moore
Angela Paterakis
Patricia Pelletier
Sharon Pelletier
John Ploof
Therese Quinn
Karyn Sandlos
Jerry Stefl
Ray Yang

Staff
Isak Applin
Tenesha Edwards
Elizabeth Morrison

Thanks Also To
SAIC Office of the Deans and Division Chairs
Jean de St. Aubin
Executive Director, Gene Siskel Film Center
The 2012 Graduation Symposium Student Organizing Committee:
Lindsay Abramo
Paulina Camacho
Kris Hechevarria
Sarah Lesser
Kelsey Nelson
Rayshawn Nowlin
Jessica Rosenbaum
Carlos Ruiz

Brochure Design: Mallory Qualls
Cover Photo: Rayshawn Nowlin

The cover photo was taken in Ester Pullman’s Multicultural Studies class at Hamilton Elementary. The project began as a way to keep tables clean during a project with pre-kindergarten students involving markers, but evolved into a collaborative freestyle mural involving every student in the school.

Program Schedule

Wednesday, May 9, 2012

10:00-10:15 Introductions
10:15-11:30 New Prescriptions: Where Art Education can Go From Here:
Panel Chair: Kelsey Nelson
Amber Yared
Kris Hechevarria
Carlos Ruiz
Mary Warbelow
Sarah Lesser
11:30-12:30 Curriculum, Storytelling and Autobiography: The Complexity of the Personal in Art Education
Panel Chairs: Kris Hechevarria and Lindsay Abramo
Nate Dorotiak
Rayshawn Nowlin
Gina Fulgieri
Lauren Goldstein
12:30–1:30 LUNCH (Wishbone!)
1:30-2:30 When Art Talks Back: Youth As Culture Jammers
Panel Chairs: Rayshawn Nowlin and Jessica Rosenbaum
Devan Picard
Catherine Brody
Jill Goldenstein
Vivian Alvarez
2:30-3:30 You Are Here: Place, Space and Environment
Panel Chair: Carlos Ruiz
Paulina Camacho
Veronica Stein
Abigail Rudner
Alana Wynes
3:00–3:45 Closing Remarks
Department of Art Education

George Roeder Master’s Symposium

May 9–10, 2012
Day One: 10:00 AM-4:00 PM
Day Two: 12:00 PM-4:00 PM
Gene Siskel Film Center
164 North State Street

Search #artedsymp