

Educating the Young Child

Advances in Theory and Research, Implications for Practice

Marilyn J. Narey *Editor*

Multimodal Perspectives of Language, Literacy, and Learning in Early Childhood

The Creative and Critical "Art" of Making
Meaning



Springer

Educating the Young Child

Advances in Theory and Research, Implications
for Practice

Volume 12

Series Editors

Dr. Mary Renck Jalongo, Emerita, Indiana University of Pennsylvania

Dr. Joan P. Isenberg, Emerita, George Mason University

Dr. Kin Wai Michael Siu, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University

Editorial Board

Dr. Wanda Boyer, University of Victoria, Victoria, BC, Canada

Dr. Natalie K. Conrad Barnyak, University of Pittsburgh, Johnstown, PA, USA

Dr. Marjory Ebbeck, University of South Australia, Magill, Australia

Dr. Jane D. Lanigan, Washington State University, Vancouver, WA, Canada

Dr. Huey-Ling Lin, Alabama State University, Montgomery, AL, USA

Dr. Marilyn J. Narey, Narey Educational Consulting, LLC, Pittsburgh, PA, USA

Dr. Jyotsna Pattnaik, University of California at Long Beach, Huntington Beach,
CA, USA

Dr. D. Ray Reutzell, Utah State University, Logan, UT, USA

Dr. Louise Swiniarski, Emerita, Salem State University, Salem, MA, USA

Dr. Barbara Wasik, Temple University, Philadelphia, PA, USA

This academic and scholarly book series will focus on the education and development of young children from infancy through eight years of age. The series will provide a synthesis of current theory and research on trends, issues, controversies, and challenges in the early childhood field and examine implications for practice. One hallmark of the series will be comprehensive reviews of research on a variety of topics with particular relevance for early childhood educators worldwide. The mission of the series is to enrich and enlarge early childhood educators' knowledge, enhance their professional development, and reassert the importance of early childhood education to the international community. The audience for the series includes college students, teachers of young children, college and university faculty, and professionals from fields other than education who are unified by their commitment to the care and education of young children. In many ways, the proposed series is an outgrowth of the success of *Early Childhood Education Journal* which has grown from a quarterly magazine to a respected and international professional journal that is published six times a year.

Book proposals for the series can be submitted to Astrid Noordermeer at Astrid.Noordermeer@springer.com

More information about this series at <http://www.springer.com/series/7205>

Marilyn J. Narey

Editor

Multimodal Perspectives of Language, Literacy, and Learning in Early Childhood

The Creative and Critical “Art”
of Making Meaning

 Springer

Editor

Marilyn J. Narey
Narey Educational Consulting, LLC
Pittsburgh, PA, USA
makemeaning@nareyed.com

Educating the Young Child

ISBN 978-3-319-44295-2

ISBN 978-3-319-44297-6 (eBook)

DOI 10.1007/978-3-319-44297-6

Library of Congress Control Number: 2016957891

© Springer International Publishing AG 2017

Chapter 3 was created within the capacity of an US government employment. US copyright protection does not apply.

This work is subject to copyright. All rights are reserved by the Publisher, whether the whole or part of the material is concerned, specifically the rights of translation, reprinting, reuse of illustrations, recitation, broadcasting, reproduction on microfilms or in any other physical way, and transmission or information storage and retrieval, electronic adaptation, computer software, or by similar or dissimilar methodology now known or hereafter developed.

The use of general descriptive names, registered names, trademarks, service marks, etc. in this publication does not imply, even in the absence of a specific statement, that such names are exempt from the relevant protective laws and regulations and therefore free for general use.

The publisher, the authors and the editors are safe to assume that the advice and information in this book are believed to be true and accurate at the date of publication. Neither the publisher nor the authors or the editors give a warranty, express or implied, with respect to the material contained herein or for any errors or omissions that may have been made.

Printed on acid-free paper

This Springer imprint is published by Springer Nature

The registered company is Springer International Publishing AG

The registered company address is: Gewerbestrasse 11, 6330 Cham, Switzerland

Foreword

When it comes to learning, there is no “one size fits all.” While this assertion may seem to be common sense, the daily reality of children’s lives in schools frequently stands in stark contrast to this basic precept. In recent years, the divide between play-based approaches and didactic approaches to instruction during early childhood has, if anything, grown wider and deeper. The Alliance for Childhood (2009) found that, in US kindergartens, the time allocated to direct instruction in literacy with print and mathematics was six times the amount of time allocated for child-initiated and child-directed activity. The early childhood curriculum has narrowed considerably in the wake of the standards movement. To illustrate, an observational study of 450 pre-K through second grade students found that children spent approximately 40% of their school day listening and watching and a little over 27% of their time completing written assignments. Direct instruction by teachers was observed 55.2% of the time, and play-based learning activity was observed less than 1% of the total classroom day (Alford, Rollins, Padron & Waxman, 2015).

As a result, contemporary teachers are caught in a philosophy-reality conflict (Hatch & Freeman, 1988); in other words, there frequently is a discrepancy between educators’ beliefs about optimal learning conditions during early childhood and what young learners are expected to do (Cross & Conn-Powers, 2014). This dichotomy results in considerable consternation because, if teachers unquestioningly do as they are told, they fail to reach and teach diverse groups of young children. On the other hand, if teachers openly resist the mounting pressures to teach to the test, they risk the disapproval of administrators and policymakers. When educators assert a more child-centered philosophy, those in power frequently cite “evidence-based practice” as their claim to authority. These claims, however, are seldom founded on a thorough understanding of a complex body of research. The very fact that some stakeholders refer to evidence-based practice—as if there were only one, right pedagogy—underscores the flaws in this argument. As this book will so cogently argue, there are many paths to learning. Multimodal experiences, particularly those focused upon the development of children’s capacities to produce and interpret visual texts, are critical to twenty-first-century learning. Expert teachers

draw upon multiple modes—rather than blindly adhere to a single approach—because this is the way to ensure that all children experience success as learners.

As the authors of this volume amply demonstrate, there is a way to avoid the rocky shoals of polarization and find a place where teachers can deftly navigate the needs of young learners and, at the same time rely on a complex body of research. Stated plainly, it is possible to respect young children’s ways of knowing while meeting academic standards. Indeed, contemporary early childhood education reconciles theory, research, and practice. It can be defined as “a decision-making process that integrates the best available research evidence with family and professional wisdom and values” (Buisse, Wesley, Snyder, & Winton, 2006, p. 3).

The problem with unrelenting teacher-directed, overly didactic methods focused upon verbocentric views of language, literacy, and learning is that they gloss over individual differences in learners and undermine learner engagement in the process. If we define engagement as “the amount of time children spend interacting with adults, peers, and materials in a developmentally and contextually appropriate manner” (McWilliam & Casey, 2008, p. 3), then it is easy to understand why teachers cannot afford to sacrifice it. There is a large, consistent body of evidence to suggest that active engagement in learning yields more positive learner outcomes, including improved behavior, better social interactions, and higher student achievement (Brown & Mowry 2015; Kelly & Turner 2009; McWilliam & Casey 2008). Indeed, much of the power of multimodal approaches has to do with their capacity to more fully engage diverse groups of young learners. Respecting young learners exerts a positive effect on the three components of learner engagement, namely, (1) interest, (2) concentration, and (3) enjoyment (Shernoff, 2013). When children are regarded as meaning makers, they “see and feel the benefit of their teachers listening to them, collaborating with them,” and this “has a positive impact on their engagement, motivation, and personal development” (Quinn & Owen, 2014, p. 19).

In 2009, when the first book on multimodal perspectives of language, literacy, and learning was published for the *Educating the Young Child* series, it was enthusiastically received by early childhood educators. Now, based on the success of that edited volume, the editor has worked with a distinguished group of educators from throughout the world to revisit the timely and important topic of young children as meaning makers. Multimodal approaches hold the greatest promise for reconciling the dichotomies that are divisive in the field of early childhood education: teacher directed vs. child directed, play based vs. standards based, and covering the curriculum vs. reaching and teaching all children. Meeting the needs of diverse groups of young learners calls upon early childhood educators worldwide to base decisions not on sound bites from empirical research or unexamined past practices but on a best evidence synthesis of current theory, research, and practice. The latter is what this book is all about.

References

- Alford, B. L., Rollins, K. B., Padrón, Y. N., & Waxman, H. C. (2015). Using systematic classroom observation to explore student engagement as a function of teachers' developmentally appropriate instructional practices (DAIP) in ethnically diverse pre-kindergarten through second-grade classrooms. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 1–13. doi:[10.1007/s10643-015-0748-8](https://doi.org/10.1007/s10643-015-0748-8).
- Alliance for Childhood (2009). *Crisis in the kindergarten: Why children need to play in school*. College Park, MD: Author.
- Brown, C. P., & Mowry, B. (2015). Close early learning gaps with rigorous DAP. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 96(7), 53–57. doi:[10.1177/0031721715579041](https://doi.org/10.1177/0031721715579041).
- Buysse, V., Wesley, P., Snyder, P., & Winton, P. (2006). Evidence-based practice: What does it really mean for the early childhood field? *Young Exceptional Children*, 9(2), 2–11. doi:[10.1177/109625060600900401](https://doi.org/10.1177/109625060600900401).
- Cross, A. F., & Conn-Powers, M. (2014). Making the intentional decision to use an effective curriculum to promote children's learning. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 42(6), 361–366.
- Hatch, J. A., & Freeman, E. B. (1988). Kindergarten philosophies and practices: Perspectives of teachers, principals, and supervisors. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 3(2), 151–166. [http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/0885-2006\(88\)90019-1](http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/0885-2006(88)90019-1).
- Kelly, S., & Turner, J. (2009). Rethinking the effects of classroom activity structure on the engagement of low-achieving students. *Teachers College Record*, 111(7), 1665–1692.
- McWilliam, R. A., & Casey, Ann M. (2008). *Engagement of every child in the preschool classroom*. Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes.
- Quinn, S., & Owen, S. (2014). Freedom to grow: Children's perspectives of student voice. *Childhood Education*, 90(3), 192–201. doi:[10.1080/00094056.2014.910367](https://doi.org/10.1080/00094056.2014.910367).
- Sherhoff, D. J. (2013). *Optimal learning environments to promote student engagement*. New York: Springer.

Preface

In 2009, *Making Meaning: Constructing Multimodal Perspectives of Language, Literacy, and Learning Through Arts-Based Early Childhood Education* was published as the second title in the scholarly series, *Educating the Young Child*. The explicit focus upon multimodal language, literacy, and learning put forth in that original edition set it apart from other books on early childhood literacy and/or arts, and the book's unique "multimodal" frame continues to draw wide interest across the globe. The book's enduring appeal and persistent relevance to a broad international readership prompted the development of this second edition with a new title that underscores the emphasis on multimodal understandings of children's meaning-making through visual textual forms.

New Voices Expand Second Edition

Expanding the innovative lens of multimodal meaning-making that distinguished the 2009 text, this second edition, entitled *Multimodal Perspectives of Language, Literacy, and Learning in Early Childhood: The Creative and Critical "Art" of Making Meaning*, brings together additional voices from around the globe. New chapters by respected authors from Slovenia, Finland, Iceland, New Zealand, Canada, Australia, and the United States, along with updated versions of several foundational chapters from the original volume, offer readers important insights into the role of visual textual forms in developing multimodal constructs of language, literacy, and learning. As in the first edition, this text offers a provocative sampling of perspectives constructed by talented authors whose fields of expertise include literacy, semiotics, the arts and arts education, child development, museum education, technology, psychology, creativity, and early childhood education. Informed by their years of professional experience as teachers, teacher educators, artists, administrators, and researchers, the authors bring authentic understandings of the children, adults, and contexts about which they write.

The new chapters were purposefully selected to build upon the ideas and contextual perspectives that were advanced in the first edition. From exploring how a young child from China engages in art making to make meaning of his immigrant experience in Australia to examining how teachers explicitly teach the process of multimodal meaning-making through dialogue and the analysis of YouTube videos and from engaging young children as coresearchers with their mother to providing insights into working with children in crisis, the new contributors to the second edition extend the range of contexts and topics that enriched the original volume. As readers seek to provide educational quality for all young children in our increasingly complex world, *Multimodal Perspectives of Language, Literacy, and Learning in Early Childhood: The Creative and Critical “Art” of Making Meaning* presents the opportunity to examine the wide range of thought-provoking ideas that these distinguished authors have explored in a variety of early childhood contexts.

Purpose of the Book

As articulated in the first edition, the purpose of this volume is threefold: (1) to provoke readers to examine their current understandings of language, literacy, and learning through a multimodal lens; (2) to provide a starting point for constructing broader, multimodal views of what it might mean to “make meaning”; and (3) to underscore the production and interpretation of visual texts as meaning-making processes that are especially critical to early childhood education in a twenty-first-century global society.

Primary Audience

The focus of this book (from its title to the selection of issues examined in its chapters) is purposefully approached in a manner that will appeal to a broad and diverse audience. University-based educators will find this scholarly edition a valuable text for graduate coursework and an excellent supplement for advanced undergraduate courses. Like the first edition, this second edition is an important resource for students in a variety of teacher education programs, including early childhood, language/literacy, art, and museum education. Further, professional development providers, administrators, and professional learning networks (PLNs) will discover that *Multimodal Perspectives of Language, Literacy, and Learning in Early Childhood: The Creative and Critical “Art” of Making Meaning* is a rich volume for in-service professional study. Additionally, the new edition offers researchers and scholars a diverse sampling of studies from across the globe and provides early childhood advocates and policymakers with critical insights into early childhood language, literacy, and learning.

Unique Multimodal Perspective

Unlike some other texts that address art or literacy learning in early childhood, *Multimodal Perspectives of Language, Literacy, and Learning in Early Childhood: The Creative and Critical “Art” of Making Meaning* is unique in that the volume’s multimodal lens:

- Challenges the early childhood education community to reexamine commonly-held beliefs about children’s visual texts (“art”) and traditional definitions of “literacy”
- Demonstrates how multimodal meaning-making processes are critical to children’s development, twenty-first-century education, and issues of social justice
- Presents a rich sampling of international perspectives by distinguished authors from varied disciplines who work in early childhood contexts across the globe
- Features authentic examples of research-based practices with toddlers and preschool- and elementary school-aged children in diverse environments
- Underscores the integral role of educators, parents, and policymakers in supporting young children’s multimodal meaning-making processes

Further, the concept of multimodal “meaning-making” presented in this book is not limited to the processes and products of children, but also encompasses ways adults across multiple fields of education work to make meaning, for example, co-constructing and evaluating curriculum, theorizing and developing research methodologies for studying children’s work, investigating contextual influences, or designing preservice teacher development.

Organization of Book

This second edition begins with a new foreword by **Mary Renck Jalongo**, a distinguished scholar in early childhood education, the editor in chief of the *Early Childhood Education Journal*, and a co-editor of Springer International’s book series, *Educating the Young Child: Advances in Theory and Research, Implications for Practice*. Following the organizational structure of the original volume, the body of this new edition is arranged into three main parts: *Beyond Words, Contexts and Layered Texts*, and *Visions*. Extending the original format of the work, editor, **Marilyn J. Narey**, bookends these three parts with her new introductory chapter, “The Creative ‘Art’ of Making Meaning,” and adds a concluding chapter, “Multimodal Visions: Bringing ‘Sense’ to Our 21st Century Texts.” Dr. Narey’s introduction offers a starting point for constructing multimodal perspectives of language, literacy, and learning, as she lays out the foundational understandings of the relevant constructs: meaning-making, multimodality, and creativity. Citing the disconnect between the proliferation of visual textual forms encountered within our twenty-first-century culture and the verbocentric orientation of many adults who

influence young children's learning, she supports the book's designated focus on visual textual forms (drawing, 3D models, photographs, sculpture, digital images). Her authentic examples of multimodal adult-child interactions during early phases of a toddler's drawing development offer informative insights for both early childhood professionals and parents and give practical form to the discussions of theory and research. In her concluding chapter Chap. 16, Dr. Narey draws attention to the challenges in undertaking a work that advocates for a multimodal view of teaching and learning, including the education community's seeming confusion surrounding the construct of multimodality, as well as the modal limitations of a traditional book format. She then underscores how the book's authors meet these challenges with their cogent descriptions and their thoughtfully selected images. Dr. Narey goes on to integrate these contributing authors' diverse and compelling accounts of children's experiences with visual texts into a synthesis of ideas that inspire further development of individual and collective multimodal visions. These new introductory and concluding pieces by the editor serve to adeptly frame the informative and insightful chapters that make up the body of the book in Parts One through Three: *Beyond Words, Contexts and Layered Texts, and Visions*.

Part One: Beyond Words

The chapters included in *Part One: Beyond Words* engage the reader in considering the diverse functions of children's multimodal meaning-making. Within these individual works, authors examine how children work to understand emerging problems encountered in their world, including explorations of identity, society, and the physical world. **Margaret Brooks'** Chap. 2, "Drawing to Learn" (reprinted from the first edition), demonstrates how multimodal approaches to learning promote children's higher mental functions as they explore common objects and pursue ideas generated through multimodal processes. Through her analysis of her 5-year-old students' evolving drawings of flashlights and light trap constructions, Dr. Brooks provides insights into how children's simple spontaneous concepts of the physical world give way to more complex and sophisticated understandings as they seek to make meaning through individual and collaborative multimodal investigations. Chapter 3 brings the distinguished voice and expertise of **James Haywood Rolling, Jr.**, to the scholarly discussion of multimodal meaning-making. Bridging children's outer and inner worlds, Dr. Rolling recounts his experiences as a teacher working to encourage young children's meaning-making in a New York City elementary school art studio. In his chapter, "Sacred Structures: Assembling Meaning, Constructing Self," Dr. Rolling demonstrates the critical role of a pedagogy of "structures supplanting structures," through poignant stories that reveal children's explorations of their own changing identities within shifting and evolving notions of the societies to which they belong and help to create. Chapter 4 is an updated version of "Creating a Critical Multiliteracies Curriculum: Repositioning Art in the Early Childhood Classroom" by **Linda K. Crafton, Penny Silvers, and Mary Brennan**. This powerful example of a multimodal, arts-based approach to teaching

critical literacy in a first grade classroom focuses upon a carefully constructed community of practice built on social justice and identity development. In Chap. 5, **Kristine Sunday** underscores the relational process of children's drawing. Dr. Sunday argues for the interconnectedness of modalities, underscoring that one modality cannot be addressed without the other. Through examples of children in kindergarten through grade three working in the collaborative space of a Saturday art program on a university campus, she demonstrates how the social practices of making meaning are highlighted and extended.

Part Two: Contexts and Layered Texts

Part Two: Contexts and Layered Texts includes chapters focused upon the authors' explorations into the diverse and often complex environments that influence children's multimodal meaning-making. This second part of the book begins with Chap. 6, in which **Susanna Kinnunen** and **Johanna Einarsdóttir** offer intimate insights into working with young children in the home, as the mother, a researcher, engages her young daughters as coresearchers of their drawings of their daily lives. Through rich examples drawn from Dr. Kinnunen's research diary, video, and other data, the authors share the evolving multimodal stories that surface in their ongoing research. In Chap. 7, "Young Children's Drawing and Storytelling: Multimodal Transformations that Help to Mediate Complex Sociocultural Worlds," **Rosemary Richards** presents her research of how a young boy from China engages in art making to make meaning of his immigrant experience in Australia. Dr. Richards contrasts the child's experiences at school and at home to offer insights into how children's visual texts can facilitate meaning-making in ways that support children's social identity. Next, an intergenerational art class for elders and young children in Canada provides the context for **Rachel Heydon's** and **Susan O'Neill's** presentation of their ongoing research in Chap. 8. In this work, "Children, Elders, and Multimodal Curricula: Semiotic Possibilities and the Imperative of Relationship," coauthors Heydon and O'Neill offer discussion surrounding the need to bring elders and preschool-aged children together and to provide opportunities for using communication technology as a means of expanding literacy options for both groups. In Chap. 9, **Brigita Strnad** focuses on the art museum as the context for multimodal meaning-making. Descriptions of educational activities at Maribor Art Gallery in Slovenia offer valuable understandings of how adults and children interact with the visual texts of contemporary artists. As senior curator and head of the museum's education department, she brings an exciting perspective that is relevant to parents and early childhood professionals, alike. In Chap. 10, "Children in Crisis: Transforming Fear into Hope Through Multimodal Literacy," **Donalyn Heise** focuses upon the critical subject of creating supportive learning contexts for children who are experiencing homelessness. Dr. Heise offers examples from years of research into a variety of settings where she worked with learners who were homeless to illustrate how multimodal meaning contributes to resilience and transformation of perspectives.

Part Three: Visions

In *Part Three: Visions*, the authors look to the future as they investigate strategies to develop early childhood teachers' understandings of how children's many languages, literacies, and learning may be developed through the arts. First, in Chap. 11, **Kimberly M. Sheridan** presents her updated chapter featuring the Studio Thinking Framework derived from research at Harvard University's Project Zero. Dr. Sheridan explains how eight studio habits of mind, typically developed in intensive high school art classes, can also be encouraged in the early childhood classroom. She describes how applying a Studio Thinking Framework to common activities, such as block building or drawing, contributes to young children's meaning-making as children become more observant, engaged, reflective on their work, and willing to explore and express ideas. In this updated chapter, Dr. Sheridan shares an example from her recent research in the MAKESHOP space at the Children's Museum of Pittsburgh to illustrate how the studio approach works in early childhood contexts. In Chap. 12, **Christina Davidson, Susan J. Danby, and Karen Thorpe** explore practices necessary for educators to support children's multimodal meaning-making during classroom use of digital technologies. In their chapter, "'Uh oh'—Multimodal Meaning Making During Viewing of YouTube Videos in Preschool," the authors demonstrate their use of conversation analysis to investigate the multimodal resources employed by the children and their teacher to accomplish individual and shared understandings of video events and extended opportunities for children's learning. Next, in their updated chapter from the first edition, **Kathy Danko-McGhee** and **Ruslan Slutsky** draw attention to the importance of providing stimulating classroom environments that support and promote children's meaning-making. They implement, examine, and compare two approaches to determine the greatest impact on the preservice teachers' abilities to plan environments and discuss the results. Chapter 14 offers insight into the crucial role of teacher educators as **Kelli Jo Kerry-Moran** reflects upon her 10-year journey striving to incorporate multimodal literacy into the teacher education classroom. Dr. Kerry-Moran's ongoing quest to understand multiliteracies and bring meaning-making into preservice education highlights challenges in changing prevailing teaching approaches and altering rigid curriculum paradigms. In Chap. 15, "'Struggling Learner'...or Struggling Teacher?," **Marilyn J. Narey** critiques current early childhood teacher preparation as she examines common "theories in use" regarding children's visual texts ("art") and poses the question: *does teacher education adequately prepare early childhood professionals with the substantive arts learning needed to support young children in multimodal language, literacy, and learning?* Flipping the problem frame to position the adult as "struggling," rather than the child, she suggests structures for critical review of early childhood teacher education programs and practices.

Second Edition Continues to Encourage Multimodal Perspectives of Meaning Making

From the introduction, through these chapters in *Beyond Words, Contexts and Layered Texts*, and *Visions*, to the final concluding chapter, this second edition work, *Multimodal Perspectives of Language, Literacy, and Learning in Early Childhood: The Creative and Critical “Art” of Making Meaning*, evolves to reveal nuances of theory, research, and practice. As we continue forward in the new millennium, these diverse chapters, individually and collectively, offer starting points for each of us in our global early childhood education community to construct, and reconstruct, our multimodal perspectives of language, literacy, and learning as we make meaning with our young children and with each other.

Pittsburgh, PA, USA

Marilyn J. Narey

Contents

1	The Creative “Art” of Making Meaning.....	1
	Marilyn J. Narey	
Part I Beyond Words		
2	Drawing to Learn.....	25
	Margaret L. Brooks	
3	Sacred Structures: Assembling Meaning, Constructing Self.....	45
	James Haywood Rolling Jr.	
4	Creating a Critical Multiliteracies Curriculum: Repositioning Art in the Early Childhood Classroom.....	67
	Linda K. Crafton, Penny Silvers, and Mary Brennan	
5	Drawing as a Relational Event: Making Meaning Through Talk, Collaboration, and Image Production.....	87
	Kristine E. Sunday	
Part II Contexts and Layered Texts		
6	“Look Mother! Mother Look!”: Young Children Exploring Life with Their Mother.....	109
	Susanna Kinnunen and Johanna Einarsdóttir	
7	Young Children’s Drawings and Storytelling: Multimodal Transformations That Help to Mediate Complex Sociocultural Worlds.....	127
	Rosemary D. Richards	
8	Children, Elders, and Multimodal Arts Curricula: Semiotic Possibilities and the Imperative of Relationship.....	149
	Rachel Heydon and Susan O’Neill	

9 Children’s Engagement with Contemporary Art in the Museum Context 169
 Brigita Strnad

10 Children in Crisis: Transforming Fear into Hope Through Multimodal Literacy 191
 Donalyn Heise

Part III Visions

11 Studio Thinking in Early Childhood 213
 Kimberly M. Sheridan

12 “Uh Oh”: Multimodal Meaning Making During Viewing of YouTube Videos in Preschool 233
 Christina Davidson, Susan J. Danby, and Karen Thorpe

13 Empowering Preservice Teachers to Design a Classroom Environment That Serves as a Third Teacher 257
 Katherina Danko-McGhee and Ruslan Slutsky

14 Stretching Toward Multimodality: The Evolution and Development of a Teacher Educator 275
 Kelli Jo Kerry-Moran

15 “Struggling Learner”...or Struggling Teacher?: Questions Surrounding Teacher Development for Multimodal Language, Literacy, and Learning 291
 Marilyn J. Narey

Part IV Conclusion

16 Multimodal Visions: Bringing “Sense” to Our Twenty-First Century Texts 317
 Marilyn J. Narey

Chapter 1

The Creative “Art” of Making Meaning

Marilyn J. Narey

Abstract Visually rich digital and media-based texts feature prominently within the educational discourse on preparing learners for their twenty-first century global futures. In discussions of young children’s learning, many early literacy professionals now express familiarity with the term multimodality, although not necessarily a substantive understanding of its application to practice. In this introductory chapter, I offer a starting point for constructing multimodal perspectives of language, literacy, and learning by focusing on the creative “art” of making meaning. Noting the dual use of the term “art,” I draw attention to the notion of making meaning as an “art” and, secondly, to the point that visual images (frequently synonymous with “art”) have become a particularly critical feature of engagement as we prepare children to navigate the changes and challenges of our millennium. I briefly explore relevant constructs: meaning-making, multimodality, and creativity and provide an overview of early phases of young children’s visual language development. Through an insightful description of the multimodal meaning-making processes that emerged in adult-child interactions surrounding a toddler’s early scribbles, I offer authentic illustration of theory in practice. Citing the disconnect between the proliferation of visual textual forms encountered within in our twenty-first century culture and the verbocentric orientation of many adults who influence young children’s learning, I purposefully highlight social justice concerns that problematize the issue of meaning-making in early childhood education relative to adults’ misperceptions of art and children’s image-making.

Keywords Textual form • Twenty-first century learning • Visual language • Multimodality • Multiliteracies • Sensemaking • Creativity • Scribbling • Stage theory • Art-based learning • Semiotic perspective • Synaesthesia • Social justice • Democratic societies • Difference • Digital literacy • Adult-child interactions • Toddler • Cognitive development • Critical thinking

M.J. Narey (✉)
Narey Educational Consulting, LLC, Pittsburgh, PA, USA
e-mail: makemeaning@nareyed.com

A Starting Point for Making Meaning

Daniel leaps up from the floor where he has been sprawled among his papers and markers and races towards me, excitedly waving his latest drawing. “Mommy! Mommy! See pirate ship!” I pull him onto my lap as we look at the lines that my toddler has created and, now, named.

I begin this chapter by focusing upon a critical point in a child’s cognitive development: the child’s realization that marks have the potential to convey meaning. As I will discuss later in this chapter, Daniel did not intend to draw a pirate ship that day. Rather, he was making lines when, suddenly, he perceived within the marks something that he recognized as the essence of what he understood to be a pirate ship (Fig. 1.1). Contemplating that the basis for all language, literacy, and learning is making meaning from a rich array of signs, it is quite exciting when a child first comes to this understanding. Recognizing that marks convey meaning empowers children to engage in the world in new ways. Yet, controversies persist over how we support their development across textual forms in our twenty-first century.

Fig. 1.1 Image created during Daniel’s milestone literacy event at age of 25 months. The toddler drew lines, then named the scribble “pirate ship”



Constructing, Deconstructing, and Reconstructing Perspectives

The sense you make of a text does not depend first of all on the marks on the paper. It depends on the sense you bring to it. (Goodman, 1996, p. 1)

Ken Goodman (1996) inspired a generation of literacy professionals with his contention that the confusion and misunderstanding surrounding written language “exists largely because people have started in the wrong place, with letters, letter-sound relationships and words. We must begin instead by looking at reading in the real world, at how readers and writers try to make sense with each other” (p. 2–3). Goodman’s research focused upon reading verbal texts and his early work (see Goodman, 1967, 1986, 1993) triggered what has become known as the “reading wars,” a decades-long educational and political controversy between advocates for whole language approaches to reading (emphasizing meaning) and proponents for phonics-based instruction (focusing on decoding letters/sounds).

In this chapter, I extend Goodman’s argument to propose that we need to focus on “sensemaking” within and across all textual forms and, along with this, to “make sense” of the broad “texts” of our teaching and learning. Definitions put forth in the first edition of this book, reflect my ongoing stance:

- A language is a system of communication structured by its rules of signification, or “meaning-making.” Languages can be constructed in a variety of sensory modalities/representational modes, not limited to human speech and writing.
- Literacy describes a person’s ability to make/interpret meaningful signs in a particular representational mode/textual form (e.g., print, image, film, etc.).
- Learning is the process of making sense or creating meaning from experience. (Narey, 2009, p. 2)

To these, I add several other provisional definitions for terms that are relevant to foundational understandings of this chapter and to the overall perspective articulated in this second edition:

- Creativity is a theoretical construct for a human phenomenon of thought and action emerging from *seeing the need for change, generating ideas for change, and enacting change* (Narey, 2008; 2014).
- An “art” is the creative exploration of an idea and the communication of that idea through one or more textual forms (Narey, 2002).
- Texts are objects, actions, or events that can be created and interpreted. This definition broadens the construct to include dance, photographs, or web pages as textual forms. Further, within this definition, a classroom or a teaching episode also may be viewed as a “text.”

Consistent with my position regarding “sensemaking” within and across modes and modalities, the goal in this chapter (and the volume) is not to cover all possible textual forms, but rather, to examine the creative “art” of meaning-making. Employing a dual use of the term “art,” I imply that making meaning is an “art,” and, secondly, I signal my focus on the visual textual forms that are often associated with “art.” This focus on visual texts does not mean that the textual forms typically categorized within the performing arts (e.g., music, dance, film) offer less important opportunities for children’s production and interpretation. Multimodal perspectives

embrace language, literacy, and learning in and across all modes. However, in order to examine “sensemaking” as comprehensively as possible within a single volume, this book’s concentration on visual textual forms allows for a greater diversity among other important variables (e.g., purposes, contexts).

I further support my designated focus on visual textual forms (drawing, 3D models, photographs, sculpture, digital images) by citing the disconnect between the proliferation of images encountered within our twenty-first century culture and the verbocentric orientation of many adults who influence young children’s learning. Focusing discussions of multimodal meaning-making around visual textual forms and providing substantive understandings of visual language development and learning addresses the growing concern that the preparation of early childhood educators has been narrowly directed to written verbal modes (reading and writing), thus limiting these adults’ capacities for engaging in multimodal content and pedagogy that effectively support twenty-first century learning.

Therefore, this chapter, like the others in this volume, will deal with meaning-making surrounding children’s visual textual forms and the multiple modalities that contribute to these meaning-making processes. To this end, I begin with a brief overview of textual forms and multimodality. Then, following Ken Goodman’s aforementioned line of thinking regarding verbal texts, I note how confusion and misunderstanding in education are often the result of “starting in the wrong place.” As I discuss textual forms and modalities for meaning-making within the current cultural milieu, I specifically highlight adults’ frequently observed misperceptions: of art, of children’s image-making, and of multimodality, as an issue of social justice. Next, I provide a foundation for understanding children’s early meaning-making with visual texts and the adult’s role in supporting this making meaning process. Finally, I explore meaning-making as a creative thought and action to argue that preparing children to navigate the changes and challenges of our millennium requires us to construct multimodal perspectives of language, literacy, and learning.

Textual Forms and Modalities for Making Meaning

Throughout history, humans have drawn upon visual, auditory, kinesthetic, and tactile modalities to produce and consume varied forms of texts. From ancient storytelling traditions to modern web pages on the Internet, people have attempted to make meaning through image, sound, gesture, and touch. Cultural beliefs and values influence textual production and consumption as needs and purposes are set against resources, technologies, and access. Over time, inevitable cultural shifts precipitate changes in textual forms and functional modalities for making meaning. Most recently, advances in digital technology and widespread media use have triggered the latest cultural shift wherein graphic resources (e.g., photographs, video, charts) function as primary forms of communication (Kress, 1997/2005; Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996). Not only have new technologies (e.g., computers, Internet) provoked questions regarding textual forms and functional modalities for learning, they also have brought forth issues of access frequently framed as the “digital

divide” (Cuban, 2001). Therefore, as we engage in discussions of education in early childhood, it is useful to explore the cultural milieu from which educational perspectives emerge, so that we do not become distracted by simplistic delineations of academic achievement in current practice or embroiled in arguments over an implied superiority of particular textual forms or modalities. Further, critical reflection on practice is necessary to ensure that we are focused on “sensemaking,” and not, as Goodman suggested with verbal literacy, “starting in the wrong place” as we develop our multimodal perspectives of language, literacy, and learning surrounding children’s production and interpretation of visual texts.

Language, Literacy, and Learning in the New Millennium

In 1994, ten scholars came together in New London, New Hampshire, to discuss “what was happening in the world of communications and what was happening (or not happening but perhaps should happen) in the teaching of language and literacy in schools” (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009a, p. 164). Two years later, this “New London Group” of scholars published the results of their collaboration, *A Pedagogy of Multiliteracies: Designing Social Futures* (New London Group, 1996), in which they presented “a theoretical overview of the connections between the changing social environment facing students and teachers and a new approach to literacy pedagogy that they call ‘multiliteracies’” (p. 60). Their manifesto initiated widespread attention to the increasing disconnect between education’s narrow monomodal emphasis on the written word and the impending rich, multimodal literacy landscape of the twenty-first century. Claiming that the “fundamental purpose” of education “is to ensure that all students benefit from learning in ways that allow them to participate fully in public, community, and economic life” (p. 60), the New London Group argued that multimodal literacy pedagogy is critical to full participation in twenty-first century global democratic societies. Yet, as they further noted, perspectives of literacy teaching and learning at the close of the twentieth century had grown increasingly monomodal, a view that they claimed “will characteristically translate into a more or less authoritarian form of pedagogy” (p. 64), rather than embodying the participatory stance required for preparing a thriving democracy.

Framing Multimodal Literacy as a Social Justice Issue

In a review of their original work, two members of the New London Group, Bill Cope and Mary Kalantzis (2009a), clarified their position with further cautions:

Patterns of exclusion remain endemic. And even in the heart of the new economy...people who find their difference makes them an outsider, however subtle—find their aspirations to social mobility hitting “glass ceilings”. In this case, a pedagogy of multiliteracies may go one step further to help create conditions of critical understanding of the discourses of work and power,.... (p. 170–171)

If we, like the New London Group, believe that the purpose of education is to provide learning that will enable all students to fully participate in public, community, and economic life, then literacy pedagogy that privileges the written word is a social justice concern because (1) it leads to institutional practices that disenfranchise persons and cultural groups whose skills and knowledge are grounded in, or facilitated by, other modalities and (2) it generates curricula and instruction that fails to provide the general population of learners an effective means of critically responding to the powerful visual/media influences of contemporary culture (Narey, 2009). Within this problem frame, the concern goes beyond merely providing children with access to technologies or increased opportunities for “art-making.”

Noting the failure of verbocentric systems to support the powerful learning that can advance all students and our society in the twenty-first century, Cope and Kalantzis (2009a) argue, “the consequences of narrowing of representation and communication to the exclusive study of written language (sound-letter correspondences, parts of speech and the grammar of sentences, literary works and the like) are more serious” (p. 177) than just denying some learners access to the multiple modalities necessary for twenty-first century economies. Underscoring that synaesthesia, the process of shifting between modes to represent and re-represent the same thing, makes for powerful learning, they go on contend that schools continue to focus only on one mode and, thus, fail many learners:

...we have to take learner subjectivities into account, we encounter a panoply of human differences which we simply can't ignore any longer—material (class, locale), corporeal (race, gender, sexuality, dis/ability) and circumstantial (culture, religion, life experience, interest, affinity). In fact, not dealing with difference means exclusion of those who don't fit the norm. It means ineffectiveness, inefficiencies and thus wasted resources in a form of teaching which does not engage with each and every learner in a way that will optimise their performance outcomes. It even cheats the learners who happen to do well—those whose favoured orientation to learning the one-size-suits all curriculum appears to suit—by limiting their exposure to the cosmopolitan experience of cultural and epistemological differences so integral to the contemporary world. (p. 188)

Other scholars and researchers (e.g., Hanafin et al. 2002; Millard & Marsh, 2001; Narey, 2009; Olson, 1992; Siegel, 2006, 2012) express similar concerns and call attention to this failure to address learners' literacy differences. Further, multimodal texts exert a powerful influence upon children and adults not only in the promotion of products but also in the advancement of beliefs and values (Barrett, 2003; Chung, 2005; Kilbourne, 2000). Verbocentric literacy pedagogy is a discriminatory practice that does little to advance democracies in the twenty-first century. While there has been increasing attention to critical literacy development in secondary schools, such development must more fully take into account multimodal texts in both print (e.g., newspapers, magazines) and nonprint forms (e.g., film, video, and Internet websites), and as Crafton et al. (2009) argue, multimodal critical literacy development can and should begin in early childhood.

A Mix of Accountability, Digital Literacy Initiatives, and Embedded Beliefs

Since the New London Group (1996) put forth their call for a multiliteracies approach to pedagogy, there has been a recognizable movement within the literacy field to embrace multimodality. As Marjorie Siegel (2012) points out, “It is increasingly rare to open a professional journal or attend a conference without encountering the argument that multimodality is central to literate practice everywhere except schools” (p. 671). Many have made similar observations: multimodality has garnered a great deal of attention in the current professional discourse, yet schools seem to remain entrenched in outdated literacy practices (see Cope & Kalantzis, 2009b; Gee, 2004). It is widely accepted that the primary reason for this is the culture of accountability that prevails in the United States and other nations across the globe. Emphasis on the demands of high-stakes testing that narrowly measure reading and math skills seems to have left little time or motivation for educators to move toward a multiliteracies perspective.

The one area in which schools appear to have responded to the changing landscape has been in their uneven attempts to implement so-called “digital literacy” initiatives: purchasing iPads and 3D printers, incorporating packaged literacy software, or teaching learners to create videos or to code. Yet, even when schools tout such efforts as “twenty-first century learning,” closer inspection reveals that the emphasis is on technology skills, not the multimodal literacy that is so critical to education for the new millennium (Wolfe & Flewitt, 2010). New media does not necessarily equate to “new learning” or higher order thinking: “institutions have an enormous capacity to assimilate new forms without fully exploiting their affordances” (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009b, p. 88). Further, while the impetus behind schools’ digital literacy initiatives is, in many cases, an attempt to address issues of learner access to the new multiliteracies environment, Prinsloo (2005) contends:

‘Digital divide’ logic overemphasizes the importance of the physical presence of computers and connectivity to the exclusion of other factors that allow people to use ICT for meaningful ends (p. 94)... it encourages simple digital solutions...focused on getting people exposed to basic techniques of coding speech and decoding print, without adequate attention to the way these limited skills [are] embedded in wider ways of social and individual being. (p. 93)

Arguing for the “neglected issue of context in new literacy studies,” Prinsloo (2009) draws on a South African perspective as he continues:

Many studies of the new literacies write about them with largely one context in mind, that of middle-class, usually American, European, Australian, or Asian contexts, but that context is assumed rather than explicit. When contextual issues are backgrounded or ignored, or when particular contexts are treated as if they are universal, then understandings of literacy tend to become more technical in nature. Under such conditions, the written texts of the old literacies and the post-typographic texts of the new literacies are sometimes treated either as simply the product of skills acquired by the writer or as the point of departure for different skills to be acquired and exercised by the reader. These skills are treated as something externally given, for the learner to “acquire” and utilize. The focus in literacy studies then becomes those skills, and the disabilities and obstacles to which would-be users thereof are subject. (p. 182)

Accountability issues pose a significant hindrance to developing broader perspectives of literacy, and the trend to adopt digital literacy initiatives might be considered as a distraction: a “starting in the wrong place.” Yet, there may be a further reason that schools have not moved toward multimodality, one that is embedded in commonly held beliefs of teachers and administrators. If we examine the cultural milieu, particularly in the United States, we may find that the absence of multimodality in schools may be centered on confusions and misunderstandings of the visual textual forms that most educators label as “art.” My intent in drawing attention to this is not to argue for more time for children’s “art,” as many arts advocates previously (and rather unsuccessfully) have attempted. Instead, my purpose is to address adults’ confusions and misunderstandings of visual textual forms within the general learning context. We must reconsider the narrow traditions of schooling and aim for broader views of cognition (Eisner, 1994).

The Need to Address Educators’ Unexamined Assumptions About Art

Rudolf Arnheim’s (1969/1997) description of the problem supports the notion that the issue is not so much one of including more art classes in schools but, rather, as the critical need to address adults’ misperceptions about art:

The arts are neglected because they are based on perception, and perception is disdained because it is not assumed to involve thought. In fact, educators and administrators cannot justify giving the arts an important position in the curriculum unless they understand that the arts are the most powerful means of strengthening the perceptual component without which productive thinking is impossible in any field of endeavor. The neglect of the arts is only the most tangible symptom of the widespread unemployment of the senses in every field of academic study. What is most needed is not more aesthetics or more esoteric manuals of art education but a convincing case made for visual thinking quite in general. Once we understand in theory, we might try to heal in practice the unwholesome split which cripples the training of reasoning power. (p. 6)

Despite the work of respected theorists and researchers (see, e.g., Dewey, 1934/1980; Dyson, 2003; Eisner, 1978, 1994, 2002, 2006; Harste, 2000; Heath & Wolf, 2005; Kress, 1997/2005), the position statement of the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) (2005), and recognized examples of practice, such as the schools of Reggio Emilia, these (mis)perceptions of “art” continue. Further, even among those educators who embrace multimodality or arts-based practices, there appears to be some confusion in regard to the role and relevance of visual thinking within multimodal perspectives of language, literacy, and learning. As illustration of this point, I share a brief account and reflection on my observations.

Several months after the publication of the first edition of this book, I was preparing to deliver a presentation at a national conference of literacy professionals. The organization had long promoted broad views of language and literacy through its publications, position statements, and website. Keynote speakers included well-respected advocates of arts and multimodal literacy, and examples of varied textual forms were evident among the exhibitors’ displays. The day before my presentation,

I took the opportunity to attend a selection of presentations that, according to the conference catalog, promised to focus on multimodal literacy, or arts and literacy. Most of these presentations were well done, and the presenters (literacy educators, teacher educators, and/or researchers) were passionate supporters for including visual arts and images into the literacy curriculum. Yet, throughout the day, some of the statements made by these presenters caused me some concern. I began to jot them down on the notes page of my conference book with the intent of incorporating the statements into my presentation the following day. These statements, which came from both early childhood sessions (focused upon Kindergarten through grade 3) and middle level sessions (focused upon grade 4 through grade 8), reveal common misperceptions:

I do not draw well, so I don't expect a lot from my students. It is just important that they try to express themselves.

Drawing and art-making take too much time...students are not comfortable with drawing so we changed to using found images clipped from magazines and on the Internet.

I am not an art teacher, so I do not grade the art...

Creativity is difficult to assess...I just look at how much time they put into it...

Drawing is precursor to writing.... (excerpts from notes taken during conference, 2009)

These statements reveal some of the misunderstandings about “art” that are commonly encountered within our educational community and demonstrate that even advocates of multimodal literacy may lack substantive understanding of its application to practice. Therefore, we must acknowledge that educators’ “unexamined assumptions about art, language, literacy, and learning...[allow] past patterns of practice to continue despite knowledge of theory, research, and practice that may contradict these beliefs” (Narey, 2009, p. 231). I will explore these adult misperceptions further as aspects of my discussion on teacher education in Chap. 15 of this volume. However, for now, these observations support the notion that the reason that multimodality is slow to be adopted by schools, or is ineffectually considered within prescribed versions of early childhood curriculum, may not be due entirely to accountability issues, or distractions caused by overemphasis on digital skills, but, rather, is due to deeply engrained beliefs about literacy and art. In the next section, I will attempt to clarify the interplay of modalities within early meaning-making processes while also offering further insights on children’s “art.”

How Multimodal Meaning-Making Looks in Practice

Thus far, I have provided a brief overview of meaning-making and multimodality, as I highlighted this book’s intended focus upon visual textual forms (drawing, 3D models, photographs, sculpture, digital images) within the twenty-first century educational milieu. At this point in my introduction to *Multimodal Perspectives of Language, Literacy, and Learning in Early Childhood: The Creative and Critical “Art” of Making Meaning*, it is useful to offer an illustration of multimodal meaning-making in practice. I intentionally present an example that focuses upon multimodal

meaning-making during the very early phases of a child's drawing development. Although it is a description of interactions between a toddler and his mother (the author) in a home, rather than in a formal early childhood learning setting, it is highly relevant to all early childhood professionals' understandings of multimodal meaning-making for several important reasons:

- There is a recent surge of interest in infant-toddler experiences due to the growing numbers of infants-toddlers entering formal early learning environments across the globe (Press & Mitchell, 2014). Knowledge of how to develop very young children's capacities for multimodal meaning-making is a critical need in early childhood education.
- Teachers in quality infant-toddler programs work one-to-one with the child in a manner similar to that of parents; thus, the example of mother-child interactions provides an authentic model for both parents and teachers.
- Focus upon these very early visual texts situates children's later drawings in the broader context of visual language development. For all early childhood professionals (including primary grade teachers and teacher educators) who lack substantive understanding of children's drawings as language and literacy, this example will offer important knowledge and insights.

Background for the Toddler Early Learning Example

Daniel's developmental milestone (see Fig. 1.1) described in the chapter opening occurred several decades ago when I was a young mother on hiatus from my elementary school art teaching position. Although I was not engaged in any formal research of my son's development, I collected a portfolio of his work, eagerly following his growth with combined parental and professional interest. Informed by my art education background, I was aware that Daniel's progression of mark-making was consistent with the sequence of phases and stages that Viktor Lowenfeld identifies in his classic text, *Creative and Mental Growth* (Lowenfeld & Brittain, 1947/1964), and that my child's mark-making efforts aligned in many ways with other theories of children's drawing (see, for instance, Gardner, 1980; Kellogg, 1970; Read, 1958).

My observations of children's visual language development in my elementary art classroom during the several years before Daniel was born supported my belief that Lowenfeld's stages provide a useful overview of general characteristics of children's graphic productions within a typical developmental sequence: (1) scribbling stage, 2–4 years; (2) preschematic, 4–6 years; (3) schematic, 7–9 years; (4) dawning realism/gang age, 9–11 years; and (5) pseudorealistic/age of reasoning, 11–13 years. However, my early experiences of teaching children in kindergarten through sixth grade also underscored the importance of viewing stage theories as frames of reference, rather than prescriptive age-determined levels of achievement (Luehrman & Unrath, 2006).

Daniel’s entry and advancement through the stages much earlier than the age ranges plotted out by Lowenfeld exemplify the kind of variations that are frequently observed in stage theories. Multiple factors, individual, social, and cultural, contribute to children’s learning; therefore, developmental stage theories can be useful, but do not account for other important influences. Among these factors, the routine interactions between children and significant adult caregivers have an impact on children’s meaning-making (Ring, 2006). Further, as Bruner (1996) underscores, meanings “have their origins and their significance in the culture in which they are created” (p. 3). While stage theories can provide general understandings, ultimately a child’s development must be viewed as situated within a dynamic, interactive context (Edwards, 2004). Children’s learning must be supported by a mix of the adult’s “practical” and “theoretical knowledge” (Hatcher, 2011, p. 404) and take in children’s desire to communicate (Halliday, 1975). Within the following descriptions of my early meaning-making experiences with my son, my impromptu responses and conscious decisions in reference to his work emerge in an interplay of theoretical knowledge interwoven with an openness to the dynamic, interactive context of our relationship and serve as authentic illustration of practice.

Sequential Phases of Scribbling Stage

Lowenfeld (Lowenfeld & Brittain, 1947/1964) indicates that the child enters stage one: scribbling stage by randomly moving a mark-making tool on a surface. While I sat working on a shopping list or other writing task, Daniel would be on my lap imitating my motions with his own paper and a soft-leaded colored pencil that I had made available to him after he repeatedly pulled at my pen. Appearing to follow Lowenfeld’s description of this phase, when making these early scribbles (Fig. 1.2), Daniel (12 months old) seemed unaware of the connection between his arm movements and the marks on the paper.

Fig. 1.2 Daniel’s drawing at 12 months of age: random scribbling (stage one, phase one)



Having determined that my son was able to grasp the pencil in his hand and to understand that it was something to move around, and not something to eat, I began to purposefully include time during our daily play to take up a colored pencil and move it back and forth on my own paper, exclaiming “Mommy’s making lines!” I then would give him the pencil and he would imitate, gradually understanding that our actions were causing the marks on the papers. Subsequently, Daniel became quite interested in filling paper after paper with marks. A sample of his work at 14 months (Fig. 1.3) shows the typical back and forth horizontal lines that children create during the longitudinal scribbling phase. During this phase, the lines are initially made by whole arm movements. As the child gains greater control, the lines become shorter and, eventually, evolve into the circular marks that indicate that the child has moved into the third phase of the scribbling stage: Circular Scribbling. Daniel’s drawing at 19 months (Fig. 1.4) demonstrates this third phase of Lowenfeld’s scribbling stage category.

Fig. 1.3 Daniel’s drawing at 14 months: longitudinal scribbling (stage one, phase two)



Fig. 1.4 Daniel’s drawing at 19 months: circular scribbling (stage one, phase three)



Situating Making Meaning in the “Real World” of the Child

When Daniel created these early textual forms (i.e., random, longitudinal, and circular scribbles), the meaning for him remained within the process of movement: first, exclusively as imitation of my hand movement, then as connected to the marks on paper. However, on the day that Daniel created the scribble that he later named “pirate ship,” his world of meaning-making changed, and soon he would move from this final phase of the scribbling stage where he drew first, then named, to Lowenfeld’s preschematic stage where he would draw with intention (naming or planning before drawing), as in his early self-portrait (Fig. 1.5).

Adult Interpretations of Children’s Visual Texts

To a casual observer, the image that I introduced at the opening of this chapter (Fig. 1.1) looks like any other child’s scribble. To some knowledgeable adults who note the groupings of fairly short, clustered lines in the drawing, the image might serve as documentation that the child is well into the longitudinal scribbling phase. However, if shown the image in the context of Daniel’s growing portfolio of scribbled marks (see samples: Figs. 1.2, 1.3, and 1.4), the adult examiners might adjust their categorization as they realize that despite the absence of circular marks in this particular image, Daniel had already progressed to the circular scribbling phase based upon other images in the chronologically organized portfolio. Yet, Daniel’s movement to the naming the scribble phase would only be noted through direct observation of, and interaction with, adults familiar with his ongoing work.

Further, while an adult viewer of Daniel’s “pirate ship” might attempt to pick out the distinct triangular formation to suggest that perhaps the child noted this as a

Fig. 1.5 At the age of 27 months, Daniel draws with intention: preschematic (stage two)



ship's sail, Daniel just as conceivably might have based his naming of this scribble on memories of the movement of crashing waves, colors, or sounds of action recalled from a recently viewed cartoon about pirates. As Matthews (1999) discusses, children's "action representations" take in their observations of movement and sound. Quaglia, Longobardi, Iotti, and Prino (2015) refer to these action representations as onomatopoeic scribbles, explaining that children are representing the characteristics of objects (like sounds and movements), rather than reproductions of the visual form. Therefore, as we consider adult "reading" of children's visual textual forms (e.g., children's "art"), several critical points emerge that can work to deepen our understanding when viewing the products of children's early meaning-making:

- Stage theories of children's visual language ("art") development can serve as useful guidelines; however, adults should be aware that contextual factors, as well as the child's individual personality and interests, have a significant impact and must be considered.
- Knowledge of the characteristics that designate the various stages can assist adults in developing appropriate interactions with young children. For instance, if an adult understands that children's early scribbles are non-intentional in regard to reproducing subject matter, the adult will realize that the common adult request, "Tell me about your drawing," is inappropriate. Further, knowledge of stage characteristics can assist in scaffolding to the next phase (as will be illustrated in the example in next subsection of this chapter).
- Adult constructs of art must not be applied to children's visual texts. Refuting a common adult assumption that children are working toward the portrayal of realism, children's early visual texts are a means of making meaning of their experiences in the world, not created for the purpose of making reproductions of real-world objects.
- As with other artifacts that document children's development, children's visual text production (e.g., children's "art") should be viewed within the larger body of children's work over time.
- Studying children's visual texts can provide the adult with useful insights; however, when isolated from the process of their production, children's visual texts do not give us a complete picture of children's meaning-making.

Starting in the "Right Place"

Recalling Goodman's statement cited in the beginning of this chapter, confusion and misunderstanding result from starting in the "wrong place," that is, by focusing on an isolated piece, rather than trying to understand how we try to make sense "in the real world." Teasing out the multiple individual, social, and cultural factors that contribute to children's language, literacy, and learning is not a simplistic endeavor. However, if we believe that making meaning is critical to education in the twenty-first century, then, it is necessary for adults to examine their interactions with young children and reflect upon these complexities. In an attempt to make this explicit, I explore the experience of Daniel's early meaning-making in somewhat greater

depth to draw out significant points of children’s meaning-making in the “real world,” a world that is largely influenced by the primary adult caregiver(s) in the child’s life.

As previously stated, the samples representing the four phases of Daniel’s work during the scribbling stage (Figs. 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, and 1.4) were created in a home context. At the time, our family consisted of Daniel, his father, and me. I had taken a leave from my teaching position; therefore, Daniel and I were home together for a great percentage of the day. This afforded me with more opportunities for one-to-one interactions and perhaps more flexible time frames than may typically be found within formal childcare environments, or other family structures. Additionally, my background in art education led me to provide Daniel with frequent opportunities to draw, access to materials, and a supportive environment. These factors, along with numerous others, including Daniel’s individual qualities (e.g., temperament, interests, demonstration of early verbal capacity) contributed to Daniel’s beginning to create these visual texts at a relatively early age compared to many of his peers. Beyond these contextual details, some brief descriptions of how I interacted with Daniel can offer further insight, for “education more generally takes place within dialogic relationships in which students see things from at least two perspectives at once, their own point of view and that of their teacher” (Wegerif, 2008, pp. 352–353). We build relationships with children over time through regular, substantive interactions. These interactions are texts that we can create and interpret. As Chandler (2007) points out, “Every text is a system of signs organized according to codes and subcodes which reflect certain values, attitudes, beliefs, assumptions and practices” (p. 157).

Our Interactive Text: Providing Opportunity and a Supportive Environment

Notwithstanding the significant affective dimension of being Daniel’s mother, as with most caregivers across formal and informal learning environments, my actions are framed by my personal beliefs about children, my broad theoretical knowledge, and my experience. Within the text of our interactions surrounding Daniel’s creation of the random scribbling example (see Fig. 1.2), it is important to note that I was engaged in an adult task (writing a shopping list) and could easily have opted to place Daniel in a secure spot while I worked. However, I chose to hold him on my lap and, when he continued to grab at my pen, I gave him a thick pencil and his own paper. Thus, rather than isolating him from adult activity, I provided an opportunity for him to “co-work” with me.

Within the broader field of cognitive development, imitation is widely understood to be critical to language acquisition and learning (Butterworth, 1999; Rogoff, 1990). Applying this to visual language development, Longobardi, Quaglia, and Iotti (2015) explain:

the child’s first graphical gestures are not motivated by the graphical product, but by the desire to imitate adults, particularly parents and teachers. In fact, they imitate the gesture

and not the result. To behave like adults is the child's most primitive and intense source of joy. (p. 2)

Daniel's random marks, then, are the residual traces of his attempt to make meaning of my adult movements. The critical understanding for multimodal language, literacy, and learning is that Daniel's meaning-making in this episode is focused on his movements, not his visual text (e.g., random scribble) that was produced. Through his imitation of my adult activity of sitting at the table moving my pen over a paper, he was trying to understand this adult experience.

As might be expected, as a 12 month old, Daniel's engagement in this work lasted only for a few minutes, and while I did not complete my shopping list, I was able to observe that he could grasp the writing tool and exert adequate pressure to make marks on the paper, and, thus, this signaled that I could begin to initiate interactions that could scaffold Daniel toward the next phase of development. So, during our collaborative mother-child play times, I began to work with him on the surface of his high chair or lay on the floor with him moving my crayon or colored pencil over a paper. Through conversation and gesture, I drew his attention to the connection between my movements and the drawn lines on the paper saying excitedly, "See Mommy makes lines," while pointing to my marks. Daniel would imitate, gradually understanding that our actions caused the lines on the papers.

Multimodal Support for Critical Thinking and Synaesthetic Capacities

Over the next months, I continued to support Daniel's meaning-making surrounding this visual textual form of scribbling. As Kress (1997/2005) advises,

It is essential that ... children are encouraged ... in their fundamental disposition towards multi-modal forms of text and meaning making. there will need to be particular emphasis on developing their awareness about the dynamic interaction between the various modes, and their awareness that all modes are constantly changing in their interaction with other modes; and through the sign-maker's use. (p. 155)

My own multimodal actions were frequently responses to the moment, emerging from my personal knowledge of my toddler's growth and interests across textual forms and modalities, and driven by my underlying theoretical knowledge and professional experience. Children's early experiences establish ways of viewing and being in the world. The multimodal nature of our interactions supported Daniel's early cognitive development. Even at a very young age, children can engage in learning that forms the foundation for complex and sophisticated thinking.

When we, as teachers of young children, attempt to support children's critical thinking, we encourage the development of processes such as observation, analysis, and comparison. We also promote development of children's languages of engagement in these processes. In my multimodal interactions with Daniel, not only did I intentionally vary the materials for production of visual texts (e.g., paint, chalk, markers) but also I spontaneously engaged Daniel in talk and gesture to note variations in observable qualities of the process and artifact (e.g., "I am going to make

fast lines!,” “I like the red color you used on your paper. It is the same as your red shirt today,” “Those smearable chalk lines look so soft.”). Thus, I used languages of image, speech, and gesture while I modeled early processes of observation, analysis, and comparison. Digital devices like iPads were not among the available resources for Daniel’s text creation at the time; however, their use as digital drawing tablets would have served a similar purpose as the tools that he was provided. The primary difference would be the same as the switch from drawing with pencils or crayons to painting with a paintbrush: the physical qualities of the different media have some slight impact upon the experience; however, adults must keep in mind that technology, traditional or digital, is merely the vehicle for producing the text. Providing children with many different media is not as important as encouraging children’s reflection on how a particular medium influences the message. Noting the observable physical qualities of the medium we happened to be using set the foundation for future complexities of Daniel’s meaning-making. George E. Forman, well known for his research with Reggio Emilia, describes the significance of this early learning:

Each medium . . . orients children to different aspects of the subject matter. Each medium makes certain questions more askable than other questions. And in order to eventually find the solution to any problem, children have to ask of the event many different types of questions. Thus by using a variety of media to represent a single phenomenon, we are helping children ask better questions. (Forman, 1996, p. 57)

Forman’s position embodies the work of Suhor (1984) who introduced the idea that engaging with textual forms across multiple sign systems could “stretch the receptive and productive capacities of the students” (p. 254). Siegel (1995) identifies this as transmediation: the “process of translating meanings from one sign system (such as [verbal] language) into another (such as pictorial representation)” (p. 456). Within the multiliteracies literature, synaesthesia is similar to transmediation; however, Kress (1997/2005) distinguishes synaesthesia as activity of the brain wherein “subconsciously or consciously . . . we constantly translate from one medium to another . . . synaesthesia is essential for humans to understand the world. It is the basis of all metaphor, and of much of our most significant innovation” (pp. xv). Nelson (2006) clarifies Kress’s “semiotic adaptation of the term” further, explaining that synaesthesia

refers to a process of emergence, where meanings presented in two or more co-present semiotic modes, e.g. the visual/pictorial and oral/linguistic, combine in such a way that new forms of meaning may obtain . . . a whole that is irreducible to and represents more than the sum of its parts. (p. 58)

As such, transmediation and synaesthesia problematize the widely held theoretical stance that drawing is a precursor to writing. Viewing the act of drawing as subordinate to that of writing privileges verbal modes of communication and contributes to misperceptions surrounding children’s art and multimodal meaning-making. Within constructs of transmediation and synaesthesia, drawing and other visual textual production are to be valued throughout literacy development, not abandoned for verbal literacies that are misperceived as more advanced.

During my interactions with Daniel, my previous practical experience as a teacher led me to intuitively understand and utilize the power of what Kress would eventually term synaesthesia. As Daniel and I drew, I would extend my modality of speech to embody constructs of fast and slow by modulating the tempo of my spoken words to the lines I was drawing or by changing my pitch to a high squeaky tone while drawing short little scribbles with a thin drawing tool or a low resounding pitch when I used a fatter tool. Daniel, already quite verbal, appeared to enjoy this playful use of voice and would experiment with his tone as he drew alongside me and when sharing his scribbles with his father. Additionally, I threaded connections across our daily experiences: noting lines made by bare tree branches against the sky or cracks in the sidewalk, curling up our bodies or waving our hands to make fast lines in the air during physical play, or discovering lines in images of picture books and paintings.

The multimodal text of mother-child interactions during Daniel's early meaning-making underscores the significance of adult support and scaffolding during this often neglected scribbling stage of development and offers a model for adults in other contexts, with particular value for professionals in toddler programs.

Teachers need to value these cognitive abilities and consider a sociocultural perspective on playing, learning and teaching. We need to reconceptualize how play and learning environments are organized and, in particular, how practitioners might provide more adult scaffolding. (Cohen & Uhry, 2011, p. 85)

Several critical understandings from this mother-child interaction model also can set the groundwork for working in a wide variety of contexts with children who are in other stages (e.g., preschematic, schematic) of visual language development. These understandings are summarized here.

- Although outdated theories of development persist, it is inaccurate to view early stages of children's art-making purely as physical development of fine motor skills or to believe that children engage in scribbling merely for kinesthetic pleasure. As new multimodal theories and recent research have indicated, children's creation of early visual texts is considered to be critical cognitive activity and growth.
- Providing safe, comfortable, and regular access to mark-making tools and surfaces and supporting children's scribbling through verbal dialogue and gesture (e.g., "Look at all the red lines you made!") encourages children's multimodal literacy development.
- Promoting ongoing exploration through co-drawing and dialogue acknowledges/validates the child's work (e.g., "I like how you made red lines. I (*parent, teacher*) am going to make red lines, too.")
- Introducing new dimensions for meaning-making (e.g., "I (*parent, teacher*) am going to make my lines go fast – now I am going to make my lines go slow") and extending/connecting these across children's daily experiences (as illustrated in the example) supports children's critical thinking and synaesthetic capacities.
- The constructs of transmediation and synaesthesia problematize the widely held belief that "drawing is the precursor to writing." Drawing is not a subordinate

capacity on a continuum of writing development, but rather, drawing and visual text productions are parallel modes to multiple verbal (and other) modes. When teachers abandon support of drawing and the other forms of visual text production because of a misperception that writing is a more “advanced” capacity, they are denying children full access to critical opportunities for language, literacy, and learning.

My descriptions of multimodal interactions with Daniel address prevailing misperceptions of children’s art, literacy, and multimodality in early childhood education and offer a model for thinking about how adults can support young children’s meaning-making. In the final section of this chapter, I expand on ideas introduced in the early sections of this writing to briefly explore meaning-making as creative thought and action within the context of twenty-first century language, literacy, and learning.

The Creative Process of Making Meaning

Questions of how to prepare children for the twenty-first century have prompted concerns of a “creativity crisis” (Bronson & Merryman, 2010) and have resulted in calls for more creativity in education (Partnership for 21st Century Schools [P21], 2011). Although creativity is frequently associated with the arts, my ongoing research into the phenomenon emerges from a broader perspective wherein creativity is proposed to be a theoretical construct for a human phenomenon of thought and action emerging from *seeing the need for change, generating ideas for change, and enacting change* (Narey 2008, 2014). This definition challenges early childhood teachers’ frequent classification of coloring book pages and step-by-step teacher-directed craft projects as examples of children’s “creativity.” Rather, the perspective that I promote (seeing the need for change, generating ideas for change, and enacting change) highlights creativity as an essentially transformative process; a view that aligns with the position put forth by Cope and Kalantzis (2009a):

a pedagogy of multiliteracies requires that the enormous role of agency in the meaning-making process be recognized, and in that recognition, it seeks to create a more productive, relevant, innovative, creative and even perhaps emancipatory, pedagogy. Literacy teaching is not about skills and competence; it is aimed at creating a kind of person, an active designer of meaning, with a sensibility open to differences, change and innovation. The logic of multiliteracies is one that recognizes that meaning making is an active, transformative process,(p. 175)

As children and adults produce or view visual texts, they do not make meaning in a vacuum but, rather, actively bring their individual experiences in dynamic interaction with the text structure (Kress, 1997/2005; Piro, 2002). They interrogate sign systems to discover the limitations and potential (seeing the need for change), they problem solve as they make connections among modes (generate ideas for change), and they translate the signs in unique interpretations to communicate to others (enacting change). As we seek to prepare our youngest learners for their twenty-first

century global futures, we must note the critical role of visual textual forms in our society and attend to the multimodal texts of our interactions.

In the midst of the complex, ever-changing world of education, it is possible to be distracted by focusing on isolated knowledge and skills, or too quickly seek methods and strategies for any strand of teaching and learning. This is true for verbal literacy studies (reading and writing) as well as for the visual textual forms to be explored in this volume. It is equally possible to be distracted by an undo focus upon multimodality itself. Therefore, as we proceed to engage with the various works in this book, it is important to keep in mind Ken Goodman's caution offered in the opening to this introductory chapter:

The sense you make of a text does not depend first of all on the marks on the paper. It depends on the sense you bring to it. (Goodman, 1996, p. 1)

We must not get caught up in starting in the “wrong place” by picking and choosing from among the vast intricacies of teaching and learning in order to narrowly objectify some set of desired “ends.” Rather, we must attempt to seek understandings across multiple texts in the transformative process of bringing “sense” to our work with young children through the creative “art” of making meaning.

References

- Arnheim, R. (1969/1997). *Visual thinking*. Berkely, CA: University of California Press.
- Barrett, T. (2003). Interpreting visual culture. *Art Education*, 56(2), 6–12.
- Bronson, P., & Merryman, A. (2010). The creativity crisis. [Newsweek](http://www.thedailybeast.com/newsweek/2010/07/10/the-creativity-crisis.html). www.thedailybeast.com/newsweek/2010/07/10/the-creativity-crisis.html
- Bruner, J. (1996). *The culture of education*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Butterworth, G. (1999). Neonatal imitation: Existence, mechanisms, and motives. In J. Nadel & G. Butterworth (Eds.), *Imitation in infancy* (pp. 63–88). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Chandler, D. (2007). *Semiotics: The basics* (2nd ed.). New York: Routledge.
- Chung, S. K. (2005). Media/visual literacy art education: Cigarette ad deconstruction. *Art Education*, 58(3), 19–24.
- Cohen, L. E., & Uhry, J. (2011). Naming block structures: A multimodal approach. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 39(1), 79–87.
- Cope, B., & Kalantzis, M. (2009a). “Multiliteracies”: New literacies, new learning. *Pedagogies: An International Journal*, 4(3), 164–195.
- Cope, B., & Kalantzis, M. (2009b). New media, new learning. In D. R. Cole & D. L. Pullen (Eds.), *Multiliteracies in motion: Current theory and practice* (pp. 87–104). London: Routledge.
- Crafton, L. K., Silvers, P., & Brennan, M. (2009). Creating a critical multiliteracies curriculum: Repositioning art in the early childhood classroom. In M. J. Narey (Ed.), *Making meaning* (pp. 31–51). New York: Springer.
- Cuban, L. (2001). *Oversold and underused: Computers in the classroom*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Dewey, J. (1934/1980). *Art as experience*. New York: Perigee.
- Dyson, A. H. (2003). *The brothers and sisters learn to write: Popular literacies in childhood and school cultures*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Edwards, A. (2004). Understanding context, understanding practice in early education. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal*, 12(1), 85–101.

- Eisner, E. W. (1978). Reading and the creation of meaning. In E. W. Eisner (Ed.), *Reading, the arts, and the creation of meaning* (pp. 13–31). Reston, VA: NAEA.
- Eisner, E. W. (1994). *Cognition and curriculum reconsidered* (2nd ed.). New York: Teachers College Press.
- Eisner, E. W. (2002). *The arts and the creation of mind*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Eisner, E. W. (2006). *Two visions of education* (The Arts Education Collaborative Monograph No. 2). Pittsburgh, PA: Arts Education Collaborative.
- Forman, G. E. (1996). Negotiating with Art media to deepen learning. *Exchange*, 3(96), 56–58.
- Gardner, H. (1980). *Artful scribbles: The significance of children’s drawing*. New York: Basic.
- Gee, J. P. (2004). *Situated language and learning: A critique of traditional schooling*. London: Routledge.
- Goodman, K. S. (1967). Reading: A psycholinguistic guessing game. *Journal of the Reading Specialist*, 6, 126–135.
- Goodman, K. S. (1986). *What’s whole in whole language?* Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Goodman, K. S. (1993). *Phonics phacts*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Goodman, K. S. (1996). *Ken Goodman on reading*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Halliday, M. A. K. (1975). *Learning to mean: Explorations in the development of language*. London: Edward Arnold.
- Hanafin, J., Shevlin, M., & Flynn, M. (2002). Responding to student diversity: Lessons from the margin. *Pedagogy, Culture and Society*, 10(3), 409–423.
- Harste, J. C. (2000). Six points of departure. In B. Berghoff, K. A. Eawa, J. C. Harste, & B. T. Hoonan (Eds.), *Beyond reading and writing: Inquiry, curriculum, and multiple ways of knowing* (pp. 1–16). Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.
- Hatcher, R. (2011). Professional learning for creative teaching and learning. In J. Sefton-Green, P. Thomson, K. Jones, & L. Bresler (Eds.), *The Routledge international handbook of creative learning* (pp. 404–413). New York: Routledge.
- Heath, S. B., & Wolf, S. A. (2005). Focus in creative learning: Drawing on art for language development. *Literacy*, 39(1), 38–45.
- Kellogg, R. (1970). *Analyzing children’s art*. Palo Alto, CA: National Press Books.
- Kilbourne, J. (2000). *Can’t buy my love: How advertising changes the way we think and feel*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Kress, G. (1997/2005). *Before writing: Rethinking the paths to literacy*. London: Routledge.
- Kress, G., & van Leeuwen, T. (1996). *Reading images: The grammar of visual design*. London: Routledge.
- Longobardi, C., Quaglia, R., & Iotti, N. O. (2015). Reconsidering the scribbling stage of drawing: A new perspective on toddlers’ representational processes. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 6, 1227. <http://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2015.01227>.
- Lownfeld, V., & Brittain, W. L. (1947/1964). *Creative and mental growth* (4th ed.). New York, NY: Macmillan.
- Luehrman, M., & Unrath, K. (2006). Making theories of children’s artistic development meaningful for preservice teachers. *Art Education*, 59(3), 6–12.
- Matthews, J. (1999). *The art of childhood and adolescence: The construction of meaning*. London: Falmer Press.
- Millard, E., & Marsh, J. (2001). Words with pictures: The role of visual literacy in writing and its implication for schooling. *Reading*, 35(2), 54–61.
- Narey, M. J. (2002). A rationale for visual arts education. In Pennsylvania Department of Education and Riverview Intermediate Unit Six (Ed.), *Pennsylvania Crosswalks Framework for Visual Arts*. Harrisburg, PA: Pennsylvania Department of Education.
- Narey, M. J. (2008). *Social and psychological theories of creativity and reflective practice: A conceptual analysis*. Paper presented at the 2008 annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association (<http://www.aera.net/repository>).
- Narey, M. J. (Ed.). (2009). *Making meaning: Constructing multimodal perspectives of language, literacy, and learning through arts-based early childhood education*. New York: Springer.

- Narey, M. J. (2014). *Educating for 21st century capacities by cultivating teachers' capacities: Re-envisioning "teaching" within a creativity framework*. Paper presented at the 2014 Global Learning Alliance (GLA), Columbia University, New York.
- National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE). (2005). *Multimodal literacies*. Retrieved March 2, 2008, from <http://www.ncte.org/about/over/positions/category/literacy/123213.htm>.
- Nelson, M. E. (2006). Mode, meaning, and synaesthesia in multimedia L2 writing. *Language Learning & Technology*, 10(2), 56–76.
- New London Group. (1996). A pedagogy of multiliteracies: Designing social futures. *Harvard Educational Review*, 66(1), 60–92.
- Olson, J. L. (1992). *Envisioning writing: Toward an integration of drawing and writing*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Partnership for 21st Century Schools [P21]. (2011). *Framework for 21st century learning*. Retrieved December 20, 2013, from <http://www.p21.org/overview/skills-framework>.
- Piro, J. (2002). The picture of reading: Deriving meaning in literacy through image. *The Reading Teacher*, 56(2), 126–134.
- Press, F., & Mitchell, L. (2014). Lived spaces of infant-toddler education and care: Implications for policy. In L. Harrison & J. Sumsion (Eds.), *Lived spaces of infant-toddler education and care: Exploring diverse perspectives on theory, research, practice, and policy* (pp. 225–240). Dordrecht, Netherlands: Springer.
- Prinsloo, M. (2005). The new literacies as placed resources. *Perspectives in Education*, 23(4), 87–98.
- Prinsloo, M. (2009). Thinking locally, acting globally: The new literacies as placed resources. In D. Koutsogiannis & M. Arapoglou (Eds.), *Literacy, New education: Aspects of the local and global* (pp. 181–206). Thessaloniki, Greece: Ziti Publications.
- Quaglia, R., Longobardi, C., Iotti, N. O., & Prino, L. E. (2015). A new theory on children's drawings: Analyzing the role of emotion and movement in graphical development. *Infant Behavior and Development*, 39, 81–91.
- Read, H. (1958). *Education through art*. New York: Wiley.
- Ring, K. (2006). Supporting young children drawing: Developing a role. *International Journal of Education through Art*, 2(3), 195–209.
- Rogoff, B. (1990). *Apprenticeship in thinking: Cognitive development in social context*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Siegel, M. (1995). More than words: The generative power of transmediation for learning. *Canadian Journal of Education*, 20, 455–475.
- Siegel, M. (2006). Rereading the signs: Multimodal transformations in the field of literacy education. *Language Arts*, 84(1), 65–77.
- Siegel, M. (2012). New times for multimodality? Confronting the accountability culture. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 55(8), 671–680.
- Suhor, C. (1984). Towards a semiotics-based curriculum. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 16, 247–257.
- Wegerif, R. (2008). Dialogic or dialectic? The significance of ontological assumptions in research on educational dialogue. *British Educational Research Journal*, 34(3), 347–362.
- Wolfe, S., & Flewitt, R. (2010). New technologies, new multimodal literacy practices and young children's metacognitive development. *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 40(4), 387–399.

Marilyn J. Narey Narey Educational Consulting, LLC, Pittsburgh, PA, USA

Dr. Marilyn J. Narey is a scholar, researcher, and teacher/teacher educator specializing in multimodal literacy, creativity, and transdisciplinary curriculum. As founder of Narey Educational Consulting, LLC, she currently leads professional development, curricular design services, and research initiatives for diverse educational institutions and community groups. Dr. Narey's background as a tenured Associate Professor of Education at East Stroudsburg University of Pennsylvania, as teacher with 20 years of experience in K-12 public schools, and as a recipient of numerous awards for her design of innovative curricular, community-based projects and partnerships, serves to inform her ongoing engagement in a variety of educational initiatives.

Part I
Beyond Words

Chapter 2

Drawing to Learn

Margaret L. Brooks

Abstract This chapter will demonstrate how a specific Vygotskian sociocultural framework can assist teachers in their understanding and support of young children's drawing processes. Using examples of children drawing in a kindergarten and year-one classroom, I will explore the notion that in drawing, there is evidence of a relationship between thought and drawing that becomes visible through the study of meaning-making processes. Drawing supports the movement from simple spontaneous concepts to more complex concepts and plays an important role in promoting higher mental functions. When drawing is used in a collaborative and communicative manner, it becomes a powerful meaning-making tool. When drawing is recognized as a meaning-making process, supporting drawing then becomes central to the teaching and learning of young children.

Keywords Drawing • Vygotsky • Meaning-making • Early childhood • Higher mental functions • Sociocultural

Drawing provides children with their first means of making a permanent, tangible, concrete, and communicable record of their ideas so that most young children have a strong desire to draw. Drawing and mark-making are also among the child's first efforts at abstraction and the use of a symbol system (Athey, 1990; Cox, 1991; Eisner, 1972; Matthews, 1999). Facility with abstractions and symbol systems are essential for school-based literacy like mathematics, information technology, reading, and writing (Athey, 1990; Barratt-Pugh & Rohl, 2000; Gifford, 1997).

In this chapter we will see how young children, in an early childhood classroom in Canada, productively used drawing in a range of contexts to make sense of the world in which they live. The children were encouraged to talk about, share, revise, and revisit their drawings. Drawing slowed responses to stimulus by engaging the child with the subject in meaningful ways for longer periods. Drawing mediated between thought and action to support progressively complex ideas. These drawing processes extended the children's thinking as well as their awareness of different

M.L. Brooks (✉)
University of New England, Armidale, NSW, Australia
e-mail: mbrooks3@une.edu.au

possibilities for representation and their drawing repertoire. In everyday life the arts often explore “big ideas.” The arts give form to some very complex concepts. This distillation (and often crystallization) of concepts allows us to make connections between ideas and concepts that we might not normally easily make.

The writings of Lev Vygotsky (1962, 1978, 1987, 1998) offer us a rich and productive way of examining young children’s drawing processes that acknowledges both the children’s context and their intentions. Sociocultural theory, as proposed by Vygotsky (1987), offers a way of understanding mental processes through disclosure of their emergence and subsequent growth. He viewed learning and development as dialectical in nature, working together as a dynamic process in a sociocultural context. The learner brings prior knowledge and combines it with new knowledge through his or her interaction with others. Expertise is shared in order to negotiate and construct meaning (Duran & Syzmanski, 1995; Rogoff, 1990). Development of the individual is “a process in which children grow into the intellectual life of those around them” (Vygotsky, 1978).

Drawing is also dialectical in nature, and this chapter describes how drawing can be a powerful tool for mediating learning within a community of learners. Drawing in a social context mediates new knowledge and understanding. Focusing on children’s drawing processes and applying an explicitly Vygotskian analysis is a departure from the way we have traditionally analyzed drawing, where individual drawings have typically been viewed in a decontextualized and developmental manner (Brooks, 2002). By examining drawing events over time, threads of children’s thinking can be followed, illuminating the consequential progression of increasingly complex ideas.

Thought and Drawing

Vygotsky was interested in the connections between thought and speech. He suggested that “the rational, intentional conveying of experience and thought to others requires a mediating system, the prototype of which is human speech born of the need of intercourse during work” (Vygotsky, 1962, p.6). However, he also considered other forms of communication such as symbols, algebraic systems, art, drawing, writing, and diagrams (Vygotsky, 1962). These signs and symbols might also be considered forms of language and a way of communicating. Vygotsky was not able to pursue his exploration of these other symbol systems in his short lifetime. My work builds upon Vygotsky’s initial ideas and explores them further in relation to drawing. I chose drawing because it is something most children do and is considered to be foundational to the visual arts. If we also consider drawing to be a language of sorts, then we can begin to see how drawing might contribute to the formulation of thinking and meaning. The diagram (Fig. 2.1) illustrates Vygotsky’s theory of the connection between thought and speech and the development of verbal thought. Verbal thought is “the linkage of multiple layers of language and thought as they transform themselves into greater mental abilities, the joining of thought and

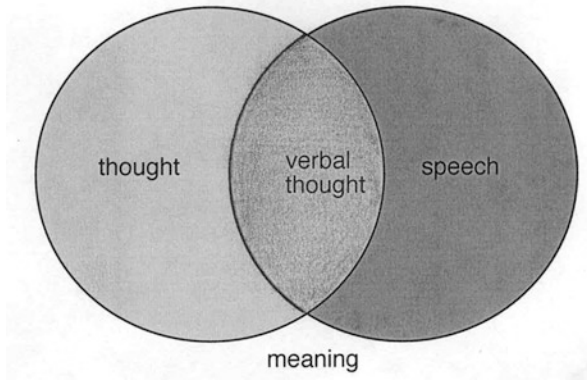


Fig. 2.1 Verbal thought (Adapted from Wink & Putney, 2002, p. xxv)

language to make meaning” (Wink & Putney, 2002, p.152). Speech informs thought and thought is given life through speech. Meaning is created at the intersection of, and through a dynamic relationship between, thought and speech. Vygotsky proposed that it is in “word meaning” that thought and speech join to become verbal thought and that through the study of meaning-making, we might find ways to understand children’s thinking. He proposes that it is “in meaning [that the] answers to our questions about the relationship between thought and speech can be found” (Vygotsky, 1962, p. 5).

Vygotsky wrote about two forms of meaning: meaning as reference and abstraction and meaning as contextualized personal sense (Wertsch, 2000). There are also two basic assumptions about meaning as reference and abstractions. One is that “language meaning is a matter of referential relationships between signs and objects,” and the other is that “the development of meaning is a matter of increasing generalization and abstraction” (Wertsch, 2000, p. 20). Vygotsky believed that an understanding of the difference between what he termed a child’s spontaneous concept and a child’s scientific concept depended on one’s understanding of these two assumptions. It is in the spontaneous concept, which occurs in a child’s first encounter with an experience that the referential use of language plays an important role. However, for meaning to develop further into abstraction, the child has to move beyond this direct linking of referent to object to a more generalized meaning. Objects are grouped into categories rather than remaining single objects. I suggest that drawing assists this movement, and later in this chapter, I present several examples of what this looks like for young children in the context of the early childhood classroom.

The diagram (Fig. 2.2) borrows from Vygotsky’s theory and illustrates a possible connection between thought, drawing, and the development of visual thought (Brooks, 2002, 2003). When drawing informs thought and thought is given life through drawing, we can begin to see the connection between thought and drawing and the value of drawing in the creation of meaning.

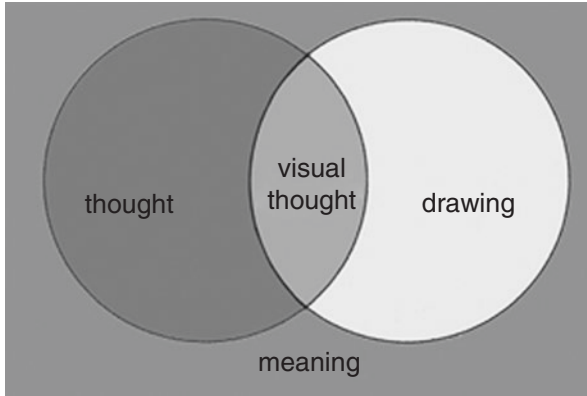


Fig. 2.2 Visual thought

If we consider drawing to be a communication system that supports meaning and that might operate in similar ways to language, and if we replace the word “language” with the word “drawing” in the above hypothesis, then we can begin to understand how drawing might function at the referential level as well as be a mediator between a child’s spontaneous concept and a child’s more complex and scientific concept. Vygotsky (1962) describes a thought as being both whole and simultaneous. It does not consist of individual words like speech nor is it always connected to speech. What is contained simultaneously in thought unfolds sequentially in speech (Vygotsky, 1987). There is simultaneity of ideas and concepts in a completed drawing that parallels Vygotsky’s description of thought. A drawing is seen as whole and simultaneous, whereas speech has a more linear and temporal order. Perhaps the power of drawing for children (and adults) is that it more closely represents thought.

The materiality of a drawing offers opportunities for ideas to be shared with others as well as revisited, re-evaluated, and reworked. The relative permanency of drawing over speech offers children possibilities for an extended dialogic engagement with and around the drawing and the ideas it represents; this might not be as possible to achieve with speech. When young children do not yet have fluency with text, or perhaps even oral language, then drawing offers a means of communication and a viable mediating role for collaboration, meaning-making, and problem-solving. Drawing provides a bridge to thinking that could have some advantages over speech or writing.

The rest of this chapter will illustrate, and expand on, four important concepts in relation to drawing and a Vygotskian theoretical framework. These four concepts are: drawing in the social context of the classroom, interpersonal and intrapersonal drawing dialogues, how drawing supports higher mental functions, and the consequential progression of ideas through drawing. Each concept relates to the other while also building upon each other.

Drawing in the Social Context of the Classroom

In the context of a dark Canadian winter, “light” was a meaningful and relevant topic for the children in this year-one classroom to investigate. The children brought a variety of light sources from home so that everyone in the class could examine them more closely (Fig. 2.3). They also brought their own understanding of light that was acquired from their experiences and interactions with their families and friends outside of the classroom. In the classroom a new social context for sharing the collective understanding about light was created. These children were now exposed to a range of ideas that might be very different, and sometimes conflicting, from their own.

Vygotsky suggests that cognitive construction is influenced by past experiences as well as the immediate social contexts and that both affect not just what is learned but also how it is learned (Moll, 2002; Vygotsky, 1962, 1978; Wink & Putney, 2002). The differing ideas helped to raise the questions that provided the impetus for further investigation by individuals and small groups. Drawing was a crucial element of the investigations. Compiling and comparing observational drawings gave the children a reference upon which to build and elaborate their ideas. Through shared reviewing and discussions, the drawings prompted a deeper understanding of the concepts in question. For example, the differences among flashlights became evident through drawing and comparison of the drawings.

In Blair’s inventory of different flashlights (Fig. 2.4), he investigates the very different purposes of these flashlights. He notices that each has a different level of light that suits its purpose. His drawing provides the impetus for an exploration of the concept of candlepower and how much light we need to see to read.



Fig. 2.3 Observational drawing of flashlights by three children (age: 5 years)

Fig. 2.4 Blair's drawings of four different flashlights



Comparing flashlights against different criteria helped the children to group and categorize in more complex ways; ways that acknowledged the scope of the technology of the culture in which they live. The children in this class were encouraged to formulate good questions and to investigate these questions either in small groups or independently. Drawing was supported and encouraged as an investigative and meaning-making tool. Vygotsky (1978) suggests that new knowledge exists first in a shared, or interpersonal, level before it is internalized. He recognized the school as an important site for promoting the shift from personal experiences and interpersonal dialogues to more complex thinking. Drawing helped to make the children's thinking visible. When their ideas were given some form of tangible, external permanency through their drawings then the children were able to use the drawings to discuss, compare, and elaborate on their own and each other's ideas. When children are exposed to different ideas through these interactions with others in their community, they are able to grow into the intellectual life of those around them. In this model the cultural, historical, and social elements of a child's life that are so crucial to a Vygotskian framework are acknowledged so that teaching and learning become truly dialogic in nature (Vygotsky 1978).

Interpersonal Drawing Dialogues

In the social context of the classroom, children are able to borrow the ideas of others and try them out for themselves, and so they become part of their own mental processes. The notion of socially shared cognition is one of the unique contributions Vygotsky has made to our understanding of how children learn (Vygotsky, 1978). The following example explores how one child develops an idea he has and how he considers, and sometimes incorporates, the ideas of others through his drawings.

A flashlight that had a four-way switch (see larger flashlight in Fig. 2.4) to produce three levels of light particularly fascinated Ed and challenged his notion of the concept of “on” and “off.” He told me that he thought the light changes had something to do with the switches. However, his friend Blair suggested instead that the changes had more to do with some mechanism around the bulb. Ed began his investigation of this flashlight by doing a detailed observation drawing of it. His initial drawing is a fairly detailed representational drawing that brought the flashlight into the realm of symbolic. This drawing represents his immediate encounter with the flashlight where he is working from the object and using his drawing to help him clarify the concept he is working with.

At an interpersonal level, one of the functions of drawing is to provide a referent to the object, thus drawing the experienced object into the symbolic realm. When Ed was drawing the flashlight, he was taking his accumulated experiences of flashlights along with his observations and compiling the information into an immediate and holistic representation of the salient features of this flashlight. His drawing became a symbolic representation of some of the ideas he had about the flashlight. While he was drawing the flashlight, he was also talking with his peers about it. He was looking at other drawings children had done of the flashlight as well as receiving responses from his peers about his drawing. The drawings provided a common point of reference that was shared among the children. The drawings and discussions are examples of new knowledge existing in a shared context.

Intrapersonal Drawing Dialogues

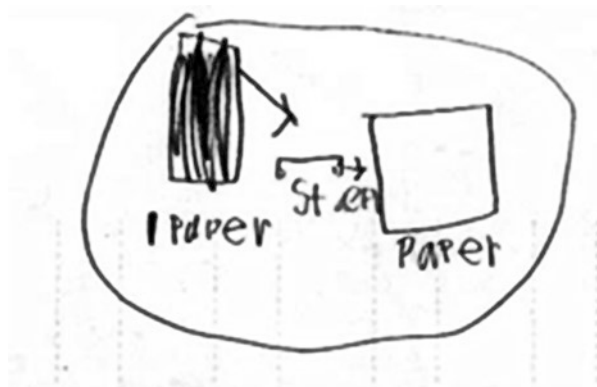
Ed drew the flashlight with the light on and brought his recent experience of observing the flashlight in a dark space into his drawing by coloring the background to the flashlight black to represent darkness. In order to represent his initial idea of “on and off,” he took a black-colored square of paper and made a cover for his drawing of the light bulb on the flashlight. When the black paper square covered the drawn light, this represented the “off,” or “no light,” and when the black square was removed to reveal the drawn light, this represented “on” (Fig. 2.5).

This was Ed’s way of representing the contrast between light and dark and the corresponding notion of on and off. Linking these two concepts through his drawing process moved him beyond a more immediate referent/object response to an intrapersonal level of interaction with his drawing. In this action drawing, Ed is giving symbolic form to his initial idea. When he is able to give a physical and symbolic form to his thinking through his drawing, he is then able to play with his ideas. One of the powerful features of drawing is the way it helps to focus attention, aid in planning, develop deliberate memory and logical thinking, and mediate perception. Ed wanted a way to connect his dark-colored piece of paper to his drawing so that it created a flap that opened and closed and would not get lost. To solve this problem, he drew a plan (Fig. 2.6), as he drew he thought aloud of the various possibilities. Drawing his plan helped him to select from a range of options and to organize the

Fig. 2.5 Ed demonstrates how the “on/off” flap works. The flashlight is “off” when he covers the light part of the drawing with a black paper square and “on” when he removes it



Fig. 2.6 Ed’s plan for how to make a flap



materials he needed to assemble to make the flap (i.e., the flap, a staple, and the drawing). In a busy classroom, his plan reminded him what he needed to do. It focused his attention and provided a logical series of steps. Ed then attached two pipe cleaners to his drawing and tucked another black-colored piece of paper under them to represent the switch on the flashlight did. The two pipe cleaners held the switch in place while also allowing it to move back and forth like the switch on the flashlight did. Now he could synchronize the moving of the switch with the opening of the flap over the light bulb (Fig. 2.7). This drawing is a good example of drawing functioning as a learning activity that was leading Ed’s development. He extended his notion of on and off to include the notion of four levels of “on/off.” His drawing was more than a replica of what he saw. The process of drawing out his ideas and observations and playing with them has moved him to higher levels of thinking. Ed has been able to build upon his initial observations of the flashlight and develop an increasingly complex set of ideas. The focus in these drawings has consistently been upon the meaning the drawing holds in the construction of new knowledge. Any attempts Ed made at likeness or verisimilitude seem to have been to better under-

Fig. 2.7 Ed's final drawing of the flashlight



stand the functioning of the flashlight, rather than to create a more realistic drawing. When drawing dialogues like this support meaning-making in the social context of the classroom, children will be able to function at much higher levels of thinking.

Drawing in this context is a metacognitive tool. The progression from an interpersonal dialogue to an intrapersonal dialogue with drawing might be considered as part of the law of the development of higher mental functions (Vygotsky, 1978). However, when adults are reluctant to engage meaningfully with children's drawing, the shift from interpersonal to intrapersonal is compromised. The teacher has a very important role in assisting children's competencies with a cultural tool like drawing. It is important that teachers recognize that drawing is part of the development of higher mental functions and a powerful way of making meaning for young children.

Higher Mental Functions

In order to know how we can better help children move to higher levels of thinking, it is important to understand what Vygotsky means by the terms "spontaneous concepts" and "scientific concepts" (Vygotsky 1987). Vygotsky believed that a child's spontaneous concept differs from a child's scientific concept, particularly in the path the child takes in his or her thinking.

Table 2.1 The relationship between spontaneous and scientific concepts

Spontaneous concept	Scientific concept
Referential relationship between signs and objects	Increasing generalization and abstraction
First, or immediate, encounter with an experience or object	Mediated relation to the object
Referential use of language	Objects grouped into categories
The child moves from the thing to the concept	Child moves from the concept to the thing
Absence of a system	System in place
Empirical connections between objects	Supra-empirical connections between concepts become possible

The birth of the spontaneous concept is usually associated with the child's immediate encounter with things . . . In contrast, the birth of the scientific concept begins not with an immediate encounter with things, but with a mediated relation to the object. With the spontaneous concept the child moves from the thing to the concept. With the scientific concept, he is forced to follow the opposite path - from the concept to the thing. (Vygotsky, 1987, p. 219)

It is the referential nature of the relationship between the sign and the object that is the key to understanding the differences between everyday spontaneous concepts and more abstract, scientific concepts.

The key difference . . . is a function of the presence or absence of a system. Concepts stand in a different relationship to the object when they exist outside a system than when they enter one. The relationship of the word 'flower' to the object is completely different for the child who does not yet know the words rose, violet or lily than it is for the child who does. Outside a system, the only possible connections between concepts are those that exist between the objects themselves, that is, empirical connections . . . These relationships mediate the concept's relationship to the object through its relationship to other concepts. A different relationship between the concept and the object develops. Supra empirical connections between concepts become possible. (Vygotsky, 1987, p. 234)

Table 2.1 summarizes the shift of thinking as the child moves from a spontaneous concept to a scientific concept. So, for example, when a child is working at a spontaneous conceptual level, they tend to have "a referential relationship between signs and objects" (Wertsch, 2000, p. 20), and when they move to a scientific conceptual level, this referential relationship changes to show "increasing generalization and abstraction" (Wertsch, 2000, p. 20).

Vygotsky (1962) states that it is not enough to have labels for objects in order to think and solve problems. What is also needed is the ability to manipulate these labels across contexts that will allow for connections that promote thinking at a more abstract and conceptual level and so develop higher levels of thinking. However, the ability to manipulate labels across contexts is dependent upon the child's adequate understanding of the concept. The acquisition of word labels does not necessarily presume a clear understanding. Vygotsky (1962) suggests that a working, or experiential, understanding is needed.

Drawing helps with the definition of words that, initially, often only otherwise exist at the level of recitation, by providing the child with a working experience.

Drawing plays an important role in focusing children's attention on the spontaneous concept as well as allowing them to make connections between concepts. Drawing will often contain and make visible the essence of an idea or concept. When these thoughts or concepts exist outside of the child, the child can then work with the idea in relation to other ideas. Drawing, when used as a medium of exchange, can form a dynamic function that allows an elaboration of an initial idea and the definition of a concept as well as assisting with building supra-empirical connections between concepts and systems.

The next series of drawings done by Ed demonstrates the shift from spontaneous concepts to scientific concepts and the important role drawing plays in the development of higher mental functions. When the children were exploring flashlights, they discovered that flashlights often cast a shadow. This observation led most children in the class into a wider exploration of shadows. We began by going outside with our drawing clipboards to observe shadows in natural settings.

Ed's Exploration of Shadows

The shadow of the bike rack (Fig. 2.8) was the subject of Ed's next investigation. He said, "I drew the bike rack because the shadow looked so different from the rack." He wondered why that would happen. He was surprised that shadows were not necessarily replicas of the objects that created them. Referring to both his drawing (Fig. 2.9) and the bike rack, Ed was able to point out to me how the hoops of the bike rack were separate circles that were attached to the bar at the top, while the shadows appeared to be a continuous loop. Ed's motivation for drawing the bike rack and its shadow was to discover more about the nature of shadows. In this context, drawing was a meaning-making tool. Ed began with the spontaneous encounter and concept,



Fig. 2.8 The bike rack and shadow

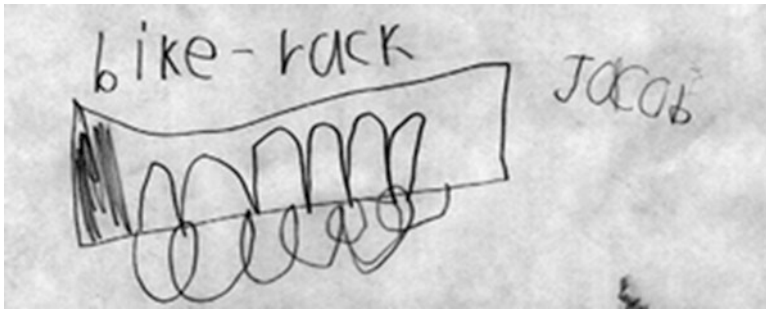


Fig. 2.9 Ed's drawing of the bike rack and shadow

and through his drawing moved to a higher level of thinking. Ed discovered that shadows were not necessarily replicas of the objects that created them. Drawing acted as the mediation tool that allowed this new understanding to occur. When I encountered Ed drawing the bike rack, our discussion focused upon what he had chosen to draw, why he had chosen to draw it, as well as what he was discovering in the process. Back in the classroom, when sharing his drawing with his peers, he talked about how he had discovered something new about shadows and how this discovery became clearer to him while he was drawing.

In the classroom the children set up some mannequins and a light to reflect their shadows (Fig. 2.10). Ed launched into an ambitious drawing of the whole setting (Fig. 2.11). He singled out one figure to pay particular attention to and began to draw its shadow. He said, "Look, the shadow is bigger than the head." He had noticed that there was a difference between the size of the figure's head and the size of the shadow cast by the head. The shadow of the head was much bigger than the head. There is a connection between this drawing and Ed's drawing of the bike rack and its shadow. Ed is interested in the size and shape of shadows in relation to the objects that cast them. He is intrigued that there should be a difference in size and shape. This latest investigation allowed Ed to try out a similar idea in a different context. Through his drawing Ed moved between concepts to operate at a supra-empirical level and develop higher mental functions. Ed continued with his exploration of the size and shape of shadows by making a plasticine figure, directing light onto it from different angles, and tracing and comparing the shadows.

Vygotsky (1978) considered the shift from everyday concepts to scientific concepts important in the formation of higher mental functions. A scientific concept allows empirical connections between concepts. A system is in place and increasing generalizations and abstractions are possible. Spontaneous concepts reach up into scientific concepts, while scientific concepts reach down and pull the spontaneous concept up. In both cases the abstraction of drawing requires a level of interpretation and engagement that works to raise the level of thinking so that the children engage in more complex thinking. When children are encouraged to make observational drawings, or to draw out their initial ideas or experiences, they can then revisit, revise, and recontextualize their drawing as well as compile a series of related drawings. Drawing processes such as this can play a critical role in the

Fig. 2.10 Lamp, mannequins, and shadows



Fig. 2.11 Ed's drawing of the head's shadow

movement between spontaneous concepts and scientific concepts and the development of higher mental functions.

Drawing and the Consequential Progression of Ideas

Mapping the consequential progression of ideas is one way of linking the notions of a social context for drawing and learning, with interpersonal and intrapersonal dialogues as well as with higher mental thinking. Consequential progression for the children in this classroom is a process whereby the interactions among children and the interactions through and with their drawings build cyclically over extended periods of time so that the understanding of the group becomes increasingly complex.

The understanding that builds through this increasingly complex dialogic engagement also becomes a cultural resource that allows the group to progress as a strong learning community. Drawing becomes part of the cultural resources of the group. When drawings are shared between and among the children on an ongoing basis, they play a vital and accessible mediating role in knowledge building.

Central to an understanding of consequential progression is the notion of intersubjectivity (Wink & Putney, 2002). Intersubjectivity in this context is the collective history and mutual meanings shared by a group of people, in particular the children in my classroom. This collective history and mutual meanings are negotiated and accumulated through drawing. Drawing creates intersubjective spaces in the classroom. Intersubjectivity comes about through the dynamic relationship between intertextuality and intercontextuality. Drawing acts as an intertextual event so that the cultural significance of artifacts and ideas is brought forward within the classroom community. Drawing allows the children to recognize each other's thoughts and ideas and link them to their own and to carry these thoughts and ideas forward to future projects. At an intercontextual level, drawing links cultural practices and concepts with ways of being or actions taken. Drawing allows children to explicitly link previous experience with new learning. Drawing helps children to trust their own knowledge and provides a vehicle to work together to jointly construct a mutual understanding. These understandings become increasingly complex as the knowledge base expands.

Another idea, or topic, that grew out of the children's initial study of flashlights was how to trap light. During class time small groups and individual children drew plans and worked on the floor with flashlights and at the light table to enclose light with unit blocks. They seemed to have formed a common agreement that all of the traps should be made from unit blocks. Each day before leaving the classroom we gathered as a class and tested the traps by putting out the main lights, plunging the classroom into darkness. This way we could better see if light was escaping from any trap. To help us better understand the notion of a consequential progression of ideas, I will describe how a small group of 5- and 6-year-old boys used drawing to explore ideas in relation to building the light traps. I will demonstrate how drawing in a social context mediated new knowledge and understanding for these children. I will examine drawing events over time and follow threads of children's thinking and the consequential progression of increasingly complex ideas.

Ed's Light Trap

Ed was one of the first children to build a light trap. While he chose to work by himself on the light table, it is important to remember that he was working within the context of the classroom where there had already been many discussions about, and shared drawings of, light traps. Ed began by drawing a plan for his trap. His drawing contained elements of ideas from his peers as well as his own emerging ideas (Fig. 2.12). The drawing brought the accumulated knowledge of light traps forward into Ed's particular project.

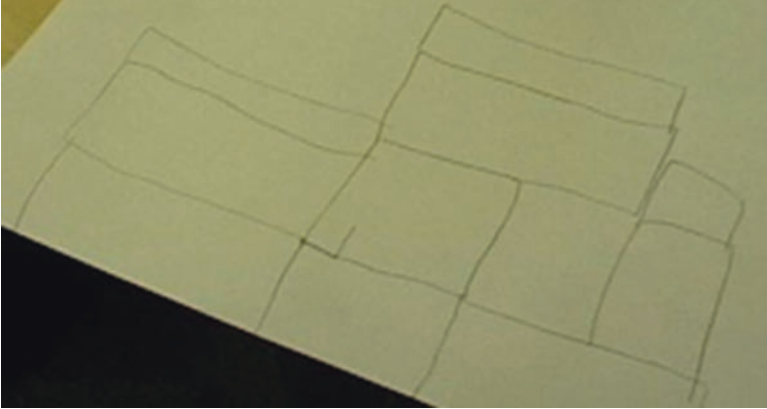


Fig. 2.12 Ed's drawing of his light trap

Fig. 2.13 Ed uses his plan to help build the light trap



After drawing his plan, Ed collected the blocks he thought he needed and took them to the light table. His drawing helped him make decisions about which blocks to choose and how many (Fig. 2.13). His drawing mediated between thought and action to make his actions more deliberate. Ed's drawing fulfilled a significant role in his knowledge construction. Ed's drawing was functioning as an intertextual event so that the cultural significance of ideas was brought forward within the classroom community through drawing. Ed's aim seemed to be to build a structure that absolutely contained the light without any of it escaping. His focus was on the "light tightness" of a basic box, block structure (Fig. 2.14); however, he could not solve the problem of light escaping from around his structure.

Fig. 2.14 Ed's finished light trap (Stuart and Anton's light trap is behind it)



Stuart and Anton's Light Trap

Stuart and Anton decided to build a light trap next to Ed. The two boys sat together to plan their light trap. Each made a drawing of how they thought the light trap would look. As they drew they talked with each other about their plans and looked at each other's drawing. The drawings allowed each child to see what the other was thinking. This facilitated a common understanding. Stuart and Anton were also aware of Ed's drawing and construction and were keen to try to address the problem Ed had with light escaping. Stuart and Anton also gained access to Ed's idea through the sharing of his drawing at a large group meeting.

Mirrors were featured in Stuart and Anton's conversation from the very beginning. When previously studying flashlights, the boys had noticed the reflecting mirror around the bulb in the flashlight and seemed convinced that mirrors and light had to go together. Stuart said the mirror gave the light "more power." Here, drawing is functioning at an intercontextual level that works to link cultural practices and concepts with current ways of being or actions taken. Stuart and Anton's drawings allowed them to explicitly link previous experiences with new learning. In the first drawing, Stuart placed the mirror under the drawbridge (Fig. 2.15). His rationale was that any light that escaped from around the castle walls would be trapped in the mirror and bounced back down to where it came from. Anton, however, drew the light going up inside the towers. He wanted to trap the light within the hollow towers. Anton's drawing showed towers connected by a drawbridge (Fig. 2.16).

However, Stuart pointed out that the light could only travel successfully up one tower because the other had windows in it where the light could escape. Stuart suggested a mirror be placed in the tower with the windows. Anton ignored that suggestion and pointed out that the drawbridge was hollow. He reasoned that the light would only be able to go up the tower, through the drawbridge, and down the other tower. There would then only be one path for the light to travel and it would not be able to go anywhere else. This plan seemed to make the mirror redundant. Stuart suggested trying to incorporate the mirror at the end of the drawbridge. The two

Fig. 2.15 Stuart's first drawing of a light trap with the mirror placed below the drawbridge



Fig. 2.16 Anton's first drawing of a light trap. Two towers and a drawbridge



boys discussed the necessity of the mirror. Stuart insisted that it was the mirror that made the light “bounce off” and “keep moving.” When Stuart mentioned “keep moving,” Anton paused and suddenly seemed to understand the purpose of the mirror. If they placed a mirror strategically at both ends of the drawbridge then the light would be forced to travel back and forward across the drawbridge indefinitely thus creating the perfect trap. Anton revised his drawing to show how the light would bounce between the mirrors at either end of the drawbridge. Stuart also revised his drawing to incorporate Anton’s ideas with his own. Drawing helped the two boys take some initial and tentative ideas about how to trap light and elaborate and extend them through their drawing, talking, and building. In this series of drawings, we can again also see the movement between spontaneous concepts and scientific concepts to higher mental thinking as well as the consequential progression of ideas.

In this case, the two boys worked together to share their existing knowledge and in the process not only extended their individual knowledge but also extended their collective knowledge. Revising their drawings after they had built their structure helped to transform new knowledge from an interpersonal state to a more intraper-

sonal state as each was able to recall and retell, through the drawing, the new knowledge they had acquired. Sharing their drawings with the class added to collective knowledge of this group of children.

Conclusion and Recommendations

In this chapter I have focused on what children bring to drawing, their interactions with their environment, and how they work to solve the problems or questions they encounter through their drawing. The focus has not been on the performance level the children achieved in drawing but rather on the process by which performance was achieved. I would suggest that it is important to pay close attention to the kinds of activities, opportunities, and discussions that can support drawing in the social context of the classroom. I have shown that drawing can help children make their ideas visible and that it is often through drawing that children's ideas, questions, and misconceptions can be effectively processed. When drawing is one of the modes of exchange in a classroom, then drawings can be preserved as a record of children's thinking that can be reviewed and revisited by both teacher and child, while also serving as a vehicle of exchange within the wider learning community.

"A child does not just become a thinker or a problem solver: she becomes a special kind of thinker, rememberer, listener, and communicator that is a reflection of the social context" (Bodrova & Leong, 1996, p. 10). In the context of school, ideas and ways of processing information are shared among the teachers and children. When we value collaborative work and structure our classroom space, time, and materials in ways that supported this value position, then much of the burden for learning is shifted from the teacher and shared among the whole class group. This provides a richer and more dialogic learning environment. When the nature of the interactions between teacher and child, and child and child, are ones that encourage a dialogue about ideas, meaning, and learning, then children hear that this is something their learning community values. Strategies for learning, thinking, and using drawing as a meaning-making tool need to be modeled and talked about individually, in small groups, as well as in large group discussions. This approach to learning recognizes the particular skills and experiences each child brings to the learning situation and works to involve the child in a continuous dialogic spiral where collective understanding and discussions work to support individual constructions. Drawing functions well as part of this dialogic model.

One of the great strengths of drawing lies in its ability to immediately reflect back to the person drawing the ideas that are revealed. This is perhaps why young children find drawing such an attractive and powerful tool. It is immediately holistic and interactive in ways that writing is not. The examples used in this chapter have demonstrated that children are able to represent complex ideas in their drawings. It has also demonstrated that children are able to absorb information from the contexts in which they work and to assimilate and transform new ideas through their drawings. However, the support, time, and opportunity for children to pursue com-

plexity in their drawing must be part of the teaching-learning environment. The focus of the discussion around the drawing has to be on the meaning and information it contains rather than on drawing skills and aesthetic qualities. This shifts the focus from performance-based criteria to one that is concerned with the meaning that the children are trying to make of certain phenomena through their drawing. This approach opens a dialogue that actively involves children at a cognitive level. I would suggest that when our focus is primarily on the meanings represented through drawing, we could begin to see drawing as an invaluable teaching and learning tool. Drawings like those I have just described provide valuable insights into children's thinking and provide records of children's cognitive growth. If we think of drawing involving many steps and perhaps many drawings in the pursuit of an idea, this opens possibilities for children using drawing over again in many different ways and contexts. The generative and divergent possibilities offered by drawing are among its most important qualities. When young children take their drawings home each day, we lose important records. It is important that drawings are easily accessible and carefully stored in the classroom.

When drawing is viewed as a tool that is part of a meaning-making repertoire, this helps teachers to see drawing as part of a learning process rather than as a product that is indicative of a more rigid stage of development. When the drawing skills involved become part of the child's struggle to articulate meaning, then teachers can work with the child to clarify the meaning with the assumption that it may take several drawings to reach a desired level of understanding. These examples show that while it is important to draw at the interpersonal level, it is worthwhile pursuing the cognitive complexity and abstraction that drawing seems to support at an intrapersonal level. This often means asking more from children through drawing. A Vygotskian theoretical framework has helped us to look at drawing as much more than recreation and decoration. It has helped us understand how meaning and understanding can be facilitated through drawing and that drawing can play a significant role in the development of young children's thinking.

References

- Athey, C. (1990). *Extending thought in young children*. London: Paul Chapman Publishing.
- Barratt-Pugh, C., & Rohl, M. (2000). *Literacy learning in the early years*. Sydney, Australia: Allen & Unwin.
- Bodrova, E., & Leong, D. J. (1996). *Tools of the mind – The Vygotskian approach to early childhood education*. Columbus, OH: Merrill/Prentice Hall.
- Brooks, M. (2002). *Drawing to learn*. Unpublished PhD thesis. University of Alberta, Canada.
- Brooks, M. (2003). Drawing, thinking, meaning. TRACEY, <http://www.lboro.ac.uk/departments/ac/tracey/thin/Brooks.html>.
- Cox, M. V. (1991). *The child's point of view* (2nd ed.). London: Harvester Wheatsheaf.
- Duran, R. P., & Syzmanski, M. H. (1995). Co-operative learning interaction and construction of activity. *Discourse Processes*, 10(1), 149–164.
- Eisner, E. W. (1972). *Educating artistic vision*. New York: Macmillan.

- Gifford, S. (1997). When should they start doing sums? A critical consideration of the emergent mathematics approach. In I. Thompson (Ed.), *Teaching and learning early number* (pp. 178–183). Buckingham, UK: Open University Press.
- Matthews, J. (1999). *The art of childhood and adolescence: The construction of meaning*. London: Falmer Press.
- Moll, L. (2002). Inspired by Vygotsky: Ethnographic experiments in education. In C. D. Lee & P. Smagorinsky (Eds.), *Vygotskian perspectives on literacy research: Constructing meaning through collaborative inquiry* (pp. 256–268). New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Rogoff, B. (1990). *Apprenticeship in thinking: Cognitive development in social context*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1962). *Thought and language*. Cambridge, MA: M.I.T. Press.
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1987). Thinking and speech. In L. S. Vygotsky (Ed.), *The collected works of L. S. Vygotsky, Vol. 1, problems of general psychology* (pp. 39–285) (trans. Minick, N.; Eds. Rieber, R. W. & Carton, A. S.). New York: Plenum Press.
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1998). The history of the development of higher mental functions. In L.S. Vygotsky (Ed.), *The collected works of L.S. Vygotsky, Vol. 4, problems of general psychology* (pp. 39–285). (trans. Minick, N.; Eds. Rieber, R.W. & Carton, A. S). New York: Plenum Press.
- Wertsch, J. (2000). Vygotsky's two minds on the nature of meaning. In C. D. Lee & P. Smagorinsky (Eds.), *Vygotskian perspectives on literary research: Constructing meaning through collaborative inquiry* (pp. 19–30). New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Wink, J., & Putney, L. (2002). *A vision of Vygotsky*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Margaret L. Brooks University of New England, Armidale, NSW, Australia

Dr. Margaret Brooks is a senior lecturer at the University of New England, Australia. Her research focuses on young children's drawing processes and the relationships between drawing and meaning-making from sociocultural perspectives. She uses arts-based and visual ethnographic methods to examine the drawing processes of both children and adults. Her most recent work involves collaborations among artists, young children, and art museums around political, social, and environmental issues.

Chapter 3

Sacred Structures: Assembling Meaning, Constructing Self

James Haywood Rolling Jr.

Abstract This book chapter tells a story of several meaning-making projects situated within the pedagogical orbit of an elementary school art studio. These are recounted in order to discover analogies and equivalencies between the effort to construct an identity as an imaginatively produced text and the effort to make meaning from materials and ideas. The assembly of a representative array of meanings from a stock of accessible materials and ideas creates the baseline structures for an evolving identity framework. This is so fundamental an activity, even a child can do it. Moreover, all young learners must do this brand of work in response to the expectation that they gainfully figure themselves out in the context of society each and every time they attempt to (re)make meaning.

Keywords Making meaning • Sense • Intertextuality • Tacit knowledge • Identity

Stories, like culture and language, have been constant traveling companions to human beings, always and everywhere... Today, different cultures maintain their stock of narratives to communicate and conserve shared meanings. To participate in a culture is to know and use a range of accumulated and shared meanings. These shared meanings, however, are not static but are in constant revision. (Gudmundsdottir, 1995, p. 27)

The question comes up whether to teach the structure, or to present the child with situations where he is active and creates the structure himself. The goal in education is not to increase the amount of knowledge, but to create the possibilities for a child to invent and discover. When we teach too fast, we keep the child from himself inventing and discovering. Teaching... means creating situations where structures can be discovered; it does not mean transmitting structures which may be assimilated at nothing other than a verbal level. (Jean Piaget, as cited in Hawkins, 2002, p. 185)

J.H. Rolling Jr. (✉)
Syracuse University, Syracuse, NY, USA
e-mail: jrolling@syr.edu

Making Sense, Making Structure

What is meaning? Meaning is what makes sense. In other words, meaning is a contraction for the conveyance of sense, a mobile transport structure for some idea or script or value pertaining to persons, places or things that constitute a key element of the overall identity of the meaning-maker. What is *meant* is conveyed as “a text, or a text-analogue, which in some way is confused, incomplete, cloudy, seemingly contradictory—in one way or another, unclear” (Taylor, 1976, p. 153); meaning therefore requires an interpretation if sense is to be made of it, and as such is ever subject to reinterpretation. The vehicle of conveyance may be as complicated as a novel, as embodied as a choreographed dance, or as simple as a crayon scribble. The interpretation requires only an audience.

Philosopher David Novitz has suggested that individual and/or social identities are like works of art, containing “an imaginatively produced narrative core” and “constructed with a possible audience in mind” (2001, p. 158). This is to say, identities are manifestations of situational sense—my arrival at a moment of clarity that I am operating within a state of awareness apt for the conditions and the relations at hand. One makes meanings that generate flexible tether lines—securing the sense one momentarily occupies to prior sense while allowing new sense to be constructed. My definition of the term “sense” is extrapolated from Lev Semenovitch Vygotsky’s discussion of the difference between the “meaning” of a word and the “sense” of a word:

The sense of a word...is the aggregate of all the psychological facts emerging in our consciousness because of this word. Therefore, the sense of a word always turns out to be a dynamic, flowing, complex formation which has several zones of differential stability. Meaning is only one of the zones of the sense that a word acquires in the context of speaking...The real meaning of a word is not constant. In one operation a word emerges in one meaning and in another it takes on another meaning. This dynamism of meaning leads us to...the problem of the relationship of meaning and sense. The word considered in isolation and in the lexicon has only one meaning. But this meaning is nothing more than a potential that is realized in living speech. In living speech this meaning is only a stone in the edifice of sense. (Vygotsky, cited in Wertsch, 1985, p. 124)

Likewise, a learner’s acquired *sense* of a person, place, object, or event is the aggregate of all the psychological facts emerging in our consciousness because of this idea. Because of its situatedness, what is meaningful today is not guaranteed to be just as meaningful in a different physical, temporal, or relational context. Yet even if the sense one makes today is transitory, every meaning-making opportunity—in the classroom or outside of school—is an opportunity to learn or otherwise to reconstruct sense as a berth for meaningful extensions of identity. This book chapter recounts several encounters wherein elementary school learners were given the space to figure out their personal arrays of meaning and where the sense they were fashioning positioned them as thinkers in the world. These opportunities for meaning-making were first generated in the art studio, and they are shared as evidence of the efficacy of arts-centered meaning-making practices situated within educational settings as prompts for individual achievement and collective genius alike.

“Sacred Spaces” and Hidden Meanings

Oscar, one of my second grade students during spring of 2004 at a public elementary school in New York, related the meaning he had meticulously embedded into his cardboard replica of a cathedral during a videotaped interview with me. Oscar worked before class, between classes, and after classes on completing his model in time for the opening of our “Museum of Sacred Spaces,” a temporary exhibition of structures designed and assembled by each of my second graders during our year-long study of the theme “Me and My Community” which included visiting some of the buildings in our neighborhood utilized for sacred activities. In the art studio, I took the instructional approach of having my students reflect on and describe activities within their own experience that they wished to depict as “sacred”—an abstract idea that we defined as an activity one considers so special that one might build a structure to devote oneself to practicing it. Earlier in the year, I had worked with our second graders to measure out and construct an accurate scale model of the floor in our new building that housed the second grade classrooms. The final work was prominently displayed, so the students were already familiar with some of the challenges of assembling structures.

Drawing upon my own background as a student of architecture and a freelance architectural model maker, I was able to facilitate the construction of anything a student wished to build. Any materials we had in our supply closet were made available to be incorporated into the sacred structures, but we primarily used wood, cardboard, and paper—common materials in the model-making profession. In order to generate some initial dialogue with the kids about the hidden meanings in structures, I first compiled and presented some slideshows on our Smart Board (an interactive, electronic whiteboard) depicting how specific shapes, colors, numbers, and elements of architecture (e.g., bridges, doorways or gates, windows, etc.) could all be used as symbols representing other special meanings. I then had the students fill out simple worksheets asking them to describe a use for a sacred structure they might want to construct for purposes they thought were special, purposes all their own. Reinforcing our classroom discussions, I reminded the second graders on these worksheets that the parts of a building can be symbols and that specially selected shapes, colors, and/or numbers could be hidden or made obvious in the structure to make it even more meaningful.

I then asked the students to write down descriptions of some of the different parts that would make up their special structure and what those parts were meant to symbolize. Only once this forethought was applied, each student was given the thumbs-up to begin building their structures. It was only during my interview of Oscar after he had completed his cathedral that he related meanings incorporated into his structure that were not at first apparent to me during the learning and construction process. The following is a description of an excerpt from an extended videotaped documentation of all my second graders describing the details of their structures:

Having removed the roof from his hand-made miniature cathedral, Oscar was explaining—from a bird’s eye point of view—the significance of the intersection of the row of pews along the nave as it cut between the two mirroring transepts in his cross-shaped floor plan

and intersected the blue and white wave-like floor patterns he had carefully inlaid within the transepts with interlocking colored beads.

Oscar: (*Explaining the floor patterns.*) “It’s kind of like a symbol for the ocean.”

Me: “...Okay. Oh, is that why it has those waves?”

Oscar: “Yeah, kind of wavy...And then...there’s also a story...about the water’s separation...”

Me: (*Surprised*) “Oh...”

Oscar: “And, so this would be the...Egypt, or something...” (*pointing forward at the very rear of the nave at the main entry into the cathedral and then dragging his finger back towards himself, tapping along the neatly aligned row of wooden pews he had cut using the mitre box*) “...and then water would be flowing here...” (*swirls his hands within both transepts, bringing them together above the center of the main aisle.*)

Me: “Right...”

Oscar: “But, it’s a cross, so you can always go to wherever you want.”

Me: “So that’s a symbol of the parting of the ocean so that, um, the people of God could get through.”

Oscar: “Yeah.”

Me: “Wow, that’s a deep...that’s a really...I didn’t even know that you did that.”

Oscar: (*Chuckles.*)

Me: “That’s one of those hidden meanings that I didn’t even know that was there.”

We learn to construct meaning early in our childhood and continue to do so the rest of our lives. In similar fashion, we construct our identities as well as our societies. Brent Wilson has outlined what he calls a “transactional pedagogy” that crosses the boundaries between meaning-makers and audiences, wherein multiple agents transact shared meanings consisting of “teachers’ values, students’ values, texts, images, interpretations, and conflicting interpretations” in a network of “visual cultural texts” wherein any “text that members of learning communities deem sufficiently important to either interpret or create is given status” (2005, p. 19, emphasis in original). In spite of this multiplicity of possible transactions, students are argued to be quite selective in their agency, choosing “from the abundance of stimuli afforded them in those subjects which, either because of their direct or indirect association, lend themselves to the examination of what is immediately relevant” (Feinburg, 1973, p. 38). My conversation with Oscar also initiated his reflexive agency as he (re)considered his cathedral and his own thinking. All teachers are in a unique position to initiate such transactions directly.

Supporting Intertextuality

Multiple transactions across the boundaries of meaning generate intertextuality. Marshall, citing a definition of intertextuality by Jacques Derrida, describes a system of interrelationships “between the psyche, society, [and] the world” (Marshall, 1992, p. 122). Barthes defines text as “a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash” (Barthes, 1968/1977, p. 146). According to Julia Kristeva, “a text works by absorbing and destroying at the same time the other texts of the intertextual space” (cited in Marshall, 1992, p. 130). In other words, meaning-making is a messy work, and it requires that teachers do a



Fig. 3.1 A collaborative self-portrait of Ian, full of his tacit knowledge about the behavior of cheetahs, jaguars, and flying dragons in the wild

better job at not micromanaging or overly standardizing the learning process. Similarly, each and every identity—as a meta-symbol—is also then *intertextual*, requiring interpretation and reinterpretation to suss out the relationship of all the sub-texts that comprise it.

An example of this intertextuality is found in the drawings and paintings of Ian. In spring 2005, during my final year as an elementary school visual arts classroom teacher, I created a new after-school course for 3rd and 4th graders titled “The Master/Apprentice Portrait-Making Workshop” at The School at Columbia University. During our time together, we created a collaborative workspace where I taught students how to draw and paint portraits, and the participants assisted me with my own portraits of each of them. Ian was a daydreamer, a quiet child with a crackling imagination who reminded me of myself when I was in the third grade. Sometimes when Ian was drawing, I could audibly pick out his soft voice in the murmur of the busy art studio, rehearsing to no one in particular the dialogue he had placed in the mouths of the characters he had created along with the sound effects of their interactions (Rolling, 2008a). Ian was full of tacit and carefully observed knowledge about the creatures of our natural world as well as the fire-breathing creatures he would concoct and personify in his imagination. The portrait/self-portrait image depicted here (see Fig. 3.1) was a collaboration; in order to convey the story of Ian, I drew the boy’s face and body, while Ian himself was responsible for conceiving and drawing the entirety of the background as story context. Hence, this particular work of art also represents a multimodal dialogue between Ian and myself, a visual translation of some of the meanings he held dear and vividly daydreamed but was not yet adept at verbally telling.

Because of its intertextuality, Ian’s sense of the depicted forest realm in his portion of this collaborative self-portrait is always an amalgamation, a meta-symbol constructed of multiple meanings and imaginaries, constructing and reconstructing his version of an ideal world. This is what makes art, an inherent vehicle for sym-

bols, so potent in its conveyance of personal meaning. Anderson (1997) claims that “personal identities would be hard to locate without the network of symbols within which we are defined and the internal monologue with which we continually remind ourselves who we think we are” (p. 263). Educational philosopher Kieran Egan also challenges educators to more carefully consider the role of meaning-making practice, evident in all assemblies of knowledge, as it relates to the work of children in our classrooms:

Young children have the conceptual tools to learn the most profound things about our past; as a struggle for freedom against arbitrary violence, for security against fear, for knowledge against ignorance, and so on. *They do not learn those concepts; they already have them when they arrive at school. They use those concepts to learn about the world and experience.* (Egan, 1989, pp. 13–14, emphasis in original)

Many art teachers spend a great deal of time either giving students assignments that will merely occupy them or trying to get them to behave positively—as if “doing” and “productive behavior” were not entirely linked. Yet they are linked, and the key to activating this linkage is to engage learners in activities that help them make sense of the things they feel compelled to make better sense of. Meaning-driven, sensemaking activities rather than compulsory exercises are bound to lead to more divergent and individually determined outcomes:

We should examine cultural practices as signifying systems, as practices of representation, not as the production of beautiful things evoking beautiful feelings. Art-texts produce meanings and positions from which those meanings are *consumed*. . . . If we replace production for *creation* then we can begin to get at the social conditions; if we replace consumption for *reception* we can begin to politicize the act of seeing. The entire syllabus changes when we see art as a form of *social practice*. (Jagodzinski, 1991, p. 149)

In other words, when students are offered the opportunity to build their own gateways of meaning, ad hoc mediations of sense may certainly proliferate visually in the form of learning possibilities—but these explorations of story, craft, composition, and structuration in the art studio are also a way of revealing their tacit knowledge about themselves in relation to the world.

Agency Reveals Tacit Knowledge

Children do not enter our classrooms as empty receptacles. Like adults, they come to us possessing knowledge—knowledge about the world and their place in it that has been discovered by happenstance, or which has been passed down to them by family and community, or that they have created for themselves through rounds of experimentation and play. Yes, they have much more to learn, but they have also learned much more in the short span of their lives than is often recognized. In their early years, children are in fact wired to absorb and utilize new languages—multi-modal ways of knowing argued to be in the hundreds (Edwards, Gandini, & Forman, 1993).

A student once shared a small black and white cartoon with me, a drawing of a youngster sitting with his teacher at a round table in an elementary school classroom

lamenting, “I don’t think I can express what I have to say in just colored paper and glue.” The child’s pronouncement is akin to a notion about creative potential that comes to us from the scientist and philosopher Michael Polanyi, author of books such as *Personal Knowledge* and *The Tacit Dimension*. Polanyi urges readers to recognize that each of us faces the same challenge as it relates to making functional sense from life experience, the daunting fact that “we can know more than we can tell” (Polanyi, 1967, p. 4). Tacit knowledge is that which is understood or implied without being directly stated. This silent and often deeply embodied knowledge is not always communicable verbally—at least not in its initial dawning upon our awareness—as we’re still either making original sense of it or in search of words or images needed to convey its meaning. Nor can we assert that what we know deeply is always communicable visually at first. Nevertheless, our tacit knowledge stores are a crucial resource for meaning-making and creative activity. How best to access all of it?

“Making Marks,” “Making Models,” “Making Special”

As educators, it is important to remind ourselves that a curriculum geared toward visual object making or any other form of individual achievement is only one mode of sensemaking at our disposal. Because we know more than we can tell and human beings may be cross-fluent in dozens of unspoken languages and lexicons, core knowledge is often first apparent within non-visual systems of meaning. According to Marsha Grace (1999), “(s)ocial-constructivist teaching and learning is nonconformist, open to variation in the outcome of what has been learned” (p. 50). Effective curriculum making draws upon the same tactile sensations and emotional stimuli that eventually congeal into our more salient memories—our acts of narrative (dis)assembly upon our acquired bodies of knowledge thus become a methodology for arranging the body parts of a coalescing identity. Consequently, making meaning in the art classroom is an asset-based activity wherein a learner’s development cannot be predetermined, a facet of the basic human effort to generate and sustain personal and social growth. The arts practices, in particular, are meaning-making behaviors that typically manifest themselves in one or a combination of three distinct ways: “making marks,” “making models,” or “making special” (Rolling, 2013).

Arts practices are self-organizing behaviors through which humans construct systems of meaning utilizing medium-specific, language-specific, and/or critical methodologies, all with informational consequences (Rolling, 2008b). The arts organize and *inform* our collective sense of ourselves, our contexts, and our place in the world. Whether we are referring to the rudimentary and random crayon scribbles in childhood or the initial scrawled letters of early literacy development (Danko-McGhee & Slutsky, 2007; Narey, 2009), the first among these self-organizing behaviors to become apparent can be distinguished as “making marks.” “Making marks” indicates presence, carving out a niche within current circumstances and context that says “I am here.” To make marks is to initiate local change, an exertion of a young learner’s emergent control over sensemaking tools within their environment.

Subsequent to early mark-making behavior, there emerges in the learner the ability to make models of their sensory experiences, perceptions, and ideas. Whether collecting seemingly incongruous rocks, artifacts, and species from the backyard into a shoebox or drawing a still life, “making models” indicates comprehension, constituting an order out of current circumstances and context that says “I shape microcosms.”

Ellen Dissanayake (2003) introduces the idea of the arts as the evolutionary practice of “making special” that which is claimed as significant to the ongoing life of individuals, societies, and civilizations. Dissanayake redefines the larger purpose of making art as the development of a network of systems for organizing and perpetuating behaviors through which humans make “special” the ideas, actions, events, and/or materials for which they have a natural need or selected affinity. When accumulated ideas, practices, or objects are identified as having life-sustaining value, making art of such things makes it possible to render them as totems, stimulating an empathetic social response that draws other humans to self-organize around them as well. “Making special” indicates agency, representing current circumstances and contexts in a way that delineates identity, position, and community and says “This is part of home.”

Making New Sense of Identity in Students’ Making Meaning

Too often, what goes on in the art classroom is viewed in a delimiting fashion, either as kids making “children’s art” or merely mimicking the work of adults. Actually, learners are exceeding our expectations; they are making meaning and new senses of themselves. Each opportunity to make meaning is like a hook and ladder in constructing the latticework of the learner’s cognitive development (Efland, 1995; 2002). Students simply need teachers willing to collaborate with them and help them make better sense of what they have accomplished.

The “Who I Am” Project

I was hired to teach and design curriculum in early 2003 as part of the faculty of a brand new elementary school in New York City, right after the completion of my doctoral studies in education. The “Who I Am” project was one of my final contributions to the lives of the children I worked with daily as a lead K-4 visual arts teacher for this new schooling venture, originally conceived to espouse a fully integrated curricular format with periodic Integrated Project Weeks (IPWs). An IPW was intended to involve small groups of students from different classes and grade levels in a focused and extended collaborative learning exercise that would allow each student to deepen their understanding of a particular topic, theme, or concept already encountered in the curriculum and in which they have indicated an abiding

interest. These developing understandings were then exhibited and/or performed in a culminating school-wide showcase to which all families were invited.

At the end of the school year, I proposed the “Who I Am” storytelling project, wherein personal family artifacts, heirlooms, and family stories were to serve as the inspiration for visual meaning-making, historical research, and the performance of self-image and identity. The project I proposed stemmed from a trip to New York City’s El Museo del Barrio in March of 2005 with three third grade classes of approximately 18 students each, in order to view an exhibition titled *Retratos: 2000 Years of Latin American Portraits*. One of the striking features of this exhibition was how many of these touchstones of personal and political identity were physically embedded, inscribed, or otherwise represented on the surface of all manner of artifacts passed down from generation to generation as family heirlooms. In the art classroom following the exhibition, we began to discuss the questions: “What is an heirloom?” “Is it valuable to the family because it is expensive, or are there other reasons for its significance?”

The ten students who chose to participate in the “Who I Am” project were required to bring home a letter introducing the IPW objective of children relating family stories while transforming meaningful personal objects or family heirlooms into works of art as an exploration of personal and family identity. To inaugurate the “Who I Am” project, I gathered the students into an empty classroom. A kindergarten teacher named Mr. Johns assisted me. We sat down on a rug in a storytelling circle, and I introduced *1260 Lincoln Place*, a mixed-media representation of my experience of the home I grew up in (Fig. 3.2).



Fig. 3.2 Author’s *1260 Lincoln Place*, a mixed-media self-portrait

The mixed-media piece incorporates a self-portrait, along with a portrait of my younger brother Chris, both of us visible in my bedroom window. Each brick on the face of the exterior wall is handcrafted and placed askew; the figures of the two boys are molded out of soil and clay. The careful pigmentation of our facial features is done with layer upon layer of oil pastels. The shirts worn by the two figures are cut from the rags of shirts we actually wore as children. The working Venetian blinds were taken from my bedroom window when the actual 1260 Lincoln Place was sold. The print of the youngster playing baseball was an heirloom passed down to us as boys; it was once hung on our father's bedroom wall when he himself was a boy and was valuable for no other reason. Too heavy to be passed around the storytelling circle, the children were invited to touch the bricks and faces in the artwork and raise and lower the blinds. These third graders had also recently been taken on a field trip to New York City's *Tenement Museum*, and I guided the discussion to reflect upon the meaning I invested into the objects, articles of clothing, and heirlooms included in the work of art. Discussion ensued regarding stories of my childhood (e.g., the "ragbag" of old hand-me-down clothes my family always kept in a closet, from which I found our old shirts) and how those stories were used as flexible tether lines to construct a work of art.

This art object was juxtaposed with some very old photographs that I passed around. The photographs belonged to the family albums of my friend Pam. I first met Dr. Pamela Harris Lawton when we were students of art education in the same doctoral cohort at Teachers College, Columbia University. At the time, she was a faculty member and coordinator of the Art Education Program at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. Like me, Pam is both a studio artist and arts-based researcher. Pam describes her effort to

[condense] family stories, records and photographs into visual/verbal art pieces, making them easy to "read" and more widely accessible. I wanted to create visual documents that could be circulated, used to teach family history to the young, and yet be so aesthetically pleasing that instead of being filed safely away in a trunk, drawer or closet, be displayed as works of art in the homes of family members where inquisitive young minds and eyes could seek them out and ask questions. (Pam Lawton, personal communication, February 12, 2006)

As I was conceiving the "Who I Am" project, I recalled viewing one such work of art exhibited by Pam several years previous at Teachers College, based on her rescue of a family heirloom—a compact folding portable desk invented in the early 1940s by her ancestor, an accomplished architectural model maker and dollhouse designer named James W. Butcher. The original photographs and copies of newspaper articles that Pam was kind enough to send to me included photos of the heirloom in disrepair upon retrieval from some attic, basement, or closet—and then seen again after the loving act of family research, restoration, and storytelling achieved by Pam in transforming the once-forgotten heirloom into a work of art. Regarding the portable desk and her reclamation of the legacy of her "Papa Will," as Mr. Butcher was affectionately called among family members, Pam writes:

Papa Will used wallpaper to decorate the sides of his desks. I peeled off the wallpaper and in place of it collaged prints and photocopies of photos and documents telling the story of

Papa Will's life on the outside panels of the desk. And then because he was so involved in making things by hand, I had the idea of sculpting in clay a replica of his hands in the act of sketching ideas for future woodworking projects—in effect putting him into the piece. (Pam Lawton, personal communication, February 12, 2006)

After viewing both my work and Pam's work juxtaposed, handling all of the learning objects with care, the children in the storytelling circle were asked to draw from their own lives to make new sense of family connections. What heirloom from their home would they each like to ask permission from their parents to bring to class and transform into a work of art? The children considered the possibilities with enthusiasm! Each child was given a sketchbook and asked to mark out some preliminary ideas for their projects as they came to mind.

Nyasa's Story of Family Lineage

Nyasa, one of my third grade students, sought to make sense of her great-grandmother's childhood long ago on the Caribbean island of Barbados, as compared to her own childhood today in the United States. The opportunity to make art in her elementary school classroom was further juxtaposed in relation to a simple and precious family heirloom—a jar of sand carried from the beaches of Barbados when her great-grandmother immigrated to these shores. In these juxtapositions, Nyasa found a connection that made sense to her, a story worth telling—a story of the passage of time and the passing down of meaning from one generation to the next (Figs. 3.3 and 3.4):

My great grandmother came to this country with her two children and a jar of sand with her from the beach. She brought the sand with her as a reminder of Barbados. The sand is a piece of her country [and] it also represents if we can't be in Barbados, it will be with us...I began with the sand and thought about what I was going to do. I got the idea of making a timeline to show how the sand got passed down the family tree...I got the idea of using clay people to symbolize my family, giving the sand to one another. I put my great grandmother and my grandmother in the first box, my grandmother and mother in the second box and my mother and me in the third box...I got the idea of making it three-dimensional because I thought it would be weird if it was on paper. I also got the idea of how I want to tell the story. (Nyasa, personal communication, Spring 2005)

This was Nyasa's story, her own curriculum creation. Her homeroom class had been studying timelines and family trees during the recent school year; I had not been studying these things in the art studio, and any suggestions I might have offered as drawn from my current experience would have led Nyasa in other directions. What I did do was simply to allow her space to extend her sense of familial identity, make her own meanings manifest, and be on hand primarily to facilitate their constructions. Each student, along with Nyasa, was asked not only to construct an art project, but three written narratives describing "My Object," "My Family," and "My Process." Time was also reserved at the end of the IPW for students to practice for a public presentation to assembled family members on the sense they had made over the course of the week.



Fig. 3.3 Nyasa's sketch for a timeline of family lineage



Fig. 3.4 Nyasa's final timeline of family lineage

Shiva's Story of Travel Knowledge

During the “Who I Am” project, Shiva, one of my fourth grade students, was allowed to bend the rules a bit and literally chose his passport as the heirloom around which to build a work of art. Although the object itself had not been passed down from generation to generation, the principle of owning a personal passport was in fact a most authentic and powerful inheritance. Shiva tried to categorize all the things his passport did for him, dividing these opportunities for meaning-making into four different quadrants: (1) new people he met, (2) meeting extended family in international settings, (3) new places and monuments, and (4) stories that he wrote after his trips (Fig. 3.5). Shiva struggled with how to express those big ideas. He ultimately came up with a plan to tether those concepts to his love for many of the animals he has seen many on his travels. Shiva selected his favorite animals: tigers, turtles, cranes, hawks, elephants, and moose, crafting them out of Model Magic and using them to signify the quadrants and intersections and for the lines while placing a copy of his passport in the middle of it all and color coding the four distinct areas (Fig. 3.6).

This passport is important because it shows my personal information and allows me to travel. With my passport I can go to different states and countries. With my passport I can also see new things, visit new places and meet new people. In these places I can find out how they live, why they like the way they live and what is important to them. When I see

Fig. 3.5 Shiva's sketch for his passport creation





Fig. 3.6 Shiva working on his passport creation

new things and monuments I ask myself questions such as why it was made, who made it and how old it is. I got my passport when I was 6 months old and it will expire in 2008. My first trip was a trip to India. I visit India every year to see my family. I have a large family. I wouldn't know many of them without my passport. Without this passport I would not have realized how lucky I am because some people do not have lucky lives. Some people don't have good schools, some children are working and there are all these other problems like world poverty and dirty hospitals. I consider myself lucky. (Shiva, personal communication, Spring 2005)

Tal's Story of Origin

Tal, one of my third grade students, was in the unique position of being a student in my regular day classroom twice a week, and a student signed up to take both my after-school classes and the extra week-long "Who I Am" IPW offered at the end of the semester. In the following previously published correspondence with Tal's mother, Blair, who happens to be a research psychiatrist at a New York hospital, she introduces her son:

I have a wonderful son named Tal (age 9) who has many talents. However, fine motor control and visual perception were not two of them. As a child, he never drew—ever. It was unclear whether this was due to lack of interest, lack of skill, or some combination of the two. His passion was baseball, and you didn't need to draw to play shortstop. As a result, when he told me one day that his only complaint with his new school was that he did not have enough art time I was startled. Even more startling was when he signed up for "Master Portrait Drawing" as an afterschool class. He chose this class even though it required

attendance twice a week for 2 hour sessions each, and it prevented him from playing after-school basketball with his best friend. I kept my mouth shut as he filled out the afterschool form, but I wondered if he would even last one week.

In fact, he lasted all semester, he chose an extra week of art at the end of the school year, and he lamented the fact that his teacher was moving away and would not be at school the following year. For the first time in his life, Tal liked drawing and looked forward to art class. (Rolling, 2006, pp. 224, 225)

Why would a self-described sports fanatic who brought his baseball glove to school each day and expressed little to no interest in art before the 3rd grade take this curricular path, so seemingly at odds with his previous autobiographical tellings? Tal's mother followed her son's development closely that semester and noticed several things that were out of the ordinary:

The first thing I noticed as Tal worked week after week on his family portraits was that he began to notice visual details in the external world. Historically, this was a child who struggled to discern E from F or to find something in the refrigerator right in front of him...The second thing I noticed was his increasing ability to see both the forest and the trees. Historically, Tal had a tendency toward tunnel-vision: when he noticed a detail, he saw nothing else. He could get caught on one word in a sentence and miss the overall meaning. However, in art class, Tal was learning how to draw his brother's face, which required that he draw his brother's two eyes, nose, mouth and teeth all in the right proportion to each other. Then, he drew his mother's eyes in his mother's face, his father's ears on his father's head, etc. To make his family portraits look like his family, Tal had to move back and forth between the forest (i.e., the overall effect) and the trees (i.e., the specific facial features). I began to notice his increasing ability to do this not only with his drawing but with his thinking as well. Whether drawing taught him to do this or whether he was ready to do this and drawing was a way to practice combining the part with the whole, I don't know. However, the growth in his conceptual flexibility was quite dramatic. (Rolling, 2006, pp. 225–226)

Tal's heirloom for the "Who I Am" project was a book from which his name was taken, from the title of the book *TAL, His Marvelous Adventures with Noom-Zor-Noom* (1929), by author Paul Fenimore Cooper, the great-grandson of the renowned early American novelist James Fenimore Cooper. Tal did not want to permanently affix this book into a work of art, so he instead chose to make a small bookshelf made out of some thick corrugated cardboard we had tucked away in one of the art studio storage closets (Fig. 3.7).

Tal writes about his name, his family, and his "being here" in the following in-class writing:

When my mom was a kid her third grade teacher read her the book "Tal," she thought it was such a great and mysterious book. The only other person my mom knew who read the book outside of her class was her sister Lisa who had the same teacher when she was in third grade. Years later my mom met my dad. He also knew the book "Tal" because his uncle [Paul Fenimore Cooper] wrote the book. One of the earliest presents from my dad to my mom was the book "Tal"! My dad went to an out-of-print book shop, and found the book "Tal" and he gave it to my mom. They decided upon Tal as my name because they both loved the book. But in the book the boy named Tal actually had blond hair and blue eyes. I have dark hair and brown eyes. (Tal, personal communication, Spring 2005)

The book was not the only object in Tal's classroom site installation; he also tethered several other exemplars of his identity into his effort to make sense of his

Fig. 3.7 Tal’s sketchbook plan for his installation



origins. Incorporated into his bookshelf, Tal included a baseball; a second heirloom, his baseball glove, which first belonged to his father and was passed on to Tal; a clay jaguar, Tal’s favorite animal, made specifically for placement within the installation; a rolled paper “chessboard” hand ruled and hand inked by Tal, a replication of the soft vinyl chessboards favored by the chess program he participated in; a copy of the front cover endpaper so richly inked by the book’s illustrator, Ruth Reeves, which was glued onto the lower shelf of the installation; other poetry and narratives written for the occasion; and a family photograph of Tal, his little brother, and parents, which was glued to a small picture frame constructed by Tal and set atop the completed bookshelf (Fig. 3.8).

Dustin’s Story of Genealogy Discovered

In the case of fourth grade student, Dustin, his joy was palpable as he saw his great-grandmother for the very first time. Dustin’s personal family artifact was a green beret that first belonged to his great-grandmother, born in Latvia and schooled in the practice of law in Europe until she immigrated to the United States in the 1930s. The green beret was passed down to his father and finally given to Dustin himself. As far as he had been told, Dustin’s great-grandmother, Adda Bozeman Barkhuus, spoke

Fig. 3.8 Tal's completed installation



at military academies during the Vietnam War era and was an advocate in favor of the effectiveness of human intelligence in the practice of espionage over too great a reliance upon satellite surveillance. The green beret was apparently a gift to Dr. Bozeman in the aftermath of one of these speeches. This was all that Dustin knew. He could not recall ever before having seen a photograph of his great-grandmother (Fig. 3.9). I proceeded to help Dustin do a quick online search for his great-grandmother's name, and we found out that she had been Professor of International Relations at Sarah Lawrence College where she taught from 1947 to 1977. Moreover, we discovered that the Sarah Lawrence College Archives had photographs of Dr. Bozeman in her role as an educator. I made an urgent request for digital copies of these photos to be forwarded to us within the week on behalf of Dustin so that he could incorporate them into his project. Given the tight timeline, it was to our amazement that our request was granted. For Dustin, receiving these photographs of a deceased family member he had never had the opportunity to meet with was like bringing the story of her lectures at West Point to life (Fig. 3.10)! His parents had never seen these archived photos either, so I aided Dustin in forwarding the photos home, especially as a gift to his father. Ultimately, the constitution of tether lines to newly discovered or revisited meaning is an asset-based approach to pedagogy, one that does not view the life experiences that children bring with them into the classroom as ancillary or extraneous, but rather as storied contexts our students are already successfully making sense of how to live in, and the berth for new permutations of their evolving identities.

Fig. 3.9 Dustin's treasure trove of archived photos of his great-grandmother

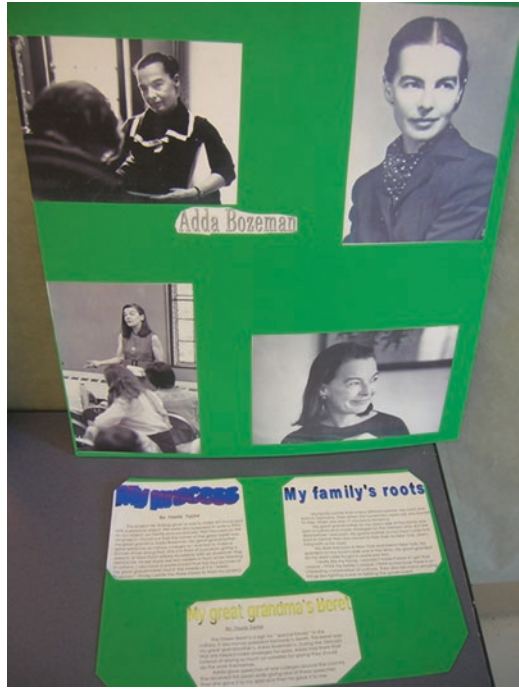
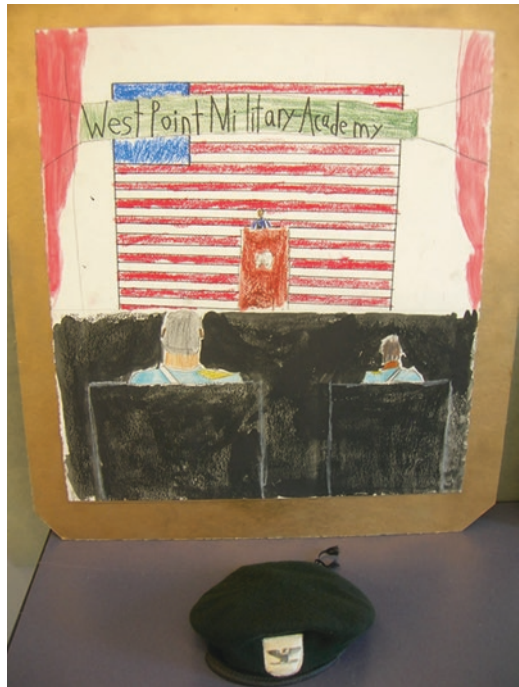


Fig. 3.10 Dustin's green beret and final painting



Multiple Assets, Multiple Possibilities

In order to change the way we view curriculum making in the classroom, it becomes important to generate a continuum of new possibilities, leveraging the assets learners bring to the classroom as they negotiate multiple edifices of sense in the engagement of meaning-making. In particular, I am interested in the multiple assets generated through contemporary urban living and in how we may learn to signify our own personal shelters—placeholders for our distinct identities—out of the sprawling complexity that never ceases to take shape. The construction and reinterpretation of an edifice of sense, or “home,” for personal identities is accomplished by inviting learners to narratively reflect on the persons, places, objects, and events they have personally signified as integral to their identity (i.e., as “sacred”). In so doing, an “art education of place” (Blandy & Hoffman, 1993, p. 23) is reconceptualized as a process of identity construction, expanding beyond a locus on geographical positions.

In Kieran Egan’s (1989) exploration of the communicative possibilities of abstract stories in schooling, he looks at those stories we collect and tether together from varying and often quite disconnected constituent meanings. Sometimes these stories hold together, sometimes they fall apart, but they each serve as an aggregate of overall sense, no matter how ephemeral or flexible that sense may be as an individual grows and contexts change. In the following citation, Egan challenges educators to more carefully consider the learner’s ability to make sense of even the most sophisticated components in our historical assemblies of knowledge:

[Children] may lack a logical conception of causality, but they clearly have available the sense of causality that holds stories together and moves them along: the conceptual tools that can make sense of *Cinderella* and *Lord of the Rings* can be used to make sense of the Athenians’ struggle for freedom against the tyrannous Persian Empire, or the monks struggle to preserve civilized learning against the ravages of the Vikings. Nor need such understanding...be trivial. Young children have the conceptual tools to learn the most profound things about our past; as a struggle for freedom against arbitrary violence, for security against fear, for knowledge against ignorance, and so on. *They do not learn those concepts; they already have them when they arrive at school. They use those concepts to learn about the world and experience.* (Egan, 1989, pp. 13, 14, emphasis in original)

With each iteration of meaning, what matters most is reconsidered. New sense is made—whether Nyasa, Shiva, Tal, and Dustin are reconsidering who they are in an elementary school art classroom or nations are celebrating or promoting their legacies in international relations. A pedagogy of structures supplanting structures is thus predicated upon trumping prior understandings within a network of learners to reveal what matters most to each of us across varying edifices of sense and multiple systems for constructing sense (Kindler, 1999). When contemporary educational practices are reconceptualized as sensemaking opportunities rendering the art of identity formation out of the stories of our lives, also wrought are possibilities for a continuum of “sacred structures” that may be initiated in schools, at home, throughout the city, and beyond.

References

- Anderson, W. T. (1997). *The future of the self: Inventing the postmodern person*. New York: Tarcher/Putnam.
- Barthes, R. (1968). The death of the author. *Image—music—text* (S. Heath, Trans.). New York: Hill and Wang. 1977.
- Blandy, D., & Hoffman, E. (1993). Toward an art education of place. *Studies in Art Education*, 35(1), 22–33.
- Danko-McGhee, K., & Slutsky, R. (2007). *The impact of early art experiences on literacy development*. Reston: National Art Education Association.
- Dissanayake, E. (2003). *Homo aestheticus: Where art comes from and why*. Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press.
- Edwards, C., Gandini, L., & Forman, G. (Eds.). (1993). *The hundred languages of children: The Reggio Emilia approach to early childhood education*. Norwood, NJ: Ablex.
- Efland, A. D. (1995). The spiral and the lattice: Changes in cognitive learning theory with implications for art education. *Studies in Art Education*, 36(3), 134–153.
- Efland, A. D. (2002). *Art and cognition: Integrating the visual arts in the curriculum*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Egan, K. (1989). *Teaching as storytelling: An alternative approach to teaching and curriculum in the elementary school*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Feinburg, S. G. (1973). *Combat in child art*. Unpublished manuscript, Tufts University. (Available from Sylvia G. Feinburg, Eliot-Pearson Department of Child Study, Tufts University, Medford, MA).
- Grace, M. (1999). When students create curriculum. *Educational Leadership*, 57(3), 49–52.
- Gudmundsdottir, S. (1995). The narrative nature of pedagogical content knowledge. In H. McEwan & K. Egan (Eds.), *Narrative in teaching, learning, and research* (pp. 24–38). New York: Teachers College Press.
- Hawkins, D. (2002). *The informed vision: Essays on learning and human nature*. New York: Algora Publishing.
- Jagodzinski, J. (1991). A para-critical/sitical/sightical reading of Ralph Smith's excellence in art education. *Journal of Social Theory in Art Education*, 11, 119–159.
- Kindler, A. M. (1999). "From endpoints to repertoires": A challenge to art education. *Studies in Art Education*, 40(4), 330–349.
- Marshall, B. K. (1992). *Teaching the postmodern: Fiction and theory*. New York: Routledge.
- Narey, M. (Ed.). (2009). *Making meaning: Constructing multimodal perspectives of language, literacy, and learning through arts-based early childhood education*. New York: Springer.
- Novitz, D. (2001). Art, narrative, and human nature. In L. P. Hinchman & S. K. Hinchman (Eds.), *Memory, identity, community: The idea of narrative in the human sciences* (pp. 143–160). Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Polanyi, M. (1967). *The tacit dimension*. New York: Anchor Books.
- Rolling, J. H. (2006). Marginalia and meaning: Off-site/sight/cite points of reference for extended trajectories in learning. *Journal of Social Theory in Art Education*, 26, 219–240.
- Rolling, J. H. (2008a). Sites of contention and critical thinking in the elementary art classroom: A political cartooning project. *International Journal of Education & the Arts*, 9 (4), 1–26. Retrieved May 23, 2015, from <http://www.ijea.org/v9n7/>.
- Rolling, J. H. (2008b). Rethinking relevance in art education: Paradigm shifts and policy problems in the wake of the Information age. *International Journal of Education & the Arts*, 9 (Interlude 1). Retrieved May 11, 2008, from <http://www.ijea.org/v9i1/>.
- Rolling, J. H. (2013). Art as social response and responsibility: Reframing critical thinking in art education as a basis for altruistic intent. *Art Education*, 66(2), 6–12.
- Taylor, C. (1976). Hermeneutics and politics. In P. Connerton (Ed.), *Critical sociology, selected readings* (pp. 153–193). Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin Books Ltd.

Wertsch, J. V. (1985). *Vygotsky and the social formation of mind*. Cambridge, UK: Harvard University Press.

Wilson, B. (2005). More lessons from the superheroes of J. C. Holz: The visual culture of childhood and the third pedagogical site. *Art Education*, 59(6), 18–34.

James Haywood Rolling Jr. Syracuse University, Syracuse, NY, USA

Dr. James Haywood Rolling, Jr. is a Dual Professor of Art Education and Teaching and Leadership in the College of Visual and Performing Arts and the School of Education at Syracuse University where he also serves as the chair of *Art Education*. James is the editor of *Art Education*, the official bimonthly journal of the National Art Education Association.

Chapter 4

Creating a Critical Multiliteracies Curriculum: Repositioning Art in the Early Childhood Classroom

Linda K. Crafton, Penny Silvers, and Mary Brennan[†]

Abstract Traditional early childhood curricula tend to separate the arts and literacy as different meaning-making systems. However, current multiliteracies theory and practice suggests that a broader view of literacy and learning is necessary for twenty-first-century living. The notion of multiliteracies allows us to expand not only our definition of literacy from traditional print views to digital ones but also promotes broader understandings of the arts as semiotic systems integral to meaning-making. More importantly, multiliteracies theory moves educators from a curriculum-as-neutral stance to a critical pedagogy stance that encourages young learners to take on a social justice identity from the start. This chapter features the critical multiliteracies research and practice of one teacher and two university educators researching in a first-grade classroom over several years. An extended curricular example illustrates how art can be repositioned in the early childhood instruction and curriculum to become an integral component of critical multimodal learning. The chapter shows how young children move seamlessly in and out of curricular engagements based on their interests and multimodal needs necessary for functioning in their classroom and the world beyond.

Keywords Multiliteracies • Emergent literacy • Early literacy • Critical literacy • Multimodal learning • Semiotics • Visual literacy • Identity construction • Transmediation • Social justice • Text set

L.K. Crafton (✉)
University of Wisconsin-Parkside, Kenosha, WI, USA
e-mail: crafton@uwp.edu

P. Silvers
Dominican University, River Forest, IL, USA

Introduction

Classrooms rich in writing, literature, and read alouds often create a strong bond between children and books. Following Ray (1999), many teachers have learned to use touchstone, mentor texts that they go back to again and again to highlight features to support students in particular writing techniques, but, just as often, children themselves decide which books will take on a significance beyond the read aloud or the reader response, which story and experiences with it will be their constant companion to help them “outgrow their current self” (Harste, Short, & Burke, 1988). And so it was with Tori and Karen during their first-grade year in Mary Brennan’s classroom. From its introduction in the fall and well into their second-grade year, *Ruby’s Wish* (Bridges, 2001), the story about a young girl growing up in China long ago who is determined to attend university when she grows up, just like the boys in her family, became a tool to think with, a text to transform, and one resource used to shape a new identity. Their story, however, like all others, is situational; it unfolds within a particular sociocultural context in which the teacher and her researcher colleagues were intentional about the ways and means of learning, literacy, and change. This chapter analyzes and describes the path taken by Tori and Karen as they lived 1 year with a teacher and classmates exploring a multiliteracies, multimodal curriculum with social justice and identity development as the core. Mary worked within a community of practice alongside two teacher educators, Linda and Penny. As a collaborative team, they came together on a weekly basis to explore the theory and practice of a pedagogy steeped in twenty-first-century understandings of what it takes to become a successful citizen in a pluralistic society.

As early childhood educators, we are interested in creating learners “who are agents of text rather than victims of text” (Albers, 2007, p. ix). Critical multiliteracies/multimodal actions not only promote increased abilities in particular sign systems, but they encourage the investigation of possible selves. The powerful visual and written texts created by Tori and Karen around a specific focus allowed them to unpack various systems of meaning and to enact developing identities. They helped us understand that visual literacy and the critical interpretation of visual texts are indispensable in the achievement of a fully realized critical literacy.

An Expanded Theoretical Base Informs Our Inquiries

We approach our research and curriculum work drawing from a rich network of theoretical views, chief among them are semiotics, sociocultural theories, and multimodal/multiliteracies.

Semiotics

As small children, we lived in a multimodal world. We discovered that art was a language with as much communication power as speech. Later we learned, like oral language, that the arts could act as a bridge to reading and writing and that music and movement had the same potential for contributing to our expression of meaning and self. There were so many languages and literacies when we were young, so much playful, joyful movement among them as we began to learn the stunning communication potential within us all as human beings. As we entered the formal structures of school, our languages and literacies were systematically downsized, and we were left with fewer semiotic resources from which to draw, just at a time when our meaning-making should have been at its richest, undifferentiated peak.

We live in a society in which language is privileged as the dominant communication system – in and out of the classroom. We value the orator over the dancer and we warn children of dismal futures should they not become proficient readers and writers. Semiotic theory expands our understanding of literacy and communication by gently sliding language from its central position to work alongside other semiotic modes, particularly the arts, with greater parity. Semiotics is the study of signs and how acts and objects function as signs in relation to other signs in the production and interpretation of meaning. Working together, multiple sign systems produce “texts” that communicate ideas. Texts can take a number of different forms (written, spoken, painted, performed, etc.), but within each text, it is the complex meaning relations that exist between one sign and another that breathe life into the communication event.

Semiotics teaches us that every text can be viewed as a multiplicity of signs (e.g., writing is both a linguistic sign and a visual one, an image can be interpreted both visually and linguistically); texts, then, are inherently intertextual. Intertextuality is a semiotic notion introduced by Kristeva (1980). The term suggests that individual texts are not discrete, closed-off entities; rather, every text and every reading depend on prior texts. Kress (2003) points out that individuals are “not mere users of a system, who produce no change, we need to see that changes take place always, incessantly, and that they arise as a result of the interested actions of individuals” (p. 155).

In our research and curriculum explorations, we use semiotic theory to remind us that when reading a picture book, for example, there are many sign systems operating in one text entity (print, visual display of print, illustrations, photographs); together, these elements come together to create a meaning gestalt. Albers (2007) notes that “Representation occurs across and within forms, and expression of meaning is semiotic” (p. 6). Read-aloud time, then, becomes a rich opportunity to not only read and discuss print meanings in relation to the linguistic and visual aspects of print but to read images in terms of how the illustrator uses line, color, light, and placement on the page to communicate and their relationship to the print elements. Collectively, these systems support particular interpretations. However, communication very often occurs through combinations of sign systems, juxtaposed to create a more powerful effect. Albers, for example, describes how in the movie, *Jaws*, Spielberg (1975, as cited in Albers, 2007) uses music and visual elements – the

shark, underwater scenes, and actors' faces – to strike fear in the hearts of viewers. This combination is so memorable that many adults who experienced it now only have to hear the music to be thrown into some level of anxiety.

Sociocultural Theory

We know from sociocultural theorists (Gee, 1992; Vygotsky, 1986; Wells, 1999) that learning is an active process involving social participation. Dewey (1938) helps us understand that individuals develop by interacting meaningfully with their environment. Children bring prior knowledge and their personal social worlds to the classroom and, as they are involved in the work of the classroom community, they learn through their interpersonal engagements and interactions with multimodal tools. “We have learned that when primary classrooms open up social learning space and encourage collective use of the available multimodal tools of the classroom culture, children and teachers transform and, in the process, transform the very culture of the classroom itself” (Crafton, Brennan, & Silvers, 2007, p. 517).

Wenger (1998) also helps us see the importance of the work of the community and the need for children to engage in inquiry using a variety of learning tools. He presents a theory of learning as participation, situated in our lived experiences in the world. As we all belong to multiple communities and construct identities in relation to these communities, our participation shapes not only our own experience and competence but shapes our community as well. This reinforces the notion that learning is about identity construction – for the individual as well as the group.

Multiliteracies

A developing body of research about multiliteracies, also called “new literacies” (Kress, 2003), has helped us understand that literacy is multimodal (print, art, drama, language) and multimedial (combining various means of communication such as the Internet, music, video) (Vasquez, Egawa, Harste, & Thompson, 2004). Children in the twenty-first century have to learn to negotiate multiple literacies to achieve work and overall life success (Kress, 2003). They have to learn to consider different perspectives, to analyze and problem-solve complex issues, and to think critically about social issues.

Traditional views of early literacy focus mainly on print. From this perspective, literacy is primarily thought of as decoding and making meaning. However, a different dimension of literacy emerges when it is considered as a social practice (Vasquez et al., 2004). Luke and Freebody (1997) elaborate on this through their four-resource model that presents practices necessary for full literacy development. These include:

- Code breaking (decoding written texts, understanding basic features of language including the alphabetic principles, and understanding broader cultural codes or ways of talking and acting within various communities)

- Meaning-making (constructing meaning through writing, visual representation, digital technology, movement, music, and oral language)
- Using texts (ways that texts are used for cultural and social purposes)
- Critical analysis (texts of all kinds are socially constructed and can be changed or deconstructed. Similarly, readers need to understand that texts position them in particular ways that can be accepted or rejected. Readers have the power to question, consider different perspectives, and resist being positioned to think or believe in a particular way)

As noted by Janks (2000), we need to understand the relationship between language and power and that language is a cultural resource that can be used to challenge or maintain systems of dominance. When this critical perspective becomes a part of literacy practices, literacy must be defined more broadly to reflect, “all literacy events are multimodal, involving the orchestration of a wide variety of sign systems” (Short, Harste, & Burke, 1996, p. 14). A multiliteracies classroom includes a focus on community and social practices, on multimodal means of representing and constructing meaning, and on taking a critical social justice stance leading to change and identity transformation. It supports teaching for social action, cultural critique, and democracy, inside and outside of school (Bomer & Bomer, 2001).

It is important that teachers learn to use multiliteracies as tools to help even young children acquire the literacy resources for appreciation, understanding, analysis, and action and to take on the New London Group’s (2000) challenge to nurture the critical engagements that are necessary for students to design their social futures and provide them with access to the language of work, power, and community. Children can understand social issues and should learn from the beginning of school that they can make a difference in the lives of others. Through play, art, music, technology, and language, children can address complex issues that concern them and their world (Dyson, 1993).

Social Practices in Mary’s Classroom

Tori and Karen were members of a first-grade classroom in a northern suburb of Chicago where changing demographics have shifted from rural to a more urban, multiethnic, multicultural community. With a variety of languages and cultures represented, Mary worked hard to develop a community of practice in her classroom, provide space for inquiry, support engaged learning, scaffold emerging literacy practices, and help her students learn to care about each other and about the world beyond the classroom. Critical literacy (Anstey & Bull, 2006; Comber, 2003; Vasquez, 2003) is part of our research study of multiliteracies as an expanded view of literacy practices. A particular emphasis in Mary’s teaching was helping the students learn to take a critical stance and to understand that agency is an important outcome of critical work and that they can take action, make a difference, and change what they feel isn’t working within their classroom, their school, or their community and beyond.

As researchers in Mary's classroom, Linda and Penny became participant observers, often working alongside Mary, talking to students, facilitating group work, preparing read alouds, joining inquiry groups, and participating in the life of the classroom. On occasion, Linda and Penny joined Mary in assessing individual students whose literacy/learning growth concerned us. Other times, they distanced themselves from the learning community, taking field notes, observing and documenting the complex interactions through video recordings, and collecting student artifacts to broaden their understandings of student learning and change.

Mary was intentional about establishing particular social practices in her classroom. She slowly transformed her classroom into a community of practice (Wenger, 1998) taking the time to reflect on learning experiences together with the students, verbalizing her own learning processes, and "noticing" out loud what she saw the students doing as a way of validating their talk, collaboration, and inquiries. She intentionally highlighted student strengths and made sure everyone knew who the experts were – experts at using technology, drawing pictures, telling stories, dramatizing stories, reading, writing, illustrating, and organizing routines. Inquiry groups were another way students were able to collaborate, problem-solve, and take responsibility for making learning decisions based on their interests, needs, and teacher expectations. Transmediation (Suhor, 1992; Harste, 2000) became a central strategy in Mary's curriculum. Transmediation is a process of rethinking something that is known in one sign system (like print) through another sign system (like art or music). For example, students can use *sketch to stretch* (Harste et al., 1988) as a strategy to symbolize what a story or concept means to them. As their unique visual representations are discussed together in the classroom, students gain new insight and come to understand something in a new way. Each sign system generates a particular perspective and contributes something unique to the meaning-making process. Students learn to think divergently, metaphorically, and collaboratively as they negotiate meaning and add the language of each sign system to their interpretive tool box. Rather than a literal representation of a story, a drawing can reflect a way of expanding meaning to other aspects of life.

From the beginning, Mary made a variety of learning tools available for the students to use as they explored topics of interest and importance. For example, Mary had a rotating daily schedule of who would use the four computers in the room. She had a box of stories and books the children could select from to engage in Reader's Theater. Students were encouraged to dramatize stories they read or wrote, illustrate and make posters or banners, or use the computer to make pictures for their writing; music was available through a variety of CDs stored in the classroom to set the mood for various subjects, and materials for writing, drawing, reading, and investigating were always available. Reading and writing, drawing, dramatizing, and interacting together were primary ways in which authentic learning experiences were developed and problems were solved.

Mary also used talk as a powerful learning tool. For example, Mary commented that Gaby's illustrations were filled with color, showing everyone what colors could do to help the viewer feel the warmth and happiness in her picture. From students' positive reaction to her statements, Gaby began to take on the identity of an artist who flooded her canvas with beautiful primary colors – colors that reminded her of

Mexico and her family visits. When Mary told Jay that she liked “reading” his picture story about computer characters, he began to place his characters in various activities in his drawings and revise his story as he authored his visual text. Soon after, he told the class that he might want to be a writer and make a book about all of his computer games at home. Reading pictures took its place alongside reading words as part of the literacy practices in Mary’s room. Pictures were a text and words were a text – children were learning to read everything and move seamlessly between the two.

Read-aloud time became an important instructional strategy, and Mary used think alouds during oral reading to help the children learn the language of visual interpretation. Using phrases like “I wonder why the artist used contrasting colors, or placed the pictures this way on the page, or showed the characters taking these actions” helped the students learn to ask critical questions of visual as well as print texts. She found ways to make learners understand that all visible texts have invisible meanings that underpin them and it is their job to discover what those are. Through Mary’s guidance, the discourse surrounding visual images gradually became the language of artists and illustrators: What do you notice? What do you feel? What do you think the artist/illustrator wants you to feel? What tools does she/he use to achieve that (e.g., color, line, placement, light source, top frame, vertical and horizontal orientation, multiple perspectives, positioning of people)?

As we all learned more about critical literacy, issues of power, equity, and justice became a more visible part of the classroom dialogue. Inquiry groups provided a way for students to choose areas of inquiry, pursue their own interests, and have multiple opportunities to work together. Early in the year, Linda brought up the issue of gender and provided a small text set of books and materials that supported an inquiry into gender roles, gender equity, and gender in the media. *The Piggy Book* (Browne, 1986) led to heated discussions about what moms and dads do, and the questions that we asked to the children became the core questions that were asked when interpreting and interrogating all texts – print, visual, digital, musical, or dramatic.

Bringing Social Justice Close to Home

As the students were learning to critique texts and interpret them from multiple perspectives, Mary helped them connect their emerging social justice awareness to life in their own community. One day she brought in an article from the local community newspaper with the intention of sharing a real-life example of citizenship and community activism. Little did she know that this article about an elderly woman about to lose her home would become so important and meaningful for her students and for herself (see also Crafton et al., 2007).

This experience [Grandma Ruth] is representative of so many opportunities this year for 1st graders to become empowered learners. Opening up space in the curriculum for students to think critically, to care, and to use the tools of 21st century learners was transformational for me. The support of our community of practice, the theory that I revisited, relearned, and

was introduced to this year became the support I needed as I returned to teaching the multimodal world of 1st grade. (Mary, personal journal, 6/05)

While Mary historically had reserved an honored place in her early childhood curriculum for the arts, particularly drama and the visual arts, and connecting them to subject matter learning, the difference now was to recognize their force in identity development and to deeply engage in the “arts essentials like personal voice, brainstorming, making creative choices, and reflecting on their impact” (Booth, 2008). A more fluid movement between text and image and back again became characteristic of Mary’s teaching, and when you ask Mary, she is quick to respond that it began with Grandma Ruth.

In mid-December, a local newspaper ran a cover story about an elderly woman who was being evicted from her house and placed in a nursing home apparently against her will. Later articles revealed how a real estate developer wanted to build more expensive homes on this woman’s neglected property. Mary felt this article would support the first-grade social studies curriculum and its focus on learning about the traits of responsible citizenship as well as her growing interest in critical literacy.

At first Mary was a little hesitant about sharing this article, as the subject matter seemed to be rather adult. But she felt that the work with critical literacy and care supported the use of this compelling story, and she forged ahead. The picture on the front page grabbed the students’ attention and the headline caused them to gasp in horror. Staring straight out of the black and white photo, front and center, Grandma Ruth was declaring, “They can kill me first!”

The first reading and sharing of this story began with a discussion of the headline and the front-page photo. Mary simultaneously discussed how the reporter purposefully used the headline, carefully crafting the words, to grab the reader’s attention, and that the photographer used a “demand image” to do the same. She helped her students relate to the headline by sharing ways that they use this same expression, e.g., “Oh, no, I lost my jacket. My mom is going to kill me.” Mary also asked her students to tell what they noticed about the woman:

“She looks sad,” responded Jordyn.

“She is looking at us,” added Kevin.

“What do you think she is saying to us?” asked Mary.

“Help me!” was Brittany’s response.

Mary reread this article several times over the next few days. Her students were engaged – this was a real story about a real person. Together they examined the photo of this woman’s home (a smaller photo in the same article). Again they simultaneously discussed word choice and images and wondered aloud why that photo was chosen and what did it tell them about her:

“I don’t think it looks so bad,” said Ricardo.

“Yes, it does,” replied Lizzie, “look at all that garbage!”

“Why don’t the neighbors help her clean it up?” asked Daniel.

“Hey look at those old tires,” said Jackie.

“It’s an ‘eyesore,’” shouted Kyle, borrowing words from the article. Students liked the expression, “eyesore;” the word the reporter used to describe her home. They also noticed that in the article the woman was referred to as “Grandma Ruth”. “She looks sort of like my grandma,” said Pearl and, from this point on, the students referred to her as Grandma Ruth.

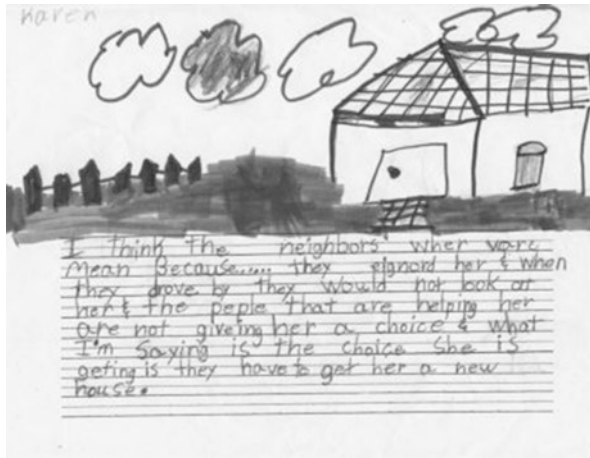


Fig. 4.1 Karen's letter to Grandma Ruth

A follow-up article elaborated her plight. This article offered a possible solution. A developer would purchase her land and build several homes on it, including one for Grandma Ruth. By this time Mary's students were beginning to understand Grandma Ruth's perspective and Kevin said, "She doesn't want a new home! She wants this one!" This led to discussions about possible solutions, kinds of action that could be taken, and a heated dialogue about fairness, rights, economics, and power. The children drew pictures of possible solutions, and some went right to the computers to create their stories about why this was wrong. Solutions included having an "extreme makeover" for the house, collecting money to help save the house, getting community members to clean the house, and sending Grandma Ruth letters from the class to be courageous and not move out if she didn't want to (Fig. 4.1).

Under Mary's guidance, the children continued to write stories, prepared a digital slide show, wrote and illustrated letters to the newspaper, and used process drama as a way to explore possible solutions. They danced, acted, drew, wrote, and talked their way to understanding the complexity of the situation and the need for taking social action. One concrete action came when the children wrote a letter to Grandma Ruth and sent it to the newspaper. It was forwarded to Grandma Ruth.

On the very last day of school, the children received a letter back from her, thanking them for caring and for helping her and encouraging them to be good students and value their education:

May 25

Dear Mrs. Brennan:

I thank you very much for being such a wonderful teacher, teaching your young Kings and Queens to love and care for others. It was a wonderful letter I received from you and your Kings and Queens from Kara S. at the newspaper. She is also so wonderful.

To the Kings and Queens you are teaching, let them know that I appreciate their caring about Grandma Ruth and that I am fine and still fighting the people that want

to take my home away from me. You see, I had wonderful teachers, like you, and it has carried me through life's journeys, so keep learning and always be honest to yourself and others and you will get to age 83 with much love and caring. May blessings be with you always.

With all my love.
Thank you so much.,
Grandma Ruth

P.S. I have kept all the papers and pictures you sent close to my heart.

Four years later, Mary's students, now in fourth grade, continue to ask about Grandma Ruth. The reporter is no longer at the paper and repeated e-mails have not answered questions about her saga, but it made an impact on these young citizens. Recently, Mary asked one of her former students to share the story of Grandma Ruth, and his response began, "Well, Grandma Ruth lived in a house that was an 'eyesore' and the government wanted to take it from her, but it was hers"

Tori and Karen Embark on a Path: Using Text and Image as Tools to Reposition the Self

Our work together this first year was purposeful and exploratory. Linda, Mary, and Penny were together in Mary's classroom on a regular basis observing and capturing the dynamic learning in this setting. Conversations and learning outside of the classroom seamlessly transferred back into the classroom setting. Early in the fall, we began to identify and share picture books that highlighted social issues, useful for the critical conversations that would be threaded throughout the school year in relation to a broad range of texts, including art, drama, and music.

One purpose of this chapter is to focus on findings revealed in the analysis of multiple, multimodal data sources that point to identity shifts in two students in Mary's classroom. The transcribed dialogues, field notes, pieces of student art, and videotapes of role playing all provided evidence of change.

Daily read alouds were an integral part of Mary's practice. Using literature selected to encourage critical conversations and reflections was a time when Penny and Linda sat outside of the learning circle and observed the dialogue that Mary facilitated. When engaged in critical literacy, the author/reader pays particular attention to how texts represent meanings about the self and others, that is, texts make available certain social roles. She believed, as Harste (2008) noted, that the ability to sound out words and make meaning from texts makes children good consumers rather than good citizens and to be truly literate, children have to understand how texts work.

During reading, Mary invited responses and interpretations of stories using basic questions of engagement like:

Why do you think the author wrote this book?
Why do you think the illustrator ...?

Favorite Books: Gender & Identity
<i>Amazing Grace</i> by Mary Hoffman (1991)
<i>Chrysanthemum</i> by Kevin Henkes (1991)
<i>Hooway for Wodney Wat</i> by Helen Lester (1999)
<i>Koala Lou</i> by Mem Fox (1988)
<i>My Great Aunt Arizona</i> by Gloria Houston (1992)
<i>Oliver Button is a Sissy</i> by Tomie DePaola (1969)
<i>The Piggybook</i> by Anthony Browne (1986)
<i>The Rainbow Fish</i> by Marcus Pfister (1992)
<i>Ruby's Wish</i> by Shirim Yim Bridges (2001)
<i>William's Doll</i> by Charlotte Zolotow (1972)

Fig. 4.2 Mary's text set of picture books

Who has the most power in the story?
 What words/images make you think that?
 Who doesn't have much or any power?
 Whose voice is silenced?
 Why do you think she/he, they don't have a voice?

The sustained critical inquiry about Grandma Ruth had a significant impact on the students. Children recognized, from the start, that the work they did was important. They listened to the books Mary read to them and had thoughtful discussions. They added new words to their vocabulary and began to use words like empathy, connecting, and caring. Mary developed an expanded text set of picture books and read alouds pertaining to social issues (see Fig. 4.2). Her read alouds included books about homelessness, different cultures, coming to a new country, learning new languages, gender, and race.

Ruby's Wish

In February Mary's students were learning about China and celebrating the Chinese New Year. They were fascinated with Chinese traditions. By this time, her students had engaged in critical discussions around a dozen or more books and had extended from them into art or drama or personal inquiry. Mary decided to read aloud *Ruby's Wish* (2001) by Shirin Yim Bridges to her class. Ruby is a young girl in Ancient China who defies the traditional female role and achieves her dream of attending the university in a male-dominated society. This book had a different focus than the books about Chinese celebrations, but its focus was one with which her students were familiar. It supported the kinds of critical questions and thinking Mary had been encouraging. "In one section of the book, the author says, 'most girls were never taught to read or write.'" Mary paused to open up space for reader response:

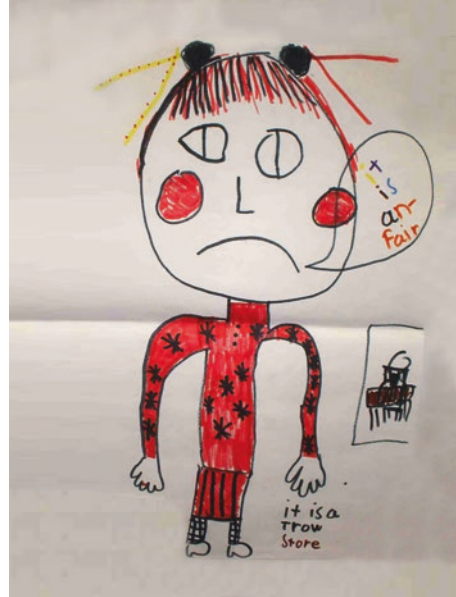
- Kevin: (gestures his response with a thumbs down, waving motion, frowning.)
- Karen says: "That's really unfair. That the boys get to learn but the girls don't get to read and write."
- Tori: (turning to Logan and whispering) "Some times you do that – on the playground, you don't let us play and that's not fair."
- Mary: "Let's stop and think about that. What's really happening?"
- Zack: "Well... I don't know... the boys have to go to school but the girls get to stop, so... the girls get to do what they want, so that's not so bad."
- Karen: "Well... no... maybe... but... What if we have an assignment to write and the girls don't have to write then we wouldn't learn how to do it." (pause) Why can't they be together doing the same things?"
- Mary: "We've thought about this before with other books – girls having the same choices or opportunities as boys..."
- Tori: "Well... like *Piggybook* and *Magic Fish* where it wasn't fair but in this book it's more unfair because only one girl got to go."
- Logan: "Yeh... maybe Ruby would feel sad that some girls didn't get to go and she might not want to go."
- Karen: "Well, she has to go or she wouldn't get to learn."
- Eric: "It was unfair at the beginning but fair at the end."

Carmen Luke (2000) states that meanings that readers make of various texts are negotiated in relation to one's different situations and positioning (e.g., adult, child, teenager, male, female, race, ethnicity, socioeconomic class) and cultural contexts. In this exchange, Mary gently pushed her young readers to consider what covert messages might be lurking under the words she was reading. Tori quickly made a connection from the text to the playground and her own experience with unfairness. Certainly, first graders of both genders are not novices when it comes to unequal treatment, but Mary raised the bar with this and other books suggesting that boys often have more power than girls in social settings. Karen focused on the injustice of not being able to learn and not having opportunities to read and write, while Logan suggested that Ruby may not want to go unless everyone has the chance. Albers (2007) notes that "critical discussions can lead to students' awareness of what they have learned, and with dialogue, they can unlearn beliefs that tend to stabilize culture, gender, race and ideology" (p. 168). The social construction of meaning in this situation laid a tentative conceptual foundation that was revisited again and again by Tori and Karen.

A short time after the reading of *Ruby's Wish*, students were asked to choose their favorite book from a set of read alouds so they could discuss its meaning with others and then represent their ideas through art. Tori and Karen joined Linda and one boy who lost interest in the activity and wandered to another group. Initially, Tori retold the story of Ruby, her wish, and how the wish was granted. As in the previous dialogue, the comments about it being unfair and how girls should get to do the same things as boys surfaced. Together, Linda, Tori, and Karen decided to draw a picture of Ruby that showed her important traits, like being brave and courageous by standing up to her grandfather and saying over and over again that her life was unfair.

Tori and Karen gathered the art supplies and continued talking about how their drawing could show something so abstract as bravery. They immediately pulled out their red markers, remembering that the color red is an important color in China. Tori recalled the line from the story that said that Ruby still wears a little red each

Fig. 4.3 First drawing of Ruby by Tori and Karen (Translation: It isn't fair. It is a true story)



day. Karen added that red is the color of bravery and power. Linda suggested that sometimes the size in a picture can communicate ideas like that too, and so the young artists used simple lines and color to fill the page with their first image of Ruby (Fig. 4.3). The vertical orientation of their drawing forces the viewer to read from top to bottom, first encountering Ruby's sad face with undifferentiated eyes and red cheeks; she is saying "it is unfair." The children's earlier dialogue, Tori's retelling, and the first piece of art produced in relation to the literature all provided connected opportunities to make and consolidate meaning in relation to the narrative.

The second image of Ruby came months later as a gift from Tori and Karen to Linda who was now visiting the classroom less and less. During the intervening weeks of image 1 and image 2, Mary had continued to highlight gender issues through an extended unit on China where the students learned that girls were not as valued as boys in that culture. Tori and Karen had also been involved in an extended inquiry group focused on gender issues.

In this second drawing (Fig. 4.4), Ruby changed from a tearful, frowning girl depicted by simple lines to an older, smiling more sophisticated girl/woman wearing makeup and earrings. This time Ruby is a smaller figure but the whole of the work itself is richer, more textured with Ruby shown in a setting that reveals Chinese culture – Chinese symbols are shown on a wall hanging and close by is a hanging ball with tassels, also an Asian artifact. However, this isn't a pure Chinese setting as a close look at the right of the drawing shows – two rugs are seen drawn in pink with hearts and stars decorating them – décor more representative of an American girl's home than a Chinese one. Albers (2007) notes that in art with a horizontal orientation, the meaning should be read left to right and the left side often presents information that is already known or given, while information on the right is new

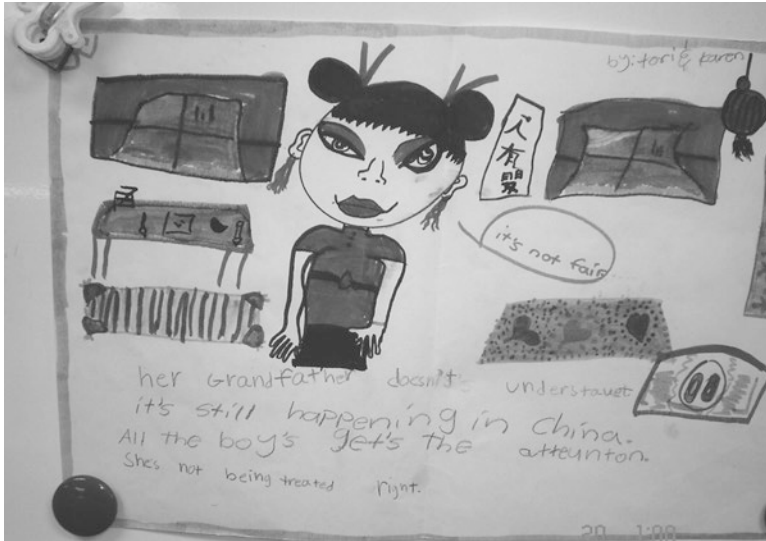


Fig. 4.4 Second drawing of Ruby by Karen and Tori

information (p. 141). In this image, Tori and Karen seem to be transitioning their understandings of gender from one culture to another; with one foot still in the narrative of Ruby, they have begun to create their own social narrative.

While Ruby is still declaring, “It’s not fair” in this picture, the artists have included more writing to express their growing knowledge of gender inequality:

her Grandfather doesn't understand
 it's still happening in China.
 All the boy's get's the attention.
 She's not being treated right.

This text not only includes a cross-cultural message, but it is an intertextual, multimodal creation reflective of the increasing salience of multiple modes of meaning available in all contemporary text displays (Fairclough, 2000). It is worth noting that Ruby’s face is dramatically different from the first drawing, particularly the eyes and mouth, which are almost, stylized versions of other images of girls and women found in many popular American magazines. These young learners show that many prior texts influence current ones and that visual literacy as well as print literacy is not only intertextual but intervisual as well. Tori and Karen use a range of semiotic resources at their disposal to create one text; their understandings of what it means to be female in America come from many places. This is the most powerful reason to engage in critical literacy from an early age, arming all students with the tools necessary to uncover and resist the ways others may seek to position them.

Tori and Karen’s final artistic rendering of Ruby came at the beginning of the second grade when they produced the text (Fig. 4.5) and brought it to Mary. The critical experiences with the text and image they had had in the first grade stayed with them throughout the summer and resurfaced one more time in another visual exploration of Ruby. Here, Tori and Karen themselves have entered the text as Ruby

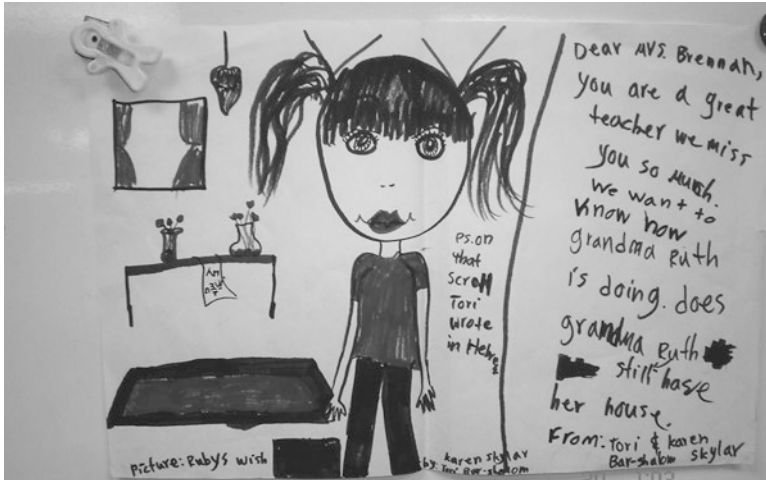


Fig. 4.5 Final drawing of Ruby

was transformed into a Western girl with pigtails not unlike Karen's and a t-shirt with jeans, similar to the clothes both girls wore to school. Gone is the provocative, sexual look and heavy makeup of the last drawing, and, in its place, Tori and Karen show an image of a contemporary girl, smiling, once again full-face forward looking out at her viewing audience.

The only remnants of the previous texts are their use of the color red and the chopsticks protruding from the girl's hair. The eyes, however, are reminiscent of the second drawing, almost doll-like in their expression; they predictably reveal the continued influence of contemporary texts in their lives. Their label in the bottom left of the picture shows that, indeed, this is still a representation of the meanings they constructed from the book, *Ruby's Wish*, but those critical perspectives have now been internalized. The words to the immediate right of Ruby say: "P.S. on that scroll Tori wrote in Hebrew." This is a strong intertextual, intervisual move by Tori, who is Jewish, to identify herself as integral to the communication.

Bakhtin (1981) tells us that when an author composes a text, he or she also composes a social self. While he was referring to written texts, we interpret this image as both a social and cultural statement about an identity that Tori and Karen have been exploring over time and have finally realized. Revealed in the details and visual codes of this image, we see how reading, writing, talk, and art mediate new understandings of the self and the world.

Importantly, Tori and Karen have divided this work into two parts: one primarily visual and the other entirely written. The right side of the text shows a letter written to Mary:

Dear Ms. Brennan,
 You are a great
 teacher we miss
 you so much.
 We want to

know how
 grandma Ruth
 is doing. does
 grandma Ruth
 still have
 her house.

From: Tori Bar-Shalom & Karen Skyla

Considering Tori and Karen's final representation as a whole, it is easy to see that the girls are seeking to reestablish a treasured relationship with their teacher, but a closer look reveals much more. Their work is unified by their concern for social issues. Their semiotic texts are both culturally and personally situated (Albers, 2007) and demonstrate that the experiences these girls have had, the critical conversations, and the explorations that revolved around images and purpose were truly transformational. Without Tori and Karen's first image, it would be more difficult to interpret their last; reading images across representations, like the process of assessing growth in writers, gives teachers and researchers access to a learner's history as well as cues to the topics that would be most productive to discuss. Knowing that many meaningful, multimodal topic-related opportunities happened in the spaces between each of the drawings underscores the value of ongoing opportunities to move among sign systems. While each picture positioned Tori and Karen as writers and artists, each also provided a reflective opportunity to consider who they are becoming and who they want to be in the future.

Conclusion

Mary's classroom and, specifically, Tori and Karen's work reveal the parallel processes of the arts and literacy, their reciprocity in the evolution of learning, and their impact on identity construction. What is essential to reading and writing is also essential to art and other semiotic systems: bringing life experiences to bear, focusing on big ideas, drafting, revising, presenting, and reflecting. Each sign system brings with it a different potential, its own rhythms of learning, and each alternative construction of meaning a new opportunity to transform the self. Transmediation and the intertextual moves visible in Tori and Karen's art and writing reveal how multiple semiotic systems support personal inquiries. When the substantive talk, the creation of images, and the reading and writing of literature brush up against one another in a continuous cycle, teachers are provided with prime opportunities to raise current social and cultural assumptions to consciousness and help students relearn oppressive views. Students, then, can enter into an active examination and control of socialized beliefs, challenging them rather than passively accepting them.

Maxine Greene (1995) repeatedly turns our attention to the notion of "wide-awakeness," the awareness of what it means to be fully present in the world. "Meanings spring up all around as soon as we are conscious, and it is the obligation of teachers to heighten the consciousness of who ever they teach by urging them to read and look and make their own interpretations of what they see" (p. 35). Our

work raises questions about exactly what constitutes effective teaching and learning in the early childhood classroom.

We know that students today live in an increasingly visual culture. We recognize that the adult world of Mary's students is one that we can only imagine. In Mary's school, first graders attend an art class once a week at the end of the day. Even the time slot allotted for art gives the message that it is not as important as the academic subjects. Our work in language, literacy, and the arts is different than the "arts experiences that are inserted into the school day without deep connections to the core curriculum of the classroom" (Grumet, 2004, p. 49). Primary teachers have traditionally embraced the arts (i.e., music, drama, visual expression), and, yet, at a time when their importance should be increasing, it is waning. Our role as early childhood educators is to provide the resources of all semiotic systems to our young learners. Our research is helping us to see that in today's world, this is not only a responsibility, but it must be a priority.

Our experiences with Mary's class demonstrate that young children are capable of challenging (or helping to perpetuate) social injustices related to gender, race, and class differences. Issues of equity and social justice are part of young children's lives and are appropriate dimensions of a semiotic curriculum.

When texts that deal with critical social issues are read, discussed, and represented through multiple modes in primary classrooms, they can open up space for children to consider alternative perspectives, make intertextual connections, critique and analyze author assumptions, and develop a sense of self and agency. Tori's and Karen's renditions of Ruby speak to shifts in their identities that may hold promise for their futures as strong, independent, socially aware women.

The children in Mary's class engaged in important work. The curriculum expanded to embrace authentic experiences and multiple ways of knowing and expressing. Linda, Mary, and Penny looked for meaningful ways to integrate the arts with a range of other sign systems – and the students were willing participants. "Every instance of making and sharing meaning is a multimodal event involving many sign systems in addition to language... When we limit ourselves to language, we cut ourselves off from other ways of knowing... Children whose strength is not language are denied access. Children whose strength is language are not given opportunities to extend their knowing and thereby develop new ways to communicate with themselves and others" (Harste, 2000, p. 4).

As teachers and learners, we must ourselves be visionary and provide ways for our students to "move gracefully and fluently between text and images, between literal and figurative worlds" (Burmark, 2002, p. 1). Future research opportunities include looking for ways to expand curriculum to embrace the arts. Visual literacy, especially connected with digital literacy, is an area that warrants exploration. As early childhood educators, we have an obligation to look for new social practices, practices that will help to fulfill a dream of a fully functioning participatory democracy. Along with the other authors in this book and colleagues in our own arts and literacy communities, we must continuously challenge ourselves and those who would contain our students within the point of a number 2 pencil.

Like all teachers, early childhood educators continue to feel the tensions of a curriculum they envision and the one they are pressured to enact. As we all know, teaching and life are never neutral. In her discussion of the ongoing importance of critical literacy, Janks (2014) reminds us that it is not enough to help our students learn to interrogate the world; they must develop a social conscience “served by a critical imagination for redesign.” The daily lives of children are filled with boundless information related to power and privilege; how do we ensure that they continually question the everyday texts and practices they encounter both at school and at home, on the local and global stages? We are updating our own work by exploring Janks’ redesign cycle as we continue to commit ourselves and the teachers with whom we work in the USA and around the world to the deconstruction and reconstruction of resources that contribute to a more just world.

This research is supported by a grant from the Spencer Foundation.

References

- Albers, P. (2007). *Finding the artist within*. Newark, DE: The International Reading Association.
- Anstey, M., & Bull, G. (2006). *Teaching and learning multiliteracies: Changing times, changing literacies*. Newark, DE: The International Reading Association.
- Bakhtin, M. (1981). *The dialogic imagination: Four essays*. Austin, TX: University of Texas.
- Bomer, R., & Bomer, K. (2001). *Reading and writing for social action*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Booth, E. (2008). Taking AIM, reaching the mark. In C. Weiss & A. L. Lichtenstein (Eds.), *AIMprint: New relationships in the arts and learning* (pp. i–ii). Chicago: Columbia College Chicago.
- Bridges, S. (2001). *Ruby’s wish*. San Francisco: Chronicle Books.
- Browne, A. (1986). *The piggybook*. New York: Alfred Knopf.
- Burmark, L. (2002). *Visual literacy: Learn to see, see to learn*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.
- Comber, B. (2003). Critical literacy: What does it look like in the early years? In N. Hall, J. Larson, & J. Marsh (Eds.), *Handbook of early childhood literacy* (pp. 355–369). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Crafton, L., Brennan, M., & Silvers, P. (2007). Critical inquiry and multiliteracies in a first-grade classroom. *Language Arts*, 84(6), 510–518.
- DePaola, T. (1969). *Oliver Button is a sissy*. New York: Harcourt Brace.
- Dewey, J. (1938). *Experience and education*. New York: Collier.
- Dyson, A. H. (1993). *Social worlds of children learning to write in an urban primary school*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Fairclough, N. (2000). Multiliteracies and language: Orders of discourse and intertextuality. In M. Kalantzis & B. Cope (Eds.), *Multiliteracies: Literacy learning and the design of social futures* (pp. 162–181). London: Routledge.
- Fox, M. (1988). *Koala Lou*. Melbourne, Australia: Drakeford.
- Gee, J. (1992). *The social mind: Language, ideology and social practice*. New York: Bergin & Garvey.
- Greene, M. (1995). *Releasing the imagination: Essays on education, the arts, and social change*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Grumet, M. (2004). No one learns alone. In N. Rabkin & R. Redmond (Eds.), *Putting the arts in the picture: Reframing education in the 21st century* (pp. 49–80). Chicago: Columbia College.

- Harste, J. (2000). Six points of departure. In B. Berghoff, K. Egawa, J. Harste, & B. Hoonan (Eds.), *Beyond reading and writing: Inquiry, curriculum, and multiple ways of knowing* (pp. 1–16). Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.
- Harste, J. (2008). Visual literacy thought piece. In M. Lewison, C. Leland, & J. Harste (Eds.), *Creating critical classrooms: K-8 reading and writing with an edge* (pp. 52–58). New York: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Harste, J., Short, K., & Burke, C. (1988). *Creating classrooms for authors*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Henkes, K. (1991). *Chrysanthemum*. New York: Mulberry Books.
- Hoffman, M. (1991). *Amazing grace*. New York: Dial Books.
- Houston, G. (1992). *My great Aunt Arizona*. New York: HarperCollins.
- Janks, H. (2000). Domination, access, diversity, and design: A synthesis for critical literacy education. *Educational Review*, 52(2), 15–30.
- Janks, H. (2014). Critical literacy's ongoing importance for education. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 57(5), 349–356.
- Kress, G. (2003). *Literacy in the new media age*. London: Routledge.
- Kristeva, J. (1980). *Desire in language: A semiotic approach to literature and art*. New York: Columbia University.
- Lester, H. (1999). *Hooway for Wodney Wat*. New York: Houghton-Mifflin.
- Luke, C. (2000). Cyberschooling and technological change: Multiliteracies for new times. In M. Kalantzis & B. Cope (Eds.), *Multiliteracies: Literacy learning and the design of social futures* (pp. 69–91). London: Routledge.
- Luke, A., & Freebody, P. (1997). Shaping the social practices of reading. In S. Muspratt, A. Luke, & P. Freebody (Eds.), *Constructing critical literacies* (pp. 185–225). Cresskill, NJ: Hampton.
- New London Group. (2000). A pedagogy of multiliteracies: Designing social futures. *Harvard Educational Review*, 66, 60–92.
- Pfister, M. (1992). *The rainbow fish*. New York: North-South Books.
- Ray, K. W. (1999). *Wondrous words: Writers and writing in the elementary classroom*. Champaign Urbana, IL: National Council for Teachers of English.
- Short, K., Harste, J., & Burke, C. (1996). *Creating classrooms for authors and inquirers*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Suhor, C. (1992). Semiotics and the English language arts. *Language Arts*, 69(3), 228–230.
- Vasquez, V. (2003). *Getting beyond "I like the book": Creating space for critical literacy in K-6 classrooms*. Newark, DE: International Reading Association.
- Vazquez, V., Egawa, K., Harste, J., & Thompson, R. (Eds.). (2004). *Literacy as social practice*. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.
- Vygotsky, L. (1986). *Thought and language*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Wells, G. (1999). *Dialogic inquiry: Toward a sociocultural practice and theory of education*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University.
- Wenger, E. (1998). *Communities of practice: Learning, meaning, and identity*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University.
- Zolotow, C. (1972). *William's doll*. New York: Harper & Row.

Linda K. Crafton University of Wisconsin-Parkside, Kenosha, WI, USA

Dr. Linda K. Crafton is a professor of Communication at UW-Parkside. She teaches courses in critical media literacy; race, class, gender, and sexuality in the media; gender and communication; and political communication. She also directs the center for Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies. Formerly, Linda was the director of Teacher Education Assessment at Northwestern University and a professor in Teacher Education at UW-Parkside.

Penny Silvers Dominican University, River Forest, IL, USA

Dr. Penny Silvers is a professor of Teacher Education and Literacy at Dominican University in River Forest, Illinois. She is a former elementary teacher and reading specialist and has written numerous articles and book chapters relating to language arts and reading practices. Penny is active in the National Council of Teachers of English and is a former member of the Commission on Reading.

Editor's Note: This chapter is one of four chapters from the original 2009 edition of Making Meaning that has been updated and included in this volume. Authors, Linda and Penny provide the following tribute to their co-author, Dr. Mary Brennan whose classroom was the setting for the work described in this chapter. We all share their loss.

Mary Brennan (1950–2014) Prichett Elementary, Buffalo Grove, IL

After a long fight with pancreatic cancer, our valued coauthor, Mary, died in June 2014. She is survived by her son and by her daughter who has followed in her footsteps as a critical literacy primary teacher. We miss her brilliance, her laughter, and her curricular insights.

Dr. Mary Brennan received her doctorate in Educational Leadership from Northern Illinois University. She was a National Board Certified first-grade teacher in Buffalo Grove, IL and an adjunct professor at Roosevelt University.

Chapter 5

Drawing as a Relational Event: Making Meaning Through Talk, Collaboration, and Image Production

Kristine E. Sunday

Abstract Contemporary understandings of child art suggest that the drawings of children are best understood as cultural productions that are influenced by the intentions and circumstances that surround children's work. Whereas the artifacts of children's drawing activity may provide insight into children's interests and personal experiences, it is within the act of drawing itself whereby children come to make meaning of their everyday worlds. In this chapter, I propose a relational view of children's drawing in which meaning emerges in the in-between spaces of talk, gesture, mark-making, and artifact. In doing so, I bring forth the idea of children's drawing as an embodied experience in which thought, talk, activity, and objects are intra-connected. Focusing my discussion within early childhood education, I conclude with thoughts regarding children's capacity to construct meaningful experiences and advocate for the inclusion of children's voluntary drawing activity as part of a comprehensive early childhood program.

Keywords Drawing events • Relationality • Children's meaning-making • Interpreting child art • Relational space • Drawing and talk

Interest, attention, and questions related to young children's drawings, and the meanings that they hold, have occupied the thoughts of scholars and practitioners for more than a century. Whereas modern artists saw inspiration in the works of children, offering an account of art that challenged ideas of representation beyond an exact mirror of what the eyes could see (Fineberg, 1997); developmental psychologists sought explanations for how children's drawings could be used as a means to further understand the mysteries of children's cognition and creativity (see Lowenfeld, 1957; Luquet, 1927/2001; Kellogg, 1969; Piaget & Inhelder, 1948/1963).

In recent decades, attention to young children's drawings, and the meanings that they hold, has been bolstered by an interest in multimodal meaning-making prac-

K.E. Sunday (✉)
Old Dominion University, Norfolk, VA, USA
e-mail: ksunday@odu.edu

tices, particularly deriving from the field of emergent literacy. Dyson (1986), for example, recognized that children's drawing was an integral piece to children's emergent literacy practice, one of many symbol systems afforded to young children in their efforts to become textual meaning-makers. Dyson's work is encompassed by a more refined view of literacy that draws from semiotics to consider how children come to use different symbol systems, or modalities, as a way of communicating meaning. Her work, and others who follow this line of scholarship, considers meaning-making as a multimodal practice, one in which symbols work in tandem with one another, what Dyson (1992) referred to as symbol weaving. For literacy scholars, children's drawings are largely viewed as something that can assist and enhance writing practices as drawing gives way to a more specific and fluid use of written text (Baghban, 2007; Puranik & Lonigan, 2011).

Beyond "Emergent Literacy"

In the field of art education, interest in children's drawing mirrors much of what emergent literacy offers regarding children's use of representational resources as a means of expressing the rich and varied worlds of children's lived experiences, albeit with a more focused attention on the value of children's drawings as a stand-alone activity of communication, rather than a precursor to the more privileged form of written text. Scholars of young children's art suggest that the drawing activity of young children presents important means by which children come to organize, narrate, and (re-)construct understanding of experiences and concepts of their everyday lives. With more than four decades of research focused on children's drawings, Brent and Marjorie Wilson (2009) have come to the broadly accepted conclusion that children's drawing is an important feature for children's world-making, that is, a space where children "develop, present, and examine ideas about the reality of their world" (p. 23), including understandings about relationships, how things work, the complexities of the self, implicit social norms of good and bad, and as a means to develop ideas about their future selves (Kreitler & Kreitler, 1972).

From the early use of developmental models to explain children's drawing activity (Kellogg, 1969; Lowenfeld, 1957) to more contemporary views that consider how children's drawings are imbued with narrative qualities, research about child art maintains a commitment to exploring the cognitive and communicative capacities of children's drawing (see Cox, 2005; Duncum, 1993; Sunday, 2012; Wilson, 1974, 1976). Contemporary scholars of child art have come to understand that children's drawings are not only produced in relation to children's experiences with each other and the broader culture but that they are also imbued with performative qualities that make the interpretation of drawings virtually impossible without consideration of the contexts in which they were created. Thompson (2009) explains, "drawings, like other forms of art-making for children, reveal themselves as public performances that extend to the situation deposits of meaning that can and should be shared, reassessed, contested, revisited, and opened to amendment" (p. 32).

Drawing as “Performance” and the Concept of Relationality

As an interpreted performance, the narrative qualities of drawing activity suggest a multimodal view of children’s drawing, one in which talk, gesture, mark-making, and artifact become inseparable from the meaning being made during the event itself. Attempting to describe and characterize the intertextuality of the meaning-making processes, Dyson (1986) uses the term “composing event,” Thompson (2002) has identified it as a drawing event, while Coates and Coates (2006) define it as a drawing episode, and Wright (2007) refers to it as drawing-telling. In each case, consideration is given to the assemblage of signs (Chandler, 2002) present during children’s activity while attempting to understand children’s “proclivity to cross channels of communication” and “rely on communication which is bodily based, iconic, basic, and expressive” (Wright, 2007, p. 37).

Turning toward contemporary art, my work considers the idea of relationality as a key concept for exploring a nomadic view of children’s drawing events, one in which visual spatial, auditory, and bodily kinesthetic channels converge through the fluid convivial and experiential moments of children’s lives (Sunday, 2015). Thus, I consider children’s drawing activity as a relational space. Informed by the work of art critic Nicolas Bourriaud (2002, 2009a, 2009b), who identified the term relational aesthetics to describe contemporary artworks that have a participatory focus and seek to address the fluid boundaries of communication, migration, and identity that characterize life in the twenty-first century, I explore how children’s drawing events create social interstices or rather spaces between objects of production, viewing, and interpretation that open potential pathways for children’s thinking, action, and agency.

In this chapter, I expand on the idea that children’s drawing activities are relational spaces in which meaning making occurs in the in-between spaces of talk, drawing, gesture, and others to solidify an understanding of the multimodal interplay of children’s drawing events. Using examples and vignettes collected during nearly a decade of researching with children, I begin by addressing connections between talk, image, and text and then proceed to narrate important ideas and concepts that exemplify, and describe, how drawing events occur within a relational space. I conclude with a discussion on how the inclusion of children’s drawing makes significant contributions to a comprehensive early childhood curriculum.

Research Context

As a graduate student, I had the good fortune of working closely with preservice art education students in community-based Saturday art classes for children. Saturday art classes were a hybrid of traditional classroom experiences and out-of-school activities. Advanced level, undergraduate students designed and implemented art curriculum that included many of the elements of a traditional art classroom, including group instruction, demonstration, art production, and critique but with an

extended time frame that gave teachers and students the opportunity to experiment with ideas and to carefully observe and reflect on pedagogy, children's learning, and art-making. Of the nearly 150 children, many began in the preschool classroom and returned each fall and spring semester throughout their elementary years. For these younger children, drawing was an integral part of curriculum, and teachers were required to provide 20 min of voluntary sketchbook drawing at the beginning of each lesson.

During my 7 years working with students in Saturday School, first as graduate student and, later, as faculty member, I closely observed children's art-making, particularly their drawing activities. These observations provoked enduring epistemological questions about children's meaning-making and became the focus of my ongoing research. *How do young children's drawing activities represent what they know? How is knowledge constructed within a context of social practice? In what ways do young children story their lives in graphic form?*

Drawing and Talk

The vignettes shared in this chapter are selections from the participatory observation of my time in Saturday School where I "played an established participant role in the scene studied" (Atkinson & Hammersley, 1994, p. 248). Gathered through the use of video, photography, and written field notes, it allowed opportunity for reflection on young children's drawing events including the talk, gesture, and expressions that accompanied interactions (Goldman & McDermott, 2007).

Exploring "Relations" of Friendship

Sarah and Emma had become thick as thieves during their weekly meet-ups in their community art class. When one would arrive, she would quickly scan the room to locate the other, sketchbook in hand, before choosing her seat. Their friendship was made on common interests and culture. Both Chinese, the girls shared interests in all things pink, princesses, and drawing. Although Emma was considerably taller than Sarah, the two girls shared common physical features, including long black hair. While Sarah was the skilled drawing practitioner, it was Emma who was the skilled verbalizer. The two five-year-olds would sit together, drawing and talking, ruminating over what to draw, how to draw, what they liked, and what kinds of activities were in store for them in the coming week.

One morning, after a lesson on simple bookmaking, the two girls ventured out on their own to create a second set of books outside the parameters of the art lesson. Sarah initiated the work, drawing princess figures on the pages of 4-panel-accordion book. While holding the work-up, for Emma to see, Emma carefully copied the visual aspects of Sarah's princess, color by color: black hair, yellow skirt, striped purple bodice, and long pink sleeves. Before each addition, Emma looked carefully

at Sarah's drawing and then verbalized each aspect as she added details. "Okay, next is black," she announced as she moved her marker to form the hands of her princess.

Sitting across the table, Sarah held her book open to display a clear view for Emma, watching and pointing to each aspect of her drawing to ensure that the details were mirrored with flawless execution. With the drawing of the first princess complete, Emma placed the cap on the black marker, looked toward Sarah's drawing and asked, "And then what do you have?"

Sarah invited a new direction for Emma's work, one that included a more intimate connection between them. "Can you draw me?"

Emma paused for a moment, looking first at her work and then at Sarah's work, before replying, "Okay, it will be like this. I will make you like a Cinderella."

Not convinced that Cinderella was the right princess for her, Sarah flipped through the pages of her own book and after looking carefully at her own princesses, replied, somewhat tenuously, "Can...I want to be a Sleeping Beauty."

Emma, recognizing Sarah's favorite color, reached for a marker as she announced her color choice, "Then I am going to use the pink." She examined the princess drawing on the page of her book, clearly contemplating the spatial restrictions left on the existing page, and continued with her explanation while pointing to a fresh page, "I'm so big so I am going to have to do it here." Then she paused and waited for her friend's approval.

Identifying their difference in stature, Sarah suggested elements that would identify the Sleeping Beauty as herself, "Make me smaller than you."

Emma placed her right hand toward the bottom of the page and with a playful smile, announced, "Then I am going to make you this many."

Sarah maintained a polite disposition of disagreement, "No thank you."

Emma, moving her hand up the page to indicate a potentially taller version of her friend, once again paused and asked for approval, "This many?"

Still unsatisfied, Sarah once again declined the suggestion with another timid, "No thanks."

Emma moved her hand parallel to the shoulder of the existing princess, but Sarah was not satisfied until Emma's hand demonstrated that the drawings would be of equal size. Emma, however, kindly explained while moving her hand back to the shoulder of the figure on her page, "No, you have to be this many, because, because, you are smaller than me."

The Role of Talk and the Act of Drawing

The talk that surrounds a group of young children, sitting together while they busy themselves with markers and paper, is an informative and exciting experience. Though it is true that for some children, drawing is a solitary activity, many children find drawing to be an immensely social activity, one in which stories are constructed, drawing styles established, and expertise shared (Thompson, 1999). It is also true that the talk that surrounds children's drawings is widely varied (Coates & Coates,

2006). For some, it is about the subject matter of their drawings, and for others it is a time to socialize about things that matter; superheroes and birthdays, mommies and daddies, brothers and sisters, or maybe a trip with grandma and grandpa. Some children, like Sarah, choose to talk while they work, at times revealing the emerging inner speech (Vygostky, 1962) that relays the connections between thought and language, a verbalization of planning and execution. Other times, often prompted by adults, children talk about their finished drawings, imbuing them with representational values that may, or may not, have propelled the initial work, as is witnessed in scribble drawings annotated with teacher handwriting.

As a researcher, I am most interested in the kind of talk that helps me to see (and understand) children's drawings outside the perimeter of my own adult eyes, as well as the utterances that facilitate deeper meaning for the children while they draw. In essence, I am interested in the entanglement between drawing and talk and how these modalities coalesce to produce meaning. Understanding the talk that surrounds children's drawing events, however, cannot be fully actualized without an examination of the "expansive range of signs" (Wright, 2007, p. 37) that are invoked during drawing events, both verbal and nonverbal. Thus, a multimodal understanding of children's graphic productions must also consider the performative qualities that accompany talk and drawing: the gestures that anchor the meaning of talk and the playful use of onomatopoeia that brings excitement and action to their work.

Going Beyond "Residual Artifacts"

While it is true that children's drawings, as stand-alone artifacts, have been used as a source for interpreting children's emotional, intellectual, and psychic lives (Golomb, 1992), many who study child art suggest that such an approach misses the richness and complexity of children's productions. The perspective toward children's drawing is grounded in modernist traditions in which children's drawings are interpreted as a noun or, rather, an assumption that the object itself is central to the creation of meaning (Bourriaud, 2002).

From a modernist perspective, the art object possesses meaning that is established when the object is produced, within the contexts and time of its creation. The fixed and stable meaning emits from the object itself and serves to reveal a particular truth, intended by the creator (Stecker, 2010). In relation to the artwork of children, such stable and fixed meaning has traditionally been thought to spring from the inner psychic life of the child. What then might we deduce about Mathew's drawing, as a noun? Dark and foreboding, the interpretive process may cause us to express concern for what lies in the shadows of his subconscious, unless of course, we take the time to entertain the talk that surrounds the creation of the drawing.

When we consider the interplay between text and image and the propensity for children to use drawings as mechanism for telling stories (Gallas, 2003), drawing emerges as a verb, an action in which the communicative capabilities of a children's drawing are more accurately discovered through the activity of drawing. Interpretation, then, becomes more about listening and watching than speculating about the residual artifact that remains, after the act of creation is complete.

Expanding Interpretive Frameworks

Mathew appeared to be somewhat of a “loner” in the company of his peers. He rarely spent time in play or talk with other children but instead preferred the company and conversation of adults. When I arrived in the classroom, he was intently focused on details that were bringing ferocious life to a full-page pencil sketch of a glorious beast, its oversized head covered in fur, formed by Matthew’s moving the lead of the pencil on its side. The giant razor sharp teeth accenting the oversized mouth, two pointed horns protruding from either side of the head, and almond-shaped slanted eyes gave the character a frightening and powerful stature. As I approached the table, Mathew was working on one of the beast’s six arms that extended from a small sticklike body. Using proportional devices to highlight the features of the monster that, to Mathew, were key to its survival, the features that were the most menacing were also the most pronounced. His final choice, a red-colored pencil, bathed the monster with a bloodlike presence (see Fig. 5.1).

When I came upon Mathew, one fall morning while visiting his classroom, I decided to watch, listen, and ask questions that could demonstrate my genuine interest in the thoughts, ideas, and hypothesis that Mathew was exploring in his work. In the space where talking and drawing intertwined, I learned about the MegMa monster, and in doing so, I also learned about Mathew’s conceptions of death and rebirth, survival, desire, and strategy. In the space where drawing and talking intertwined, Mathew’s meanings emerged and expanded.

“Can you tell me about your drawing?” I asked, “He sure does seem to have some powerful teeth!” Mathew responded while he continued to draw. The MegMa monster, he explained, was the lone survivor of a monster species, exiled from the planet earth. Now living on Jupiter, nourished by the gasses that comprise the massive planet, the MegMa monster waits patiently for the opportunity to return.

As Mathew explains the origin and fate of the species, two 7-year-old girls, sitting across from him at a large table, are listening. “Uh-oh” one says. Mathew stops his own story to investigate their drawing but seems uninterested in the innocuous snowmen and dolphins that have the girls’ drawing attention.

“What does he do when he comes to earth?” I asked. Mathew began to respond, “He comes to...” but then paused, unsure of the direction of his tale. He points across the table, to the girl’s drawing, “He comes to get them!” The girls squeal with delight, “He comes to get my snowman!” one replies. “But the dolphins protect them,” adds the other. And with that, the origin and the fate of the species emerged. The MegMa monsters, once many in numbers, arrived on earth to devour the snowmen but were destroyed by the dolphins, who shot water on the monsters to defend the personified snow. Though the dolphins appeared the victors of the intergalactic battle, Mathew suggested that the parthenogenetic offspring continue to not only threaten the earth but also to re-populate the species. “So the species is almost totally extinct?” I asked. Mathew got up from his chair. “Yeah, except this guy laid eggs, and he’s going to keep coming down. So here’s Jupiter,” he said pointing at his own drawing and then moving his fingers across the table to the edge of the girl’s

Fig. 5.1 MegMa monster
by Mathew, age 7



drawing, “and I am going to draw a line coming from it, and then it’s going to be like, arrows pointing down, so that’s like the guy jumping off.”

More than a menacing picture, Mathews drawing was a connection to his ideas and an important entry into the social spaces of the classroom. The drawing, and the meaning constructed, became a social interstice (Bourriaud, 2002) or rather a potentiality and possibility for human interaction and collaborative meaning making. Actualizing the potentiality and possibility, the MegMa monster fully came into being, and as it did, meaning became entangled between talk, collaboration, and image production.

Drawing Events

Thus far, I have demonstrated that children’s drawings, as stand-alone artifacts, provide little evidence to reveal the complexities of meaning-making. Instead, meaning-making is an unfolding that can best be understood through careful attention to the talk, image, and activity that surrounds this creative process. When acknowledged together as an integrated process, the interpretation of children’s drawings becomes more rich, but still incomplete. To observe a child’s work, explains Thompson (2015), as it comes into being, “is to understand the complexity of the forces entangled in its making, the particular cultural and personal references it evokes, and the

questions about childhood and artmaking and pedagogy that it raises. This is the drawing in process, as assemblage and event” (p. 555).

In its early use, the idea of a drawing event filled an important gap for the study of child art that served to characterize the connective tissue between talk and drawing realized through peer-mediated drawing activity (Thompson, 2002; Thompson and Bales, 1991). Furthermore, studied as a performative event, the importance of accompanying gesture and sound effects expanded how it was that meaning not only emerged through such activity (Sunday, 2012; Thompson, 1999) but also how graphic representation moved through process of inscription and re-inscription, thus resisting fixed and stable meaning (Schulte, 2011).

Characterizing children’s drawing activity as “events” also has the advantage of recognizing the sociocultural influences of children’s meaning making during the activity of drawing. Because drawing is a social practice (Pearson, 2001), we must consider how children’s graphic productions include prior knowledge of cultural influences and how meaning is associated with children’s lives both in and out of schools. Thus, a complete understanding of children’s drawings must include “the context in which the drawing occurred, and other aspects that may be linked to the drawing: social activities, personal experiences or intertextual influences such as TV, films, comic books or computer games” (Wright, 2007, p. 38).

Understanding Drawing as Social Practice

Seven-year-old Lucy’s fascination with the magic of the calabash gourd emerged first in her sketchbook as a (re)telling of an animated Chinese folk tale. Like much of the content that makes up children’s drawings, when they are given a choice of what to draw, the folk tale was a piece of animated popular culture viewed at home that she chose to explore further in the pages of her sketchbook (Thompson, 2003). Lucy worked alone and in silence in which, over the span of several mornings, nearly a dozen images unfolded in the pages of her sketchbook. Without a single word of explanatory text, the images of mythical figures were a graphic narrative, in every sense of the word. Each drawing shared common features of those that preceded it, in style and/or content, and the linearity of the story took a more definitive turn when Lucy co-opted the idea of page numbers from the peer beside her (see Figs. 5.2 and 5.3).

Lucy’s characters hatched from calabash gourds and possessed magical powers. One shot fire and another water, and one especially mischievous-looking character could turn invisible, as indicated by a series of diamonds that twinkled on the page and a verbal explanation from Lucy, herself. Although Lucy’s story remained wedded to her native Chinese tongue, and thus unknown to me, fragments of her thinking and ideas found their way into other drawing events that semester.¹

¹Another version of Lucy’s drawings of the magical calabash gourds can be found in *Studies of Art Education* (2015), volume 56, issue 3, pages 228–240.

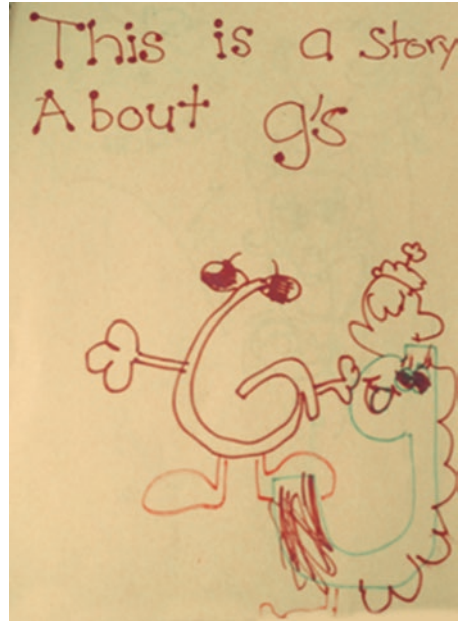
Fig. 5.2 Lucy (age 7) explores cultural references from home video using conventions of storytelling



Fig. 5.3 Lucy appropriates page numeration for story sequencing



Fig. 5.4 Lucy and I draw anthropomorphic letters that become the title page of an ongoing story



Although it is now possible for us to consider how meaning is constructed through the drawing event, it is also important to consider that meaning is not bounded within a single event. Children carry their ideas with them, into new contexts where they are once again (re)worked and (re)imagined; thus, it is important to recognize that meaning is emergent and continuously shifting. Children are consistently presented with new information, and each new experience adds to their cognitive landscape, recasting the familiar and opening possibilities for new and different understandings. I first noticed the re-appropriation of the gourd figures in a collaborative story that Lucy and I constructed together, in the before and after hours of our weekly community art class.

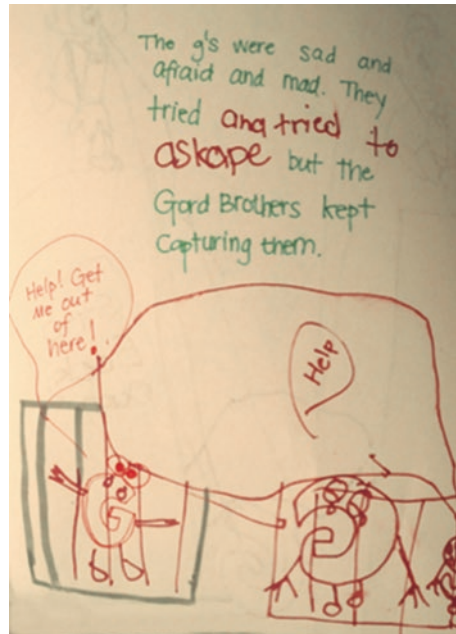
The story circulated around an evil plot to take over the world featuring personified letter Gs, vegetarians with an insatiable appetite and desire for world domination that could only be actualized if they could overpower the benevolent Gourd Brothers. Known simply as *The Story of the Gs* (see Fig. 5.4), the battle between the Gourd Brothers and the Gs was composed in oral, written, and graphic form. The *Story of the Gs* utilized clear literacy conventions beginning with title page while intertwining verbal, written, and graphic forms (see Fig. 5.5).

In the pages of our sketchbooks, the Gourd Brothers fought the Gs with valiant effort. Most often, the Gourd Brothers emerged victorious as the Gs succumbed to calabash magic, with outcomes of imprisonment and sometimes death (see Fig. 5.6). Fueled by questions and ideas that served to enhance meaning, the written text that accompanies Lucy's visual imagery was jointly constructed as a textual dialogue: each of us taking turns with both drawing and writing in conjunction with oration.

Fig. 5.5 Lucy mixes symbol systems in her drawings



Fig. 5.6 Lucy and I take turns with drawing and writing while she envisions victorious protagonists who successfully capture the Gs



Revisiting Ideas in Multiple Contexts

At some point during our narrative escapades, a 7-year-old Bryan became curious about our work. One morning, while waiting parents to arrive, after the conclusion of art class, Bryan, Lucy, and I found ourselves conversing about the story. The storytelling began with a question, prompted by Brian, about a drawing we were looking at (see Fig. 5.7). During the (re)telling, Bryan questions and probes for deeper understanding of the story, while both use the images as a catalyst for building existing and new meaning and understanding.



Fig. 5.7 Bryan inquires about Lucy's work and offers suggestions

When Bryan suggests that a series of Banana Agents (characters from the pages of his own sketchbook) as potential allies in the battle against evil, Lucy playfully rejects them. However, days later, in a small drawing, located in the corner on a page in Lucy's sketchbook, a lone Banana agent executing a powerful punch to a G is discovered; an observation that reminded me that meaning is always incomplete. Was the drawing of the Banana Agent an attempt to consider how they might be successfully incorporated into a different and extended version of the story? Was the story unfinished? For Lucy, clearly it was not.

My next encounter with the Gs happened weeks after I believed that Story of the Gs had come to its conclusion. Lucy and I had moved to new drawing collaborations, but I became frustrated by what seemed to be a destructive and annoying habit. Lucy, a talented and precise drawer, had begun using her marker to scribble over virtually every image that was drawn on the page. In these instances, Lucy would ask me to draw something but before I could finish the work, she would push her own marker over my own and scribble with frantic motion to obscure the picture. My request for an explanation went unanswered for several class periods, until one morning, she began to talk while she scribbled. Pushing the tip of her marker, in rapid circular motions, she playfully announced, "Now you are dying. You are almost dead. You're lifeline is running out." And with the final verbal explanation, she proceeded to draw rectangular-shaped boxes in the lower quadrants of the page. With each explosive action, Lucy would fill in a small portion of the box. It was then that I realized what had previously been a mystery; we were playing a video game.

Once again, Lucy had revisited the familiar Gs, only this time in graphic video game form. The Gs, who had fared so poorly in the battle against the Gourd Brothers, emerged victorious in this new set of drawings (see Fig. 5.8). Graphically identifiable only through the title, G vs., Lucy's explosive scribbles served to represent the presence and power of the Gs, who burst onto the page to destroy the lifelines of a repertoire of characters from the pages of her sketchbook. From the first of Lucy's drawing events that captured the interconnected nature of meaning-making to cul-

Fig. 5.8 Lucy's explosions and corresponding scribbles deplete lifelines



tural references and background to the final video game graphic productions, Lucy's drawing activity reveals how children combine various elements of popular culture, knowledge of different textual forms, behaviors, talk, and graphic activity.

Viewing children's drawing as an event opens opportunity to consider how meaning-making occurs relationally, in the social spaces between talk, gesture, thought, emotion, and material. This idea, of a relational space, provides not only a way to consider the complexities of children's drawing activity but also a way to consider the importance of drawing as part of an inclusive multimodal approach to early childhood education.

Relational Space

The concept of space is challenging to define. It is simultaneously empirical, and transcendent, temporal yet stable, distant while present (Thrift, 2009). For example, young children learn in classrooms, located in buildings that are situated in communities. More than a mere physical location, early childhood teachers are reminded to "consider the walls" (Tarr, 2004) in ways that suggest the importance of designing classroom spaces as "the third teacher." In this way, socio-spatial aspects, of the classroom, are activated to encourage teachers to account for the materiality of classroom life, or rather, teachers are asked to consider the ways that the physical

and material choices within a classroom are implicated in communicating particular values and foster ways of engaging in classroom life. Such a perspective considers not only the physical aspect of the school but also the way that children and learning live within the geography of a classroom. Learning then is not something that merely takes place in the classroom but rather occurs in relation to the space in which it is embedded, experienced in time, and spatially distributed. Thrift (2009) defines space as “an outcome of a series of highly problematic temporary settlements that divide and connect things up into different kinds of collectives which are slowly provided with the means which render them durable and sustainable” (p. 95). Thus, relational spaces are not a concrete thing to describe where meaning is located but rather a way to characterize a series of connections in which ideas are linked, contrasted, combined, separated, and altered.

Looking back on the drawing activity of Emma and Sarah, Mathew and the girls, and Lucy and Bryan, it becomes apparent that meaning-making occurs within relational spaces as active, social, collaborative, and emerging processes. As Knight (2013) explains, “each time a child draws, they produce a drawing in reaction to what is occurring – physically through materials, environment, body function, and metaphysically through thoughts and mood, at that moment”(p. 255).

The events narrated in this chapter not only show how children’s drawings are in and of themselves a modality, but more importantly, how the activity of drawing is linked to other modalities of meaning-making. Drawings are fragments, residual evidence that something much more complex has taken place. They are but one of many heterogeneous elements that move thinking across space and time. Children’s drawing activity creates a momentary coexistence of trajectories distributed across porous boundaries where multiple representational systems come into contact with the material, generating new thoughts, ideas, affect, and directions. As a relational space, drawing is always under construction. Drawing, as a verb, opens (and relies on) possibilities for thought where relations are made, unmade, and remade through the experimental and improvisational nature of meaning making. Thus, drawing is not only a modality that produces meaning-making but is also produced by other modalities of meaning making.

Implications

Far too often, children’s drawing activity is marginalized, misunderstood, and underutilized in the early childhood classroom. Still wedded to modernist assumptions about creativity, the tendency to view children’s drawings as a window to the subconscious rather than an active pursuit of meaning-making fuels an understanding of drawing as a solitary activity that is best facilitated through non-interference. Furthermore, as a component of literacy instruction, children’s drawing continues to be examined as a precursor to writing, something that eventually transforms into symbolic forms of written text (Mackenzie, 2011). As Binder (2011) explained, drawing is “often considered an illustrative component to writing practice rather

than a generative medium that support children's development of storylines, oral language, and print awareness" (p. 367).

The vignettes presented in this chapter reveal the significant learning potential of drawing, as an activity in and of itself. Certainly, some key features, of these events, reveal important considerations for how children's drawing supports young children's meaning-making. First, drawing materials were readily accessible to children, and time was scheduled into the day specifically for drawing. Second, children's stories and talk with each other and with other adults in the room were encouraged. Third, children were given the choice to explore the range of themes and experiences that were pressing in their lives, rather than prescribed content and subject matter for children's drawing activity.

A relational understanding of children's drawing provides a framework for thinking about how drawing can be incorporated into the early childhood classroom as an inclusive and significant modality for meaning-making. Giving voice to the exploratory, experimental, and improvisational nature of children's work, drawing events consider the nomadic and entangled nature of meaning as it emerges from children's drawing activity to create spaces where the social practices of meaning making are highlighted, encouraged, and extended.

As a space where peers come together, to sort out and construct shared understandings of themselves, each other, and their broader worlds, Sarah and Emma's drawing activity illustrated the potentiality for drawing events to create social interstices that encourage children to learn from one another, to negotiate identity, and to generate meaning in relation to each other. When children are encouraged to draw, together with their peers, children are afforded opportunities to rework and reconstruct understanding within the context of their shared interests.

As a space where children connect seemingly unrelated ideas, children's drawing events demonstrate the significance of others for extending thought and ideas. Illustrated by Mathew's *MegMa Monster*, stories and expanding details are often forged through talk, questions, and the playful interactions that surround children's drawings. Encouraging a spirit of collaboration leads to invitations that provoke children's thinking and expands meaning.

Lastly, as a space of experimentation and possibility, children's drawing is a generative means of constructing and reconstructing familiar ideas within new contexts that personalize, link, and distinguish children's thinking. Lucy's drawing activity not only articulates how children's drawing relies on the familiar but also how it is redistributed across contexts through social and relational processes.

Conclusions

A multimodal approach to early childhood education recognizes the ways that children's meaning making is dynamic, complex, and extended through the application of multiple textual resources. When young children are learning to write, for example, drawing and talk are key resources that can be invoked to anchor meaning in

emergent written text and, equally important, when drawing, both talk and text can be invoked to anchor meaning in an image (Bolter, 1991). Furthermore, multimodal approaches ease the tensions between home and school cultures, invite inclusion of prior knowledge from a wide variety of sources, and open up ways toward developmentally appropriate practices that allow children to explore, think about, and inquire about phenomenon through a variety of communicative modes. In this way, multimodal approaches bridge diverse abilities, skills, and aptitudes toward meaning-making.

In this chapter, I have explained how the production and interpretation of children's drawings must be viewed through a multimodal lens. I began by considering the connections between two modalities, drawing and talk, and then introduced drawing as a verb wherein interpretation of the drawing artifact encompasses and essentially relies upon the entirety of the process. As a verb, the production and interpretation of children's drawings employ additional modalities, including gesture and sounds, to solidify meaning-making. I then expanded the view of children's drawing, once again, to encompass an even wider range of multimodal practices by describing the activity of children's drawing as an event. I explained that, as an event, children's drawing activity is influenced by a broad range of textual resources that are situated in children's cultural worlds. Finally, I considered what it means to consider drawing activity as a relational space. It is in this final analysis that the interconnectedness of drawing, talk, thought, and action is materialized in ways that suggest that one modality cannot be addressed without the other. Thinking relationally, about children's drawings, allows us to understand that the activity of drawing is both produced by and produces meaning within social spheres. Any attempt to separate the meaning being made during a drawing event, from the array of modalities that are used to produce it, leaves us with an incomplete understanding of how children's drawing functions as a meaning-making activity.

References

- Atkinson, P., & Hammersley, M. (1994). Ethnography and participant observation. In N. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (2nd ed., pp. 248–260). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publication.
- Baghban, M. (2007). Scribbles, labels, and stories: The role of drawing in the development of writing. *Young Children*, 62(1), 20–26.
- Binder, M. (2011). Contextual worlds of child art: Experiencing multiple literacies through images. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood*, 12(4), 367–380.
- Bolter, J. D. (1991). *Writing space: The computer and the history of writing*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Bourriaud, N. (2002). *Relational aesthetics*. Dijon, France: Le press du reel.
- Bourriaud, N. (2009a). *The radican*. New York: Lucas and Steinberg.
- Bourriaud, N. (2009b). *Altermodern: Tate triennial*. London: Tate Publishing.
- Chandler, (2002). *Semiotics: The basics*. London: Routledge.
- Coates, E., & Coates, A. (2006). Young children talking and drawing. *International Journal of Early Years Education*, 14(3), 221–241.

- Cox, S. (2005). Intention and meaning in young children's drawing. *International Journal of Art and Design Education*, 24(2), 115–125.
- Duncum, P. (1993). Ten types of narrative drawing among children's spontaneous picture making. *Visual Arts Research*, 19(9), 20–29.
- Dyson, A. H. (1986). Transition and tensions: Interrelationships between drawing, talking, and dictating of young children. *Research in the Teaching of English*, 20(4), 379–409.
- Dyson, A. H. (1992). Symbol makers, symbol weavers: How children link play, pictures, and print. *Young Children*, 45(2), 50–57.
- Fineberg, J. (1997). *The innocent eye: Children's art and the modern artist*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Gallas, K. (2003). *Imagination and literacy: A teacher's search for the heart of learning*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Goldman, S., & McDermott, R. (2007). Staying the course with video analysis. In R. Golman, R. Pea, B. Barron, & S. J. Denny (Eds.), *Video research in the learning sciences*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Golomb, C. (1992). *The child's creation of a pictorial world*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Kellogg, R. (1969). *Analyzing children's art*. Palo Alto, CA: National Press.
- Knight, L. (2013). Not as it seems: Using Deleuzian concepts of the imaginary to rethink children's drawings. *Global Studies of Childhood*, 3(3), 254–264.
- Kreitler, H., & Kreitler, S. (1972). *Psychology of the arts*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Lowenfeld, V. (1957). *Creative and mental growth* (3rd ed.). London: Macmillan.
- Luquet, G. H. (2001). *Children's drawings*. (A. Costell, Trans.). London: Free Association Books. (Original work published 1927).
- Mackenzie, N. (2011). From drawing to writing: What happens when you shift teaching priorities in the first six months of school? *Australian Journal of Language and Literacy*, 34(3), 322–340.
- Pearson, P. (2001). Towards a theory of children's drawing as social practice. *Studies in Art Education*, 42(4), 348–365.
- Piaget, J. & Inhelder, B. (1963). *The child's conception of space*. (F. J. Langdon & J. L. Lunzer, Trans.). London: Routledge. (Original work published 1948).
- Puranik, C. S., & Lonigan, C. J. (2011). From scribble to scabble: Preschool children's developing knowledge of written language. *Reading and Writing*, 24(5), 567–589.
- Schulte, C. M. (2011). Verbalizations in children's drawing performances: Toward a metaphorical continuum of inscription, extension, and re-inscription. *Studies in Art Education*, 53(1), 20–34.
- Stecker, R. (2010). *Aesthetics and the philosophy of art: An introduction* (2nd ed.). Lanham, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield.
- Sunday, K. (2012). "I'm going to have to draw it to find out": Children's drawing performances, knowing, and the formation of egocentric speech. *International Art in Early Childhood Research Journal*, 4(1), 1–18.
- Sunday, K. (2015). Relational making: Re/imagining theories of child art. *Studies in Art Education*, 56(3), 228–240.
- Tarr, P. (2004). Consider the walls. *Young children on the web*. Available at <https://www.naeyc.org/files/yc/file/200405/ConsidertheWalls.pdf>.
- Thompson, C. M. (1999). Action, autobiography and aesthetics in young children's self initiated drawings. *Journal of Art and Design Education*, 18(2), 155–161.
- Thompson, C. M. (2002). Drawing together: Peer influence in preschool—kindergarten art classes. In L. Bresler & C. M. Thompson (Eds.), *The arts in children's lives: Context, culture and curriculum* (pp. 129–138). Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Kluwer.
- Thompson, C. M. (2003). Kinderculture in the art classroom: Early childhood art and the mediation of culture. *Studies in Art Education*, 44(2), 135–146.
- Thompson, C. M. (2009). Mira! Looking, listening, and lingering in research with children. *Visual Arts Research*, 35(1), 24–34.

- Thompson, C. M. (2015). Prosthetic Imaginings and pedagogies of child art. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 21(6), 554–561.
- Thompson, C. M., & Bales, S. (1991). “Michael doesn’t like my dinosaurs”: Conversations in a preschool art class. *Studies in Art Education*, 33(1), 43–55.
- Thrift, N. (2009). Space: The fundamental stuff of human geography. In N. Clifford, S. Holloway, S. P. Rice, & G. Valentine (Eds.), *Key concepts in geography* (2nd ed., pp. 85–96). London: Sage.
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1962). *Thought and language*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Wilson, B. (1974). The superheroes of JC Holz plus and outline of a theory of child art. *Art Education*, 27(8), 2–9.
- Wilson, B. (1976). Little Julian’s impure drawings: Why children make art. *Studies in Art Education*, 17(2), 45–61.
- Wilson, M., & Wilson, B. (2009). *Teaching children to draw* (2nd ed.). Worcester, MA: Davis.
- Wright, S. (2007). Young children meaning-making through drawing and ‘telling’: Analogies to filmic textual features. *Australian Journal of Early Childhood*, 32(4), 37–48.

Kristine E. Sunday Old Dominion University, Norfolk, VA, USA

Dr. Kristine E. Sunday is an Assistant Professor of Teaching and Learning at Old Dominion University in Norfolk, VA, USA, where she teaches courses in the early childhood education program. Kristine’s research interests circulate around ideas of children’s thinking and the visual arts in early childhood and relational art, teaching, and pedagogy. Since 2012, she has served as an assistant editor for the *International Journal of Education and the Arts*.

Part II
Contexts and Layered Texts

Chapter 6

“Look Mother! Mother Look!”: Young Children Exploring Life with Their Mother

Susanna Kinnunen and Johanna Einarsdóttir

Abstract In this chapter, we present a study generated with young children in their home context. The focus of the study is on how young children explore and make sense of their lives through drawing stories. The chapter is based on a study that began with two sisters, Anna (3) and Maria (1.5), who made drawings of their daily lives and the changes in their lives when their younger sister was born. By examining extracts from the 5-year investigation, this chapter considers how the aesthetics and narration intertwine with the knowledge construction processes in the children’s daily lives. The research practice shifted over time from following and listening to the children’s drawing processes toward co-drawing.

Keywords Narrative research • Drawing stories • Spontaneous drawing • Co-drawing • Home context • Infant-toddler drawing • Children as co-researchers

“Look mother! Mother, look!”

“Oh, what colorful fingers you have. Nice!” I exclaim.

“Look!” Anna says again as she repeats the process of dipping her fingers in a water cup and colors and pressing her hand on the paper (Fig. 6.1). Her deliberate gestures seem to be important.

“Look, Loo-ook! Look, look.”

Anna is excited to see the imprint of her fingers appearing again on the page. As a researcher (and Anna’s mother), I respond enthusiastically to my 3-year-old daughter’s invitation to share in her discovery.

This episode was one of many explorations that became the focus of investigation not only for Susanna, the first author, but also for young Anna and her siblings, as they joined their mother as co-researchers over the course of the study. Being together with young children and seeing how they explore the world and make sense of their lives through drawing stories can provide insights for early childhood practitioners, researchers, and families that support children’s holistic well-being and growth.

S. Kinnunen (✉)
University of Oulu, Oulu, Finland
e-mail: susanna.kinnunen@oulu.fi

J. Einarsdóttir
University of Iceland, Reykjavík, Iceland

Fig. 6.1 Anna (age 3 years) pressing her hands on the paper



Spontaneous Drawing Stories in the Context of Home

In this chapter, we draw upon findings from a 5-year study generated with young children in their home context. The study focused on how young children explore and make sense of their lives through drawing stories. The chapter is based on this investigation that began with two sisters, Anna (3) and Maria (1.5), who made drawings of their daily lives and the changes in their lives when their younger sister was born (Kinnunen & Einarsdottir, 2013). In this chapter, we use extracts from the previously constructed data to consider how the aesthetics and narration intertwine with the knowledge construction processes in the children's daily lives. The research practice has evolved over time from following and listening to the children's drawing processes toward co-drawing.

Invitations: Generating the Study Together with Children

The original study took place in a Finnish town, mostly in the first author's home. After the first data construction period with Anna and Maria, documenting and saving the drawing stories continued until 2011. During this 5-year-period, the family grew with the birth of two more children, Miriam and Liina. In the beginning of the research process, the mother (Susanna) studied arts, which might have partly motivated the children's interest in drawing. The children had pens and paper available to them, and thus they were able to draw on their own initiative. They had their own drawing table in their room, but their favorite places for drawing were on the floor of the living room or around the kitchen table. In the drawing situations, the children frequently drew together, and the mother, father, and all siblings were usually present.

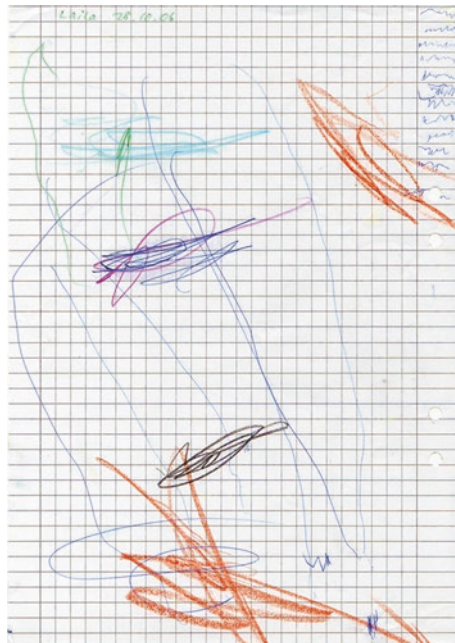
The first author, Susanna, saved the stories in a research diary where she recorded the girls' drawing processes. Writing a research diary as a way of recording required

close and continuous contact between the children and the researcher (Bentzen, 2005). Detailed notes were made of the children’s utterances, gestures, and expressions (Cox, 2005; Wright, 2010). Susanna started to write down the happenings from the time the girls asked her to come and look at what they were drawing until their drawing situation was finished. The notes in the research diary contain the dialogue as well as Susanna’s own comments and ideas about the feelings and doings of the life before, during, and after the drawing situation. Other data collected include the children’s drawings, video records, and photographs.

The nature of the material constructed as data in this study is ongoing (Andrews, 2008). The preliminary data generated with Anna and Maria includes 42 spontaneous drawing situations, of which 49 transcribed narrations are separated and renamed according to the key content for further analysis. For this chapter, the multiple drawing stories that were lived through with the four children (Anna, Maria, Miriam, and Liina) after the preliminary material generation are taken into consideration. In addition, the daily life with the girls has provided a chance to broaden the insights collected from the drawing stories and look at how new stories were created.

The young participants invited their mother on multiple occasions to look at and listen to their makings, as Anna did in the excerpt at the opening of the chapter. During the material generation process, the children became co-researchers, writing on their paper what the others were drawing, just as they had observed their mother writing notes about their work (Fig. 6.2). Anna, for example, told that she prepares her own “Master’s” beside her mother.

Fig. 6.2 As a “co-researcher” with her mother, Anna (age 3) “writes” notes about her younger sister’s drawing process in the top-right corner of this drawing by Maria (age 1.5)



Exploring Children's Aesthetics and Narration

The theoretical and methodological basis of our work draws from the narrative paradigm (Spector-Mersel, 2010) and from the assumptions that children are best encountered as creative and capable human beings and thus as valuable co-creators of knowledge (Boldt & McArdle, 2013). Ontologically, in our research we consider aesthetics as a primary and holistic way of being and experiencing entwined with emotions, thoughts, and imagination (see Dewey, 1934; Merleau-Ponty, 2010). We also consider narrativity as being in relation, listening to, and co-constructing participants' narration of these holistic experiences (Caine, Estefan, & Clandinin, 2013).

In the study, the children's aesthetics and narration were explored through spontaneous drawing stories (Coates & Coates, 2006; MacDonald, 2009), which were regarded as a process of multimodal narrating (Wright, 2010). "Drawing stories" are defined as containing the drawing situation as a whole: the context, the interaction between the participants, the girls' drawing processes, and their multimodal narrations within the process. These situations were not limited only to drawing but included cutting, painting, and playing with the materials. The girls were drawing voluntarily, with no particular predetermined topics. Several researchers (McLennan, 2010; Thompson, 2007) argue that when children spontaneously draw to please and inform themselves, their concerns, interests, attitudes, and ambitions come to the fore. In addition, children's narrating is often fragmentary (Puroila, Estola, & Syrjälä, 2012) and offered in bits and pieces (Luttrell, 2010), which supports the need for adults to listen to children's spontaneous narrating within daily life.

Drawing as a Multimodal Narration

Children tell about their lives in multimodal ways: through body language, talk, play, dance, songs, and drawings (Anning & Ring, 2004). They wander, moving easily between the paths of reality and fantasy. In this study, the aesthetic experience is also emphasized to be moving between active and passive experiencing (Dewey, 1934; Merleau-Ponty, 2010), containing both personal and social aspects (Dewey, 1934).

Susanna's everyday life with participants directed the study toward exploring the narration processes and shared experience; being in the midst of the drawing situations enabled her to acknowledge the multimodal narration beyond the completed pictures. Susanna describes her motivation for studying young children's drawing thusly:

...She (Anna) scribbled and I wondered. Little dots, long strokes, circles. The drawings started to evoke questions. I pondered what those strokes meant to the little drawer, and what about the doing? I recorded the pictures and wrote down the memories. In those moments, I started to realize the multilevel story of the drawing process; the strokes began

to have gestures, facial expressions, babbling, singing, and also burbles later on. Then a little sister joined us and constantly followed the bigger one. I started to write down their comments and expressions while they drew. I looked at the drawing as a story and found the emotions of the picture in children’s holistic emphasizing in drawing. The drawing stories shaped important places of sharing and constructing self. I saw that the ready product doesn’t convey the richness of the children’s expression and multimodal narration. (Susanna’s research diary—05/2010)

In consequence, the drawing process is described as one way that children encounter the surrounding world. As they work, they imagine the past, the present, and the future, clarifying things for themselves and sharing experiences with other people. Further, young children often tell more with their actions and body language than they do verbally (Corsaro, 2003; Matthews, 2003), as they often do not have the words for telling. Therefore, we advocate giving the children opportunities to narrate their lives in various ways, and not to favor one form of telling over another. The drawing activity, which includes the visual product along with verbal narration and body language/gesture, is seen as a place for multimodal narrating. When narration includes drawing, children can tell holistically, creatively, and practically in a way that links with their imagination (Anning & Ring, 2004).

Emphasis on Communicating Meaning

Children draw to create meaning and to communicate this meaning with others (Kinnunen, 2008; Wright, 2010); rather than representing the world, the child faces the world when drawing (Merleau-Ponty, 2010). However, drawing is often treated as a developmental action, and children’s abilities to draw realistic pictures and to produce representative drawings are predominant in most research (Hallam, Lee, & Das Gupta, 2011). As Leitch (2008) argues, for many years the clinical and diagnostic research tradition of psychology and psychotherapy has gathered children’s drawings as information and used them extensively. For instance, researchers have been investigating patterns of development, exploring trauma, and searching for signs of developmental disorders (Cox, 2005; Di Leo, 1970; Malchiodi, 2001; Matthews, 2003; Steele, 2003).

A less explored research area examines children’s spontaneous drawings as a means of communicating moods, feelings, and ideas in an aesthetic sense (Jolley, 2010) and as innovative, alternative ways to understand children’s knowledge and experiences (Leitch, 2008). Instead of focusing solely on what a child can or cannot draw, several researchers have proposed that we might listen to children’s messages and access children’s shared meanings present in their drawings (Einarsdottir, Dockett, & Perry, 2009; Veale, 2006). The study of drawing processes has the potential to help children narrate aspects of their consciously lived experiences. It also has the potential to uncover the unrecognized, unacknowledged, or “unsayable” stories that they hold (Leitch, 2008, p. 37). An emphasis on the process connects the narration as a part of the actors and interaction to the social and cultural environment (Striano, 2012) and the temporal dimension (Caine et al., 2013).

Viljamaa (2012), who has studied children's narrative knowing, underscores that children's narration and knowing in narration are not separated from the surroundings. Instead, both the surroundings with their practices and the social and material relations become a part of the process. In this chapter we describe how the drawing stories were relational places and promote the acknowledgement of the methodological and pedagogical possibilities of the drawing process for common and reciprocal knowledge construction (see Knight, 2013).

Researcher's Role and Ethical Issues

Although drawing with the mother in a home context is a very natural situation for a child, it is not a classical research frame. Most research with children is carried out in public situations, excluding children's lives within the home (Holloway & Valentine, 2000). The home context and the researcher's position as the children's mother present both advantages and challenges. In this study, the advantages are related mainly with the issues of familiarity, time use, and shared experiences, while the challenges are related with the concept of confidentiality. In the relation between mother and child, the emotions and well-being of the child are the measures for making the decisions in every case. That is why the caring ethics has been the guide for this study. In narrative research, this means that the researcher is sensitive to, identifies, and responds to the uniqueness of the situation (Syrjälä, Estola, Uitto, & Kaunisto, 2006).

Ring's (2006) sociocultural study of young children's drawing behaviors at home, day care, and school demonstrates how strongly drawing, as a mode of meaning-making, is influenced by the environment. Similarly, Gubrium and Holstein (2009) see different institutions enabling different conditions for children's narration. At home, without the traditional, unfamiliar researcher-child position, the children might tell their thoughts more freely to the people closest to them. Furthermore, the researcher might have been able to pick up the spontaneous moments without time limitations and was then capable of following the children's different ways of narrating in different situations. This can provide a new perspective in examining the drawing process in young children's daily lives as a part of a larger story from the narrative point of view. However, familiarity can also be a challenge. Researchers assume responsibility for all of the choices. The full trust of the first author's young daughters prompted her to work out how she could honor the confidence of her children.

In this study, the issue of confidentiality specifically included the reflection of children's anonymity, privacy, and future research use. Because the girls' lives are identifiable, we considered if the study might hurt the children's personality or violate their privacy in any way. In all data construction situations, and in the continuous analysis process, the well-being of the children was kept in mind. For example, if the girls were tired or hungry or if they started to do something else, the material collection was naturally stopped. Furthermore, the matters that can be reported in

the study demanded deep thought, which limited the choice of the research aim and narrowed the reporting. Therefore, the conflicts between the siblings were not recorded nor were things that might cause harm in the girls’ lives, such as personal problems or issues that measure the children’s capabilities (see Kiili, 2006). A researcher in an intimate relationship with a participant does not want the research document to be hurtful to the participants (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 135).

Complexity of Consent

Asking for consent was not a straightforward process with the researcher’s own children. The closeness demanded reflecting on the meaning of the consent. Susanna was conscious that as the mother of the participants, it was her role to ask for consent as well as give consent because of the girls’ young age. Although the girls knew that their mother was doing a study of their drawings, their view about it was surely different than their mother’s view. Consent was continuously reestablished within the drawing situations and the analyzing and writing processes with the following question: Does the research promote the good of the participants (Estola, Kontio, Kyrönniemi-Kylmänen, & Viljamaa, 2010)? Children might express the willingness or refusal about being in the research, for example, with their body language, look, words, silence, or retreat (see Viljamaa, 2012). Ultimately, as Viljamaa has noted, the consent of a child is the interpretation of the researcher; it is an interpretation of children’s thoughts. The next excerpt from Susanna’s research diary is one example of how Maria’s and Anna’s action and narration supported the material generation:

Anna wants to color. She goes around the kitchen table and sorts her book and colored pencils on the table. “Look, Mother! Mother, come and write down how great I can color. Sit down here, next to me!” Maria joins the conversation: “I will also color!” I sat next to my little drawers, touched.—Without the study, I had easily answered that I had no time now to sit because of the other responsibilities. (Susanna’s research diary—11/2006)

As the excerpt illustrates, conducting research with one’s own children involves balancing emotions. Furthermore, it requires balancing the roles of mother and researcher. Many times, Susanna wondered whether she was looking at her children’s stories for the sake of the study or for the sake of her daughters. Similarly, from the children’s standpoint, did the girls draw to please themselves or to please their mother? There is no answer to what the girls might think of the research when they are older. The line of ethicality is translucent because we are not able to predict or control the reaction of the participants (Josselson, 2007). However, the drawing situations were a place of togetherness and, for the children, a chance to be heard. The children were telling and creating their views of the world with their mother, and Susanna was learning to understand her children’s lives through the drawing stories. The researcher and the stories did not disappear from the participants’ lives (see Viljamaa, 2010). The research diary is now a storybook that the girls listen to

and read gladly with their mother again and again. The clips of the drawing stories are constructing the memories of their childhood.

Rereading the Material “with Heart”

Children’s drawings have often been analyzed without considering the context and without including other ways of communicating that the child may have used within the creative process (Fulkova & Tipton, 2011). In this study, children’s narrating was emphasized in the whole spontaneous drawing process instead of within a focus limited to interpreting the drawing products and verbal utterances (Coates & Coates, 2006; Einarsdottir et al., 2009; Wright, 2011). We see that the content of the drawing stories cannot be perceived without listening, seeing the processes used to create them, and understanding the context of the children’s narrating (Jolley, 2010; see Spector-Mersel, 2010). This is important if we want to understand children’s meaning-making and bring their voices to the surface (Coates & Coates, 2011).

During the 5 years, there have been many layers for reading the drawing stories. In all parts of the reading processes, the children’s narration was encountered by following the mode of empathic reading (Saarinen, 2003) and by engaging it with a sensitive and caring attitude (Syrjälä et al., 2006). The multimodality and holistic involvement in the young children’s narrating was acknowledged, which served as a reminder that every little story was important to the young drawers. During the first reading, Susanna was sometimes afraid of losing the richness of the stories, especially the emotional and sensuous aspects. In addition, she pondered how her interpretations might affect the girl’s lives.

For this chapter, the drawing stories were read and analyzed once more. The process was similar to what Liebllich (2014, p. 115) calls reading with the heart; the stories were read based on the researcher’s “gut feelings” as a whole rather than categorizing and removing them down to fractions. Although the close relationship enabled a different understanding of the stories, the following thought from Susanna’s research diary (01/2008) illustrates how she reflected that it is possible to be close to the children’s personal stories but impossible to fully catch them (see Viljamaa, 2010): “Do I reach where you wander, tiny little girls? Still, I am here. I am bewitched.”

Holistic and Embodied Knowing

The extracts used in this chapter were chosen from the larger research data to illustrate how the aesthetic and narrative knowing were interpreted within children’s spontaneous drawing processes. Furthermore, the social and action/movement dimensions of the aesthetics and narration are highlighted. The extracts are not in chronological order but were selected to demonstrate how the multiple essential

aspects and typical features of situations integrate with the aims of the research. The children’s lines are authentic, marked with quotes. Other text includes Susanna’s retelling and interpretation of the situations.

Miriam (2) plays on the floor in the living room. She is using wax crayons and paper. She has some colors under her nails. She wonders what the small wax crayon crumbs on her hand are. The mother pays attention to her doings when Miriam tastes the colors. Miriam sees what her mother is going to say and skillfully directs her mother’s thoughts toward the drawing. Miriam: “I have drawn a nice. (Break) Draw you, too! ...that I only tasted that color (sniffles and clucks). Then I drew a duck (breathes deeply). Do we draw still a fish? Look, that fish would swim in this water. Plunging, plunging. It could however fly, vroom, vroom.” Miriam starts to run around the room with the wax crayon. She goes around the fireplace and returns to her mother’s lap. (Susanna’s research diary—05/2009)

The atmosphere in the drawing situation above was very intense. Miriam seemed to become enthusiastic when gaining her mother’s attention. It seemed that she lived in her narration with her whole body (see Viljamaa, 2012). The extract illustrates how the child experiences, senses, and constructs the knowledge of her surroundings primarily through the body (Merleau-Ponty, 2010). Miriam’s aesthetic knowing accumulated through the colors, tastes, lines, sounds, imagination, and touches. Her immediate embodied being seemed to be her primary way of being. She lives the emotions and awareness intertwined with her body (Merleau-Ponty, 2010; see Koivunen, 1998). As Sava (1998) emphasizes, in the aesthetic and emotional experiences, the human senses and feels in and through her body.

In Liina’s drawing situation, one can also perceive the same kind of meanings of embodiment. Liina is drawing on the table. Her holistic involvement in drawing conveys the joy of narration:

“Pompa,” Liina (1) laughs. She draws on piece a paper (Fig. 6.3) and says again and again: “Draw, draw.” Then she puts the pen in her mouth and laughs. She takes the pen from her mouth and says “draw” again. She whoops, swings on her chair, and makes more long lines. The movement extends her hand and the lines reach my paper as well. “Drawing, drawing!” Liina stands up and claps her tummy. “Pööki” she says. She sits down, puts her paper on the floor, and draws with her pen. She seems very happy. She yells enthusiastically and lifts her paper. (Susanna’s research diary—09/2011)

Both Miriam’s and Liina’s drawing moments illustrate the active and passive dimensions of aesthetics (Dewey, 1934). The drawing action, materials, and imprints conveyed their multi-sensuous experiences. According to Sava (1998), in order to know, it is important to encounter the aesthetic experience in action. By living with the children, the situations enabled the first author to understand the tones of their drawing experiences, for example, how Liina drew long lines by moving her hands in broad sweeps and how Miriam explored and imagined the color-world.

The crayons, pencils, and papers were not only tools for drawing—they were also part of the play. The children’s joy in meaning-making illustrated that the doing was important. Children’s holistic involvement in narration also illustrates how much the memories of childhood are intertwined with aesthetics. Children’s embodiment and aesthetic living challenges adults to construct spaces toward the multi-modal narration in which the children are able to narrate without using words. This

Fig. 6.3 One-year-old Liina's drawing



requires the adults not to favor the visual or embodied narration as by-products of the story but rather as an important part of everyday narration. As Viljamaa (2012) writes, the aesthetic knowing can be actualized if the children are able to act and narrate through the ways that are natural to them.

The Experiences Become Shared

Drawing is treated quite often as an action for passing the time or getting the children to behave (Ivaskevich, 2006). Drawing is not only copying or representing things (Merleau-Ponty, 2010) as it is often treated in the educational context (Knight, 2013; Ring, 2010). The relation to one's own drawing story is formed through all the senses and processes of mind—through one's thoughts and imagination (Sava, 2007). Anna's picture (see Fig. 6.4) could also be assessed purely as a surface, as quite fine, nice imprints. However, pictures have their stories, and Anna's picture is an important part of her other narration. The picture is valuable as such, but by being a mother in the midst of the multimodal narration process, it looks different. Listening to the narration with individual and shared aesthetic experiences intertwined with emotions, thoughts, imagination, and memories makes it seem as if the picture is "singing":

"Look Mum, look, I draw a bear," calls Anna, wanting me to share her drawing at the morning breakfast table (Fig. 6.4).

"Oh, it's fine," I answer.

"Look, first I just drew this kind of line and this kind and then I left up here like this, then it appeared a bear."

"Yes, it's just like a bear," I say.

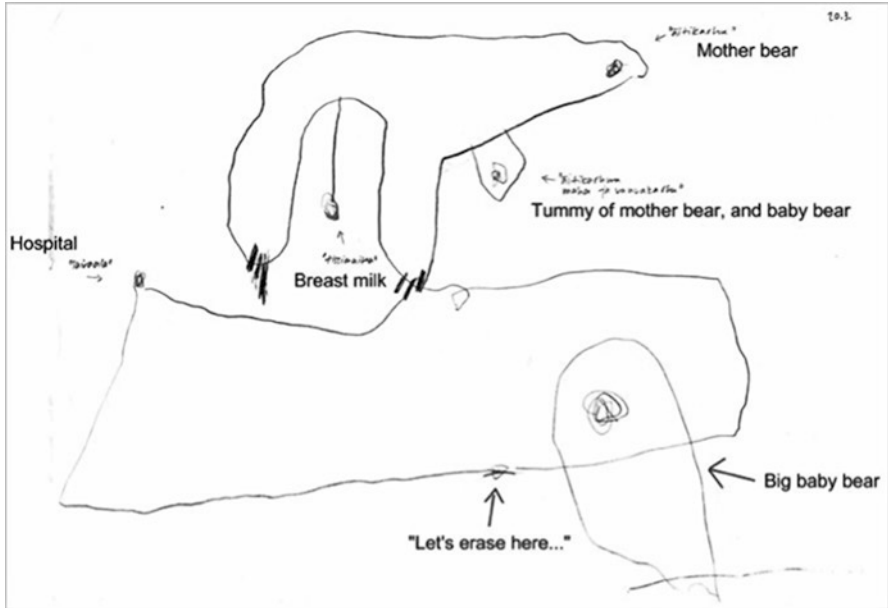


Fig. 6.4 Anna (age 3 years) draws lines that become a bear and evolve into a story of a new baby

“Let’s draw an eye for it. Here is a claw of it, the sharp claw, look mum, isn’t it just like a claw of a bear?”

I agree.

Anna draws more claws on both feet. Her cheeks flush.

“Then we’ll draw boob milk to it. Maria, look at this, it is, look at, the mother bear.” Anna whispers the last words and nods to Maria, amused and knowingly.

“Yes, mum bear.” Maria notes.

“—here the calf drinks milk. It needs to be like that, that the calf extends to drink.—I need to draw a stomach and the baby bear, lovely tiny.”

Now Anna is thinking about something. After a while she asks, “Mum, where does the baby bear come out?”

“From the stomach, like our baby,” I answer.

“Then we draw here a route, where it (the mother bear) can go and give birth. Here is the hospital. Let’s erase a little bit away here so that it (the mother bear) can’t go because it is a little bit dumb. Not the baby bear but the mother bear. Let’s draw it, however, back here like this, so that it can go.”

I remember when the shy big sister came to look at the baby in the hospital. I remember how wistful Anna’s big eyes were when she understood that I was still staying with the baby in the hospital.

“Then we draw the baby bear here, because it has grown up already thiiiiiiis big (drawling and showing with her hands after drawing.) Now it has come off from that stomach.” (Susanna’s research diary—03/2007)

In this drawing situation, Anna (3) shared and constructed the experiences of her little sister’s birth with her mother and sister. She considered the different emotions and thoughts through the mother bear and baby bear. She asked about the events, reflected on them, and taught her mother and sister how she understood these things.

She drew, talked, gestured, sketched, and imagined the new life situation in order to make it more familiar. Behind memories and experiences, there are often multi-sensuous journeys that require multimodal ways of narration. Such journeys also require a listener who sympathizes, encourages, and considers these memories and experiences (see Martin, 2004).

The excerpt illustrates that Anna was not initially planning to draw a bear, but to her surprise, the line formed a bear. Anna wanted to share this wonder with her mother. Anna started to use “Let’s draw...” in order to keep her mother in her story. She asked her mother to prove that the bear really was a bear who had sharp nails. Then Anna drew “milk” coming from the bear. It became a mother bear. This seemed to be a little bit exciting and needed to be explained to her little sister as well. The drawing situation enables a space for considering the relation to those with whom the child is drawing and to those who the child is drawing. Anna drew the baby bear with tiny movements and chattered tenderly, almost as if she had taken care of the little one. She conveyed strong emotions toward that “lovely tiny” baby bear.

Multimodal narration enables staying in different memories, including feelings, smells, colors, and movements. The drawing situation stratifies the present emotions and feelings as a part of the memory. The aesthetics experienced and narrated while drawing stories can allow one to recall the earlier experiences. The senses, sounds, smells, colors, and tastes organize our memories and evoke the earlier experiences of certain spaces and places. In this situation, tenderness was not the only feeling; the mother bear appeared to be “a little bit dumb.” This reveals how the shadows in the narrations should also have space. The drawing lines with imagination accommodate new ways toward accessing the emotions that are otherwise out of reach or incomprehensible. Although the things are not understood in that moment, it is possible to return to the drawings.

Everything Is Not Seen: Being “Beside” and Drawing Together

As the next excerpt illustrates, being together while drawing included both vivid movements and shared silent presence:

Anna is drawing a window (Fig. 6.5). She wants the curtains on the window, which we draw together.

“Let’s draw the stars there. The night is coming.”

Then she draws the sun and three stars under it.

“Let’s draw all of the children sleeping;” Anna says kindly and starts to draw a human under the lower part of the window. “This is Maria.—Maria is sleeping. Like this Maria sleeps there.—Let’s draw a bed to Maria.—Let’s draw a blanket on her. This kind of is Maria’s bed. That is Maria’s room.—Here is a pillow to her. Let’s draw a bow to her. Here. Here is a bow.—Mouth. She has a bow-mouth. Then, Anna’s room.—Anna’s room is over here. This is Anna’s.—Let’s draw a small window to Anna’s room. Then, also the curtains. So. Then we close that curtain. Like this.”

Anna closes the curtains by drawing lines on the window.

“Do we draw Anna there?—That one is kind of sandman.”

Fig. 6.5 Three-year-old Anna’s drawing of her and her sister’s rooms



Anna stops and looks at drawing the hands on her laps. She considers for a moment.—Then she quickly catches the pencil.

“Now I can open the window with this. Like this I open the window.”

Anna draws the red line on both windows. (Susanna’s research diary—03/2007)

While drawing, children communicate with the lines and dots that they have made; the lines are included in the narration, and they generate the new stories. Drawing is like the dialogue between the lines and thoughts (Kinnunen, 2015). The above excerpt reveals how the children live in their pictures, as Merleau-Ponty (2010) has argued. Anna put her little sister in the bed, tucked her in, and closed and opened the curtains. The drawing situations, which started spontaneously from the children’s initiation, did not contain prescribed goals; rather, the pictures were constructed together little by little toward the not yet known. The spontaneity enabled space for creativity and daily *how-are-you* stories. In this kind of space, both the children and the adults were learners. The drawing stories illustrate how drawing was much more than copying the perceptions; in the drawing situations, the child was present and experienced through the wholeness (Kinnunen & Einarsdottir, 2013). In and between the lines and dots, multiple emotions and ideas were included.

The girls shared their experiences in multiple ways with their mother. The researcher was already (and during the study became more) a part of the drawing context and influenced the outcome (Wright, 2010); indeed, the stories were created together. However, although much was understood due to being in the midst of the children’s daily lives, not everything was seen. The children did not draw in the order that their mother had imagined they would; that is, they did not draw first and then tell what they drew nor did they talk and draw the same things at the same time.

The things that are seen or heard are not the whole story. Heinimaa (1996) writes that children's visual narration has two realities: the seen and heard and the inner life. Rather than trying to understand what all the drawings mean, it is probably more important to be present for the stories and construct them together—to notice how much the children call us adults to draw our stories together.

Conclusion

In this chapter, we focused on young children's spontaneous drawing stories, understood as multimodal, meaning-making processes, and concentrated specifically on young children's aesthetic and narrative knowledge construction in the home context. The study underscores the value of young children's spontaneous drawing stories and illustrates how this activity provides children with many different ways to narrate their multi-sensuous experiences, to explore the surrounding world, and to prepare for life changes. All of these, in turn, may help children deal with their feelings, explain unexpected things, reconstruct memories, and imagine the future. Furthermore, drawing leaves children with concrete reminders of experiences, not only for retellings but also for new stories.

Our research highlights the power of listening to multimodal narrating as an essential part of children's well-being and the importance of sharing the experiences of drawing stories. The study illustrates the pedagogical usefulness of spontaneous drawing stories as a supportive tool for understanding the ways children narrate their experiences, particularly the emotional and sensuous nature of drawing. Through multimodal narrations, including the process and form of telling, children not only express their lives but also construct them in relation with other interlocutors. Attending to children's spontaneous drawing situations, listening to their meaning-making, and sharing the narration and narrating together with them instead of asking or talking about a completed product broaden the perspectives on children's holistic way of experiencing and constructing knowledge. Composing the study together with children highlights how the research is not a direct process of transferring information from participants to the researchers; rather, knowledge is understood to be co-constructed between them. In this kind of relational approach, the ethical questions, especially the issues of confidentiality, need to be carefully considered.

The narrative approach to the drawing process provides an understanding of why and how children tell in certain contexts, reflecting the surrounding cultures in which they live. In this study, the close relationship with participants enabled the researcher to address the children's spontaneous drawing moments and compare their narrations against the larger story. Similarly, with all children, we should think about how to give time for children's multimodal narration, how to be sensitive to it, and how to make it possible. Stopping for the drawing stories reminds us to see how much the children challenge the adults toward co-drawing. The power of using the spontaneous drawing stories as a research method with children is that instead

of focusing only on the developmental aspects of the drawing product, and thus treating children only as developing people, children are encountered as competent and experiencing citizens. During co-drawing, a common ground for narrating can be formed in which the caring curiosity toward the other’s life-world is most important. This message is crystallized nicely in the following excerpt in which Susanna was drawing with Liina:

“The name of this could be nature and the nature of life.” Liina (5) explains to her mother. Pens fly swiftly over the paper. “This is important smoke coming from the chimney of this house. It helps this child to find his home.” We discuss together the life being constructed. “Shall we draw all kinds of creatures?” Liina asks her mother. “You draw, too! Wow, will you draw one with many eyes? These here are making braids, like each one to the next.” Like in a line? “Yes.” For a moment, we quietly look at what was narrated. “Write down also that they need not be afraid.”

The original study from which this chapter drew was funded by the Finnish Academy (TelLis-Project, 21892) and the Finnish Cultural Foundation.

References

- Andrews, M. (2008). Never the last word: Revisiting data. In M. Andrews, C. Squire, & M. Tambokou (Eds.), *Doing narrative research* (pp. 86–101). London: Sage.
- Anning, A., & Ring, K. (2004). *Making sense of children’s drawings*. Maidenhead, UK: Open University Press.
- Bentzen, W. R. (2005). *Seeing young children: A guide to observing and recording behaviour* (5th ed.). Pyrmont, Australia/Clifton Park, NY: Thomson/Delmar Learning.
- Boldt, G., & McArdle, F. (2013). Young children, pedagogy and the arts: Ways of seeing. In F. McArdle & G. Boldt (Eds.), *Young children, pedagogy and the arts. Ways of seeing* (pp. 3–18). New York: Routledge.
- Caine, V., Estefan, A., & Clandinin, D. J. (2013). A return to methodological commitment: Reflections on narrative inquiry. *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research*, 57(6), 574–586.
- Clandinin, D. J., & Connelly, F. M. (2000). *Narrative inquiry: Experience and story in qualitative research*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Coates, E., & Coates, A. (2006). Young children talking and drawing. *International Journal of Early Years Education*, 14(3), 221–241.
- Coates, E., & Coates, A. (2011). The subjects and meanings of young children’s drawings. In D. Faulkner & E. Coates (Eds.), *Exploring children’s creative narratives* (pp. 86–110). New York: Routledge.
- Corsaro, W. A. (2003). “We’re friends, right?” *Inside kids’ cultures*. Washington, DC: Joseph Henry Press.
- Cox, S. (2005). Intention and meaning in young children’s drawing. *International Journal of Art and Design Education*, 24(2), 115–125.
- Dewey, J. (1934). *Art as experience*. New York: Perigee Books.
- Di Leo, J. (1970). *Young children and their drawings*. New York: Brunner/Mazel.
- Einarsdóttir, J., Perry, B., & Dockett, S. (2009). Making meaning: Children’s perspectives expressed through drawings. *Early Child Development and Care*, 179(2), 217–232.
- Estola, E., Kontio, M., Kyrönniemi-Kylmänen, T., & Viljamaa, E. (2010). Ethical insights and child research. In E.-L. Kronqvist & P. Hyvönen (Eds.), *Insights and outlooks: Childhood research in the North* (pp. 185–201). Oulu, Finland: University of Oulu.

- Fulkova, M., & Tipton, T. M. (2011). Diversifying discourse: The influence of visual culture on children's perception and creation of art. In D. Faulkner & E. Coates (Eds.), *Exploring children's creative narratives* (pp. 133–156). London: Routledge.
- Gubrium, J. F., & Holstein, J. A. (2009). *Analyzing narrative reality*. Los Angeles/London: Sage.
- Hallam, J., Lee, H., & Das Gupta, M. (2011). Painting dinosaurs: How a reception class context shapes children's opportunities for creative expression. In D. Faulkner & E. Coates (Eds.), *Exploring children's creative narratives* (pp. 111–131). London: Routledge.
- Heinimaa, E. (1996). Kuvallisen kielen aakkosia tavailemassa – lapsen kokemusmaailma kuva- taideopetuksen lähtökohtana [Spelling the alphabets of visual language – The children's experiences as a starting point for teaching the visual arts]. In T. Jantunen & P. Ronnberg (Eds.), *Anna lapsen leikkiä. Kirja leikistä ja lapsilähtöisyydestä* (pp. 155–163). Jyväskylä, Finland: Atena.
- Holloway, S. L., & Valentine, G. (2000). Spatiality and the new social studies of childhood. *Sociology*, 34(4), 763–783.
- Ivaskevich, O. (2006). Drawing in children's lives. In J. Fineberg (Ed.), *When we were young. New perspectives on the art of the child* (pp. 45–59). London: University of California Press.
- Jolley, R. P. (2010). *Children and pictures: Drawing and understanding*. Chichester, UK: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Josselson, R. (2007). The ethical attitude in narrative research: Principles and practicalities. In D. J. Clandinin (Ed.), *Handbook of narrative inquiry: Mapping a methodology* (pp. 537–566). London/New Delhi: Sage.
- Kiili, J. (2006). *Lasten osallistumisen voimavarat. Tutkimus ipanoiden osallistumisesta* [The power sources of children's participation. A study of kids' participation]. *University of Jyväskylä Studies in Education, Psychology and Social Research*, 283.
- Kinnunen, S. (2008). *Pienten piirtäjien tarinat: Oman elämän rakentamista ja jakamista* [The stories of little drawers: Constructing and sharing their life]. Unpublished master's thesis, University of Oulu, Finland.
- Kinnunen, S. (2015). Kato papukaija! – Spontaanit piirustushetket lapsen ja tutkijan kohtaamisen ja tiedonrakentumisen tilana [Look a parrot! – Spontaneous drawing situations as a space for children and researcher's encounters and knowledge construction]. In M. L. Böök, A. V. Kärjä, M. Mustola, & J. Mykkänen (Eds.), *Visuaaliset menetelmät lapsuuden—ja nuorisotutkimuksessa* (pp. 35–45). Helsinki, Finland: Nuorisotutkimusseura.
- Kinnunen, S., & Einarsdóttir, J. (2013). Feeling, wondering, sharing, and constructing life: Aesthetic experience and life changes in young children's drawing stories. *International Journal of Early Childhood*, 45(3), 359–385.
- Knight, L. (2013). Small acts of resistance: The role of intergenerational collaborative drawing in early childhood teaching and learning. In F. McArdle & G. Boldt (Eds.), *Young children, pedagogy and the arts. Ways of seeing* (pp. 21–33). New York: Routledge.
- Koivunen, H. (1998). Hiljainen tieto luovuuden lähteenä [A tacit knowledge as a source of creativity]. In M. Bardy (Ed.), *Taide tiedon lähteenä*. Jyväskylä, Finland: Atena.
- Leitch, R. (2008). Creatively researching children's narratives through images and drawings. In P. Thomson (Ed.), *Doing visual research with children and young people* (pp. 37–58). London/New York: Routledge.
- Lieblich, A. (2014). About Amos: Reading with our heart. *Narrative Works, Issues, Investigation, & Interventions*, 4(1), 114–124.
- Luttrell, W. (2010). 'A camera is a big responsibility': A lens for analysing children's visual voices. *Visual Studies*, 25(3), 224–237.
- MacDonald, A. (2009). Drawing stories: The power of children's drawings to communicate the lived experience of starting school. *Australasian Journal of Early Childhood*, 34(2), 40–49.
- Malchiodi, C. A. (2001). Using drawing as intervention with traumatized children. *Trauma and Loss: Research and Intervention*, 1(1), 21–28.

- Martin, M. (2004). Satu elämän kosketuspintana – lapsen ja aikuisen kerronta [A story as a contacting surface of life—The narration of child and adult]. In I. Sava & V. Vesänen-Laukkanen (Eds.), *Taiteeksi tarinoitu oma elämä* (pp. 77–106). Jyväskylä, Finland: PS-kustannus.
- Matthews, J. (2003). *Drawing and painting: Children and visual representation* (2nd ed.). London: Paul Chapman.
- McLennan, D. (2010). Process or product? The argument for aesthetic exploration. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 38(2), 81–85.
- Merleau-Ponty, M. (2010). *Child psychology and pedagogy the Sorbonne lectures 1949–1952*. Translated from the French by Talia Welsh. Evanston, Ill: Northwestern University Press. [Original book: *Psychologie et pédagogie de l'enfant: Cours de Sorbonne 1949–1952*, Editions Verdier, 2001].
- Puroila, A. M., Estola, E., & Syrjälä, L. (2012). Does Santa exist? Children's everyday narratives as dynamic meeting places in a day care centre context. *Early Child Development and Care*, 182(2), 191–206.
- Ring, K. (2006). What mothers do: Everyday routines and rituals and their impact upon young children's use of drawing for meaning making. *International Journal of Early Years Education*, 14(1), 63–84.
- Ring, K. (2010). Drawing with seven-year-olds: Assuming the role of teacher. *International Journal of Education Through Art*, 2(3), 195–209.
- Saarinén, J. (2003). *Naistutkijat tiedemaailmassa. Kertomuksia tutkimusprosesseista* [Women-researchers in the world of science. The stories of research processes]. Dissertation. Acta Universitatis Lapponiensis 57. Rovaniemi: Lapin yliopisto.
- Sava, I. (1998). Taiteen ja tieteen kietoutuminen tutkimuksessa. In M. Bardy (Ed.), *Taide tiedon lähteenä*. Jyväskylä, Finland: Atena Kustannus Oy.
- Sava, I. (2007). *Katsomme – Näemmekö? Luovuudesta, taiteesta ja visuaalisesta kulttuurista*. [We look – Do we see? About creativity, art and visual culture]. Jyväskylä, Finland: PS-kustannus.
- Spector-Mersel, G. (2010). Narrative research: Time for paradigm. *Narrative Inquiry*, 20(1), 204–224.
- Steele, W. (2003). Using drawing in short-term trauma resolution. In C. A. Malchiodi (Ed.), *Handbook of art therapy* (pp. 139–151). New York: Guilford Press.
- Striano, M. (2012). Reconstructing narrative. A new paradigm for narrative research and practice. *Narrative Inquiry*, 22(1), 147–154.
- Syrjälä, L., Estola, E., Uitto, M., & Kaunisto, S.-L. (2006). Kertomuksen tutkijan eettisiä haasteita [Ethical challenges of a researcher of story]. In J. Hallamaa, V. Launis, S. Lötjönen, & I. Sorvali (Eds.), *Etiikkaa ihmistieteille* [Ethics for Human Sciences] (pp. 181–202). Helsinki, Finland: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura.
- Thompson, C. M. (2007). The culture of childhood and the visual arts. In L. Bresler (Ed.), *International handbook of research in arts education. Part 2* (pp. 899–913). Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Springer.
- Veale, A. (2006). Creative methodologies in participatory research with children. In S. Greene & D. Hogan (Eds.), *Researching children's experiences: Method and approaches* (pp. 253–272). London: Sage.
- Viljamaa, E. (2010). Block story: Listening to child's narrating at home. In E.-L. Kronqvist & P. Hyvönen (Eds.), *Insights and outlooks: Childhood research in the North* (pp. 173–184). Oulu, Finland: University of Oulu.
- Viljamaa, E. (2012). *Lasten tiedon äärellä. Äidin ja lasten kerronnallisia kohtaamisia kotona* [With children's knowledge. Narrative encounters of a mother and children at home]. Dissertation. Oulu: University of Oulu.
- Wright, S. (2010). *Understanding creativity in early childhood. Meaning-making and children's drawings*. London: Sage.
- Wright, S. (2011). Meaning, mediation, and mythology. In D. Faulkner & E. Coates (Eds.), *Exploring children's creative narratives* (pp. 157–176). Abingdon, UK: Routledge.

Susanna Kinnunen University of Oulu, Oulu, Finland

Dr. Susanna Kinnunen is currently researching and teaching in the faculty of Education, University of Oulu. Her research interests are in spontaneous and multimodal narration, aesthetics, socio-material relations, and children's agency. She has explored these areas in children's daily life contexts and between them with children, parents, and teachers.

Johanna Einarsdóttir University of Iceland, Reykjavík, Iceland

Dr. Johanna Einarsdóttir is a Professor of Early Childhood Education and the Dean of School of Education, University of Iceland. She has been involved in several international research projects as a researcher and a consultant in her areas of expertise and published together with international colleagues. Professor Einarsdóttir is an editor of several books published in Icelandic and English. She has presented numerous papers and research results on early childhood education to professional and community groups nationally as well as internationally. Recently she has been conducting research on children's views on their preschool education and transition and continuity in early childhood education.

Chapter 7

Young Children's Drawings and Storytelling: Multimodal Transformations That Help to Mediate Complex Sociocultural Worlds

Rosemary D. Richards

Abstract While making sense of their social, cultural and linguistic worlds can be especially challenging for multilingual and immigrant children, child-initiated drawings and graphic stories can assist them to navigate these complex spaces. This chapter describes some of the ways a 5-year-old Chinese-Australian boy, for whom English is a second language, used his drawings and storytelling to facilitate fuller participation with others and to explore and communicate interests and concerns. A narrative and graphic representation of several of his artworks is followed by a consideration of how his drawings functioned as cultural tools and mediating devices through which he explored complex ideas, emotions and experiences. Critically employing Vygotskian sociocultural lenses and Dewey's notions on art as experience highlights how, through graphic symbols, English and Mandarin, interpersonal and intrapersonal dialogues, and dramatic rendition, a child's multimodal drawing and storytelling generate shared cultural understandings. Interacting with children as they share their graphic narratives can also reveal valuable insights into the complex worlds of children in immigrant families and their cultural, social and linguistic practices. Such understandings can provide important foundations for bridging children's personal, home, community and educational lives and thus promoting their educational and socioemotional growth and sense of well-being and belonging.

Keywords Children's drawing • Narrative research • Social worlds • Vygotsky • Immigrant children • Multiliteracies • Second language (L2) • Transformation • Art as experience • Children's storytelling • Graphic narrative • Belonging

R.D. Richards (✉)
Waiariki Institute of Technology, Rotorua, New Zealand
e-mail: rosemary.richards@waiariki.ac.nz

Introduction

Children are born into social and cultural worlds that have defined and evolving histories. They are active participants in their own and other's lives as they make meanings from the world around them and contribute meanings to their worlds (Dewey, 1934/2005; Vygotsky, 1962/1934, 1978). Their participation, which involves co-constructions with people, objects, events and places, results in their competent use and construction of multiple literacies. While children's early literacy is often viewed in terms of decoding and making sense of print media (Crafton, Silvers, & Brennan, 2009), drawing and other art forms have long provided children with a means of expressing thoughts and feelings and making sense of experience. Artistic actions and outcomes bridge internal thoughts and external communication – in effect acting as mediating devices, through which children make meaning, develop higher levels of thinking and generate complex interpersonal relationships.

As an educator, artist and researcher, I am keenly interested in how young children experience art, their art self-efficacy and the impact that social and cultural contexts have on their artistic experiences. To this end, I have engaged in research with young children with particular focus on (1) children's drawing self-efficacy and the messages they gave and received (Richards, 2009) and (2) children's perspectives on their art experience in their homes, early childhood centres and schools (Richards, 2012). It was during the latter research that I became aware of how important drawing could be for children whose racial or ethnic backgrounds differ from the mainstream in their particular community. This seems particularly critical for children who grapple with English as an additional language and strive to develop their sense of belonging within homes and educational settings. This chapter shares aspects of one such example, as it describes how Lee Wong (pseudonym), a 5-year-old Chinese-Australian boy for whom English is a second language, uses his own drawings and storytelling to facilitate fuller participation with others and to explore and communicate concepts of difference, identity and friendship.

Theoretical Perspectives: Vygotsky and Dewey

The theoretical framework, through which research is conducted and analysed, helps in unpacking the taken-for-granted experiences of the young and making sense of their art experiences. The main theoretical frameworks that underpinned the research in which Lee participated were Vygotskian sociocultural perspectives (Vygotsky, 1962/1934, 1978) and Dewey's (1934/2005) notions on art as experiences.

Vygotsky: Learning and Development as Transformational

Vygotsky (1962/1934, 1978) posits that children construct knowledge through social interactions with others, and this learning is transformational as it promotes children's mental development. Furthermore, what children can achieve with the help of others often surpasses what they can achieve alone, and it is in this zone between independent and supported learning that development occurs (Vygotsky, 1978). Language is vital in mediating relationships where less capable persons learn from more capable others. For example, as infants interact with parents or caregivers, meanings are attributed to objects and people in the shared environment. This joint meaning-making is supported by the languages of interaction between child and adults and takes many forms including sounds, gestures, body language, movement, graphic images and symbols. Through such socially mediated exploration, as infants grow into toddlerhood, they use physical objects as tools and mental ideas stimulate actions (Vygotsky, 1978). Over time, children's symbolic functioning is evident as they use objects, actions, words and people to stand for something or someone else (Bodrova & Leong, 2007).

Thus, Vygotsky recognises that people arrange and organise their physical worlds with the aid of tools and arrange and organise their mental worlds with the aid of symbols (Vygotsky, 1978; Vygotsky & Luria, 1934). While many Western studies building on these ideas narrowly define language as verbal and written communication (Lee & Smagorinsky, 2000), Vygotsky (1978) regards make-believe play as "a major contributor to the development of written language" (p. 110) and the naming of drawings as "evidence of the strong impact of speech on the development of children's drawing" (p. 113). Moreover, from a "psychological point of view," drawing is regarded "as a particular kind of child speech" (p. 112). The interrelationship between children's gestures, speech, play, drawing and writing is well documented (Dyson, 1993; Kress, 1997; Wright, 2005, 2011), and children's spontaneous art-making is widely regarded as a mode of expressive communication that provides insights into children's perspectives (Anning & Ring, 2004; Einarsdottir, Dockett, & Perry, 2009; Richards, 2014).

From sociocultural perspectives, all human psychological development, including artistic development, is regarded as a series of transformations, where interpersonal processes transform into intrapersonal ones (Vygotsky, 1978), as "every function in the child's cultural development appears twice: first, on a social level, and later, on the individual level" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 57). As such, Moran and John-Steiner's (2002) analysis of Vygotskian sociocultural perspectives as applied to creativity recognises that creativity and development are "both objective and subjective processes, involving not only shared, public meanings and objects, but also personal experiences and transformations" (p. 3). Their analysis prompts deeper readings of young children's drawing experiences, in that rather than seeing drawings as merely evidence of a child's vivid imagination, they can be seen as an

expression of current issues and exploration of future needs. Moran and John-Steiner emphasise that:

A person comes to know about the world not through absorbing – but through *transforming* – the information received from others' speech and actions; s/he must reconstruct knowledge based on these experiences. Through the transformation of this social interaction and use of cultural tools and signs, a person can free himself or herself from the constraints of the present environment and take control of his or her own future. Past experience influences but does not determine what a person does; s/he can reorganize the way s/he thinks in anticipation of future needs and goals. The emphasis is not on autonomy from others, but in the development of self mastery and a more flexible interaction with others. (pp. 4–5)

As will be seen in the following discussions, Moran and John-Steiner's (2002) notions on creativity were pertinent when critically analysing Lee's drawing-story "Bob's Farm, Farmer Bob." Such analysis is important not only for researchers but for educators, as through acknowledging "both the reason and the meaning of the child's work" (Wright, 2011, p. 164), our attention encompasses greater understanding of the aesthetic, intellectual and emotional significance for that child's artwork and the "child's 'agency' within the work and the embodied way in which the child communicates their message" (p. 164). This chapter's focus on how one young child's drawing-stories mediated his social experience within his school and home highlights how important shared languages are for children and how that language may include graphic or artistic forms.

Dewey: Art as Experience

Dewey (1934/2005) is adamant that art experience is not separate from everyday experience. Like Vygotsky, he explores notions of transformation but with a special focus on art experiences, noting that through art experiences a person not only transform materials into art media but artworks and art experiences can transform people. He recognises the importance of actively engaging with the world in order to live more richly, with the arts providing means by which people transform mere interaction into active "participation and communication" (p. 22).

Life's challenges provide the momentum for personal and social growth. Dewey points out that human development, which changes with the ebb and flow of everyday life and includes periods of pause and rest, is accelerated when a person overcomes difficulties in order to progress and flourish. As such, children's artistic growth and development can be understood as transformations of "factors of opposition and conflict" into "differentiated aspects of a higher powered and more significant life" (Dewey, 1934/2005, p. 13) where past experience is carried into present experience with some sense of future actions.

Thoughts and actions are intricately linked in a purposeful life and through art. In order to achieve perceptive engagement, a person must move beyond mere recognition of the world around them into deeper perceptive levels of engagement. At its height, art experience involves people in "complete interpenetration of self and

the world of objects and events” (Dewey, 1934/2005, p. 18) and enriches their experiences of life.

Weaving together the threads of Vygotskian sociocultural perspectives and Dewey’s notions on art as experience highlights the ways in which young children’s social experience of art are both essential for human growth and a necessary ingredient for a fulfilling, aesthetically experienced life. As will become evident, for 5-year-old Lee, art provided him with social connections, rich interpersonal dialogues and fuller participation with others. His art mediated his experiences as an immigrant child and through interactions around his art also mediated other’s understandings of issues he regularly dealt with as a bilingual child.

Lee’s Multimodal Art Experiences

Lee Wong was one of four young Australian children involved in research investigating children’s experiences of art-making in their homes, early childhood centres and schools. The first phase of the research related to his art experiences at home, in his last term at preschool and during summer holidays (October to January), and the second phase encompassed his home and school experiences (February to June). The research, which was informed by a co-constructivist paradigm, drew on hermeneutic/interpretive approaches. The research data were generated through narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), where Lee’s narratives of experience were shared and re-shared, and visual ethnography (Pink, 2001), where his photographs of his art experiences provided the focus for our interactions and my analyses. Over the course of the research, Lee took about 1,500 digital photographs focusing on his art experiences and during home-based visits generated over 9 h of recorded discussions about his art experiences.

Lee’s Social World

Lee lived with his father, mother and 7-year-old sister in a small Australian city. The family had emigrated from China the year before he was born, and despite Chinese immigrants making up the country’s largest group of immigrants between 1987 and 2002 (Tannenbaum & Howie, 2002) and comprising 4 % of the overseas-born Australian population in 2006,¹ there was not a large Chinese community in the Wong’s community. Nevertheless, in regard to language, Lee’s family spoke Mandarin and English and aimed to be conversant in both.

¹ According to the Australian Bureau of Statistic, in 2006 the China-born population made up 4 % of the overseas-born Australian population, and overall in 2009–2010, Australia had 6.3 million families of which 40 % (2.5 million) were migrant families. To qualify as a “migrant family” at least one “key member” of the family was born overseas.

Twice weekly, Lee attended an early childhood centre that was a preschool catering for up to 40 children aged 3–5-years. In this setting, Lee was a reticent child who often played alone or on the edges of other children’s play, he spoke when spoken to, and he was difficult to understand and softly spoken. While play is a leading activity in promoting a child’s development (Vygotsky, 1978), poor language skills limits play interaction for second language children (Konishi, 2007), and young children usually play with ethnically similar peers (Lui & Blila, 1995). Thus, being Chinese and speaking English as a second language had an impact upon Lee’s sense of belonging, especially in this educational setting.

Art as Social Practices of Play

Drawing and art, however, offered Lee a means by which he could mediate his experiences in order to interact more fully with his physical and social environment. For example, at preschool his teachers reported that while he seldom attracted attention to himself, during drawing episodes he became more animated, tended to be more verbally fluent, requested adult attention and expressed definite ideas about the sort of help he wanted. His drawings appeared to bridge the gap between his verbal communication skills and his teachers’ abilities to understand him. As such, his drawing experiences in this context emboldened him in ways that facilitated greater social interaction and participation (Dewey, 1934/2005) and mediated his child-adult interactions (Vygotsky, 1978). In much the same way that his drawings mediated his verbal interactions with teachers, his artistic mark-making offered him guides for his own play and forms of companionship. For example, during one preschool-based observation, I arrived to find him playing outside with a map-drawing (Fig. 7.1).

He said, “I’m a pretend policeman.” He explained that he had pretend soldier friends to help him to find the treasure. Pointing out the symbolic features of his map-drawing, he enthusiastically explained how the keys represented treasure, guns

Fig. 7.1 Lee’s treasure map showing the playground bridge and his “pretend” soldier companions



represented soldiers and the bridge was like the one in the playground. In this context, he had not only transformed the card into a map but transformed his solitary game to one involving adventure and imagined companions. For Lee, his map-drawing was an integral aspect of his social practice of play, providing a script for his imaginary play and the artifice of play with others – albeit imaginary playmates in a real playground with other children.

Art as Social Engagement with Family

When home, during the day, Lee's preferred activities were playing with Transformer™ toys and drawing. He liked drawing with pen or pencil on paper or in exercise books, and many of his drawings were in the format of maps, games or stories. His home life was rich in bicultural and bilingual conversations, texts, art, images and objects – he had books, games, posters, movies and computer programs in both English and Mandarin. Learning experiences, such as drawing, writing, mathematics or playing musical instruments, were valued as part of family routines.

From Lee's perspective, scheduled "learning times" were socially engaging and interesting parts of his home life, and while his 7-year-old sister Penny did homework, he often drew. English was the main language of instruction at home, and being neither verbally fluent nor able to write coherently, Lee used his art to mediate between solitary homework and social interactions. For example, he created his own school-like homework sheets based on ones his sister brought home, exchanged original school-like worksheets with his sister and made card games, puzzles, maps and imaginary musical scores. As such, Lee's art skills and artworks provided him with the means to more fully participate in family routines that might ordinarily be above what he could do unaided (Vygotsky, 1978).

At home, Lee responded to graphic images on television, in books and movies and through drawing modified versions to suit his personal interests. For example, following an initial interest in replicating various scenes from the movie *Mulan*, an animated Disney version of a traditional Chinese story, Lee modified the storyline in ways he felt were improvements. He did this by replacing the original Chinese dragons with "Chinese dinosaurs" as they were better suited to survive the "big icy water going down." He explained further, "Dinosaurs, they have a long neck. You can see the neck if they go in the water – that's why."

Lee's confident manner when engaged in and sharing his art experiences aligned with Vygotsky's (1978) assertion that "in play a child always behaves beyond his average age, above his daily behavior; in play it is as though he were a head taller than himself" (p. 102). When Lee shared his drawings and stories, he did so with use of the graphics, words, gestures, actions, songs and noises. His drawings and art experiences were an extension of the exuberant personality he displayed at home, and they were delivered with a great deal of humor. Thus, drawings were very important for him as they allowed him to lead a more interesting, social and adventurous life.

Fig. 7.2 Lee created a poster to be used in his family's Chinese language lessons



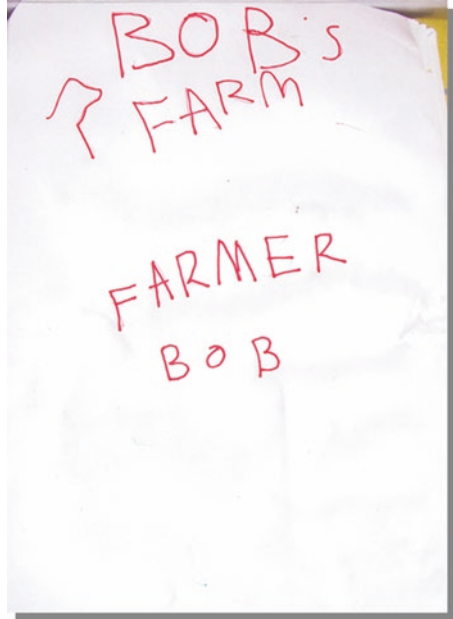
Lee also used drawing to be part of another important cultural and family ritual, that of learning to read and write Chinese. Lee's mother, Jingjing, was instructing Penny in forming Chinese script, and, in order to be part of this activity, Lee drew a poster for his mother (Fig. 7.2). In discussion with Lee, she added Chinese script and used his poster in her language lessons. Again, Lee used his drawings to mediate his interactions with family members and to insert himself into a language-based activity that was otherwise beyond his verbal or written capabilities.

Within his family environment, Lee's ability to generate such drawings was also significant in that they allowed him to move from being a mere respondent to other's ideas to being a director of activities. This required both an understanding of the aim of the family events (such as homework activities or learning Chinese script) and the requisite art skills. In many ways, his worksheets were another variation on his wider repertoire of game drawings, and through this genre he inserted himself into the family event in a leadership role. This was possible in the context of familial trust, through family-based routines and through application of art knowledge and artworks. Although unable to write Chinese script, he created his own visual images to enter into the event, and in doing so, he enhanced his sense of belonging.

Art to Navigate Complex Ideas, Emotions and Experiences

It is generally accepted that children's ability to engage in meaningful and playful interactions with peers and adults is important for children's sense of belonging and their emotional well-being (Australian Government DEEWR, 2009; Joerdens, 2014). Child-generated art provides children with a means of entry into other's play as well as encouraging others to play with them (Griebing, 2009, 2011). Lee used his art to insert himself into the preschool play environment and engage more fully in family events – thus, art was critical to Lee's well-being.

Fig. 7.3 Cover page of Lee's book, "Bob's Farm, Farmer Bob"



As a bilingual Chinese boy in a predominately Anglo-Australian community, Lee's sense of belonging was fraught with challenging social interactions, comparative isolation and communications frustrations. Lee's graphic narrative, "Bob's Farm, Farmer Bob" offers insights into how he was grappling with important issues such as racial difference, identity and friendship. This drawing and verbal narrative will now be shared, followed by a closer examination of how this functioned as a cultural tool and mediating device through which he explored complex ideas, emotions and experiences.

During one home-based visit, in the period when Lee attended preschool, he was clearly excited about sharing a new artwork with me. Ordinarily Lee showed his artworks via his digital photographs, but on this occasion, he was keen to dramatically narrate his work from a storybook he had created. With this in mind, he led me to the dining room table and asked me to sit as he stood on the chair at the head of the table. In front of him was a book in which he had drawn. He looked at the upside-down words on the cover of his book, which appeared to be copied from a model provided (Fig. 7.3), and let out a sigh and glanced at his mother. She gently prompted, "Farmer." Again, Lee drew breath and in a clear, confident voice announced, "Bob's Farm, Farmer Bob."

Reaching down he flipped the page (Fig. 7.4) and continued, "Once upon a time, there's got a house. This is not just a house, it's a farm house. There lived a Farmer Bob. Farmer Bob's got three sheep. One is different because it is green – and these two orange sheep wouldn't play with him". Lee's voice intoned a sense of sadness.

Fig. 7.4 Bob's farm house and the green and orange sheep (pages 1–2)



Fig. 7.5 Green Sheep runs away, Farmer Bob sees his sheep (pages 3–4)



“Oh, that’s a bit sad,” I said.

Lifting the edge of the next page (Fig. 7.5), Lee expressed suspense, “And once at night, in the gate, something secret got away.”

He turned the page fully, turned his head on a slight angle, raised his eyebrows, and in a storybook tone asked, “Can you see it?”

Looking at the book I suggested, “One of the sheep got away?”

His mother, familiar with his story, prompted, “You tell me the reason why.”

He ignored her request and continued, “Farmer Bob very happy to see the sheep. Can you see the green sheep?”

“Oh, it’s off the picture,” I exclaimed pointing to the bottom half of a sheep at the top of the page.

Lee flipped the page to reveal a dark sky and stars, indicating time has passed (Fig. 7.6). He exclaimed, “And the Farmer Bob have only two sheep. Oo-oh! Something gets wrong!” said Lee in a dramatic tone.

Fig. 7.6 There are only two sheep and Farmer Bob is alarmed (pages 5–6)



Fig. 7.7 Farmer Bob sets out to search for Green Sheep (pages 7–8)



Then, still in character as the narrator but in a more conversational manner, he said, “He met a new friend called Josh.”

“Josh the new sheep?” I asked.

“No, Josh the Wass!” Lee responded in an exasperated tone.

“Josh the Wass?” asked Jingjing.

“Yes,” said Lee more calmly.

Jingjing said quietly, “Yes, his name, this sheep’s name...”

“...is Josh the Wass,” I finished.

By way of explanation Lee muttered, “He see him up a tree...um...” His voice trailed off, and then switching back with the confidence of the narrator commanded, “Next page!”

“Farmer Bob was to look.” Again, there is a night sky and Farmer Bob appeared to be on a journey (Fig. 7.7).

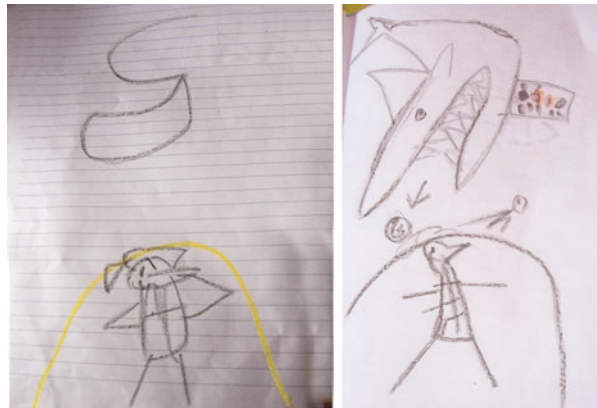
Lee continued, “He was to say ‘Oh my God, that might be where he be’.”

Lee silently flipped to the next page (Fig. 7.8).

Fig. 7.8 Farmer Bob climbs a hill and meets Garfield (pages 9–10)



Fig. 7.9 Farmer Bob gets a map and meets a shark (pages 11–12)



“What’s this bit?” I asked.

“Is it a hill?” inquired Jingjing.

Lee nodded. He then modulated his voice in the space of a few sentences to be the narrator, Farmer Bob, and Garfield.

“But he’s wondering. That sheep is a Garfield. ‘Do you see my sheep?’

‘No, no, no, but you can come in and look, but I’ve got some work to do.’”

Turning to the next page (Fig. 7.9) Lee again voiced Farmer Bob: ‘I need something to...I know, I need a map.’

Lee, having tucked the next page face down, slowly and carefully opened it to expose a tail shape. In a drawn-out, high-pitched voice he asked, “Guess what is this is?”

I responded, “Oh, it’s the edge of something scary. It’s not a shark fin, is it?”

“Of course it is!” he laughed.

“Oh no! The shark is going to eat Farmer Bob!” I exclaimed in mock horror.

Fig. 7.10 Farmer Bob goes to the hat shop and calls the police (pages 13–14)



Fig. 7.11 Farmer Bob and the policeman search for Green Sheep (pages 15–16)



Acting out the dialogue between Farmer Bob and the shark, Lee continues:
 ‘Have you seen my sheep?’

‘No, no, no,’ says the shark.

‘I saw you eat it!’

‘No, I be baddy. Your hat is going to be flooded.’

‘Yes, I want to buy a hat’.”

Lee goes on as narrator: “Farmer Bob he wish he have a new hat. So, Farmer Bob walked to the shop, but the shop is ready to close. So he go to call the police station man. He said, ‘Have you seen my sheep?’ ‘No,’ said the man. ‘Have you seen MY sheep?’ ‘No, so we will going to go find’.” (Fig. 7.10)

“So they got in the police car?” I asked.

“Yeah,” agreed Lee. “They search, with the badge, but no.”

A gun now appeared in the story as the policeman and Farmer Bob searched for the green sheep. Below the men is a body of water that in Lee’s drawings often signified danger – especially in the form of lurking sharks (Fig. 7.11).

Lee continued, “He said, ‘Can I search for it?’ ‘No’.”

Fig. 7.12 Farmer Bob and policeman search and then Green Sheep comes home (pages 17–18)



The final pages of Lee’s Farmer Bob book graphically scripted the policeman shooting into a building and Farmer Bob moving towards a flock of sheep. (Fig. 7.12)

The tension and suspense of the story so far had led me to anticipate a dramatic conclusion, so I was somewhat taken aback when Lee calmly concluded, “And he come back, and they lived happily ever after.” Lee’s mother, having heard the story previously, turned to Lee and said, “He told me that they wouldn’t like to play. The green one said, ‘I am so sad, I am so lonely.’ He told me in Chinese, maybe because it is very difficult for him to say in English. The green one got away. ‘So sad,’ he said, ‘I want to change my colour.’” Looking towards Lee she asked, “Did you tell Rosemary – the green sheep say I want to change my colour into orange so these two can play with him?”

Lee, who was drawing another story, looked up but does not comment. Jingjing continued, “So, at the last page the green sheep eats a magic biscuit and changes colour; changes orange at the last page – an orange one so they can play together. You can see in the first page the sheep is green, and in the last page it is turning orange.”

Discussion: Seeing Beyond the Drawings

As Lee’s mother shared his previously told version of the story, my impressions of the story’s outcome, and of Lee’s experience of difference, were altered. As I considered his experiences as a Chinese child on the fringes of social interactions, and Green Sheep’s social isolation, I felt pleased that Lee has storied the sheep as returning by his own volition and accepted as he was. However, Jingjing’s elaboration, accompanied by graphic evidence of the green sheep outlined in orange, revealed a harsher version in that only by becoming externally like the others, while retaining his internal greenness, was Green Sheep assimilated into the group. Although I had not witnessed racist comments or attitudes directed at Lee, he seemed aware of exclusion based on race and storied this in his fictional narrative, putting the

responsibility for change on the differently coloured sheep. Seeing beyond the surface features of this story-drawing, it was apparent that these complex themes of racial discrimination and assimilation were beyond verbal discussion, yet through drawing and storying, Lee explored important personal, social and cultural issues and brought these to the attention of others.

Hearing and sharing children's voices, whose viewpoints and stories are traditionally marginalised, contribute towards filling gaps in research on young children's perspectives of art. Children's stories and images, such as those shared in this chapter, are rich with close-up views of specific events, times, places and circumstances. Furthermore, sociocultural-historical perspectives help highlight social and cultural contexts of such experiences over time and reveal patterns between and across events. From a theoretical perspective, critical analysis of Lee's art experiences did not have clear starting or ending points in that each interaction was a form of reflective practice; to interact with Lee was to be conscious of his art experiences and consciousness provoked analysis. Such interpretations are not fixed in that "our aim as researcher-storytellers is not to seek certainty about correct perspectives on educational phenomena but to raise significant questions about prevailing policy and practice that enrich an ongoing conversation" (Barone, 2007, p. 466).

Critically analyzing Lee's Farmer Bob drawing-story through sociocultural perspectives on creativity illuminates that Lee came to know his world through social interactions with his family, teachers, community, preschool peers and significant others and that these social interactions lead to transformation of his thinking and actions and the reconstruction of knowledge (Moran & John-Steiner, 2002). Within the supportive environment of family interactions, Lee was a son and brother who shared practices, languages and activities that constituted his family's cultural and social cultural practices. As a preschool boy, friend and community member, Lee also engaged in social interactions but often without the easy flow of shared language and similar family values and traditions. When reconciling these ways of being, through a series of transformations, Lee was constantly learning and developing (Vygotsky, 1978). One way in which he externalised his thoughts and feelings was through his drawings.

As a young artist, author and dramatist, Lee used the cultural tools of art and dramatic narrative to free the green sheep, who was different to the other sheep, from his friendlessness and create a new future – or symbolically Lee freed himself from "the constraints of the present environment to take control" of his "own future" (Moran & John-Steiner, 2002, p. 4). As a family member, Lee was vibrant, sociable and articulate, but as a preschool boy, his immediate needs included being verbally understood, accepted as a playmate and belonging within social groupings. Lee's future needs included starting a new school, with the associated challenge of forming new peer relationships. He could anticipate that, despite the reassuring knowledge that his parents, family and teachers cared for him, like Green Sheep, he must solve his own relationship issues. In a triple parallel of Lee's story, his lived experiences and the theories of Vygotsky, Lee's emphasis was "not on autonomy from others, but in the development of self mastery and a more flexible interaction with others" (Moran & John-Steiner, 2002, p. 5).

Within the family environment, as Lee regularly discussed his drawings with me and family members, such interactions enhanced his communication skills and transformed our understandings and consciousness of his lived experiences. Lee made use of photography, drawing and storytelling as cultural tools and mediating devices (Vygotsky, 1962/1934, 1978), to explore and make sense of his social and linguistic worlds. His doing so illustrated how children are active in the development of their consciousness and use tools and sign systems “in order to transform themselves and to reshape cultural forms of society” (Wink & Putney, 2002, p. xxi), not just at a domain altering level but at an everyday level. Through socially retelling his story, Lee engaged in complex multiliteracies, negotiating shared understandings and facilitated greater cultural awareness for others.

This drawing-story and his other artworks not only extended Lee’s capacities to communicate complex ideas and feelings through drawing but also extended his English-speaking capacity as he responded to his self-initiated stories. Drawings and illustrations are recognized as useful media through which to work with children with English as a second language (ESL), such as assisting young children to “express their culturally-diverse backgrounds and perspectives through multimedia story writing” (Peng, Fitzgerald, & Park, 2006, p. 262) and using picture books to become “aware of the generic structure of a story by comparing how each stage is realised both visually and verbally” (Astorga, 1999, p. 220). Culturally relevant picture books have also been used to help children cope with the dilemmas they face as immigrant children (Baghban, 2007).

English language narrative and illustration matching is a complex task, especially for children with English as an additional language (Peng et al., 2006) when the story is not their own. However, as evident from Lee’s repertoire of artworks, child-initiated art can also be a powerful mediating device that bridges cultural and linguistic gaps for ESL children, especially when children verbally share their narrative with others. The processes involved in generating the story, and the complex relationships between the story and the illustrations, requires dialogic engagement with the drawings (Brooks, 2005), and child-generated drawings provide scripts for children to use as scaffolds for verbal interactions. Additionally, such drawings provide powerful means of expressing important social issues, facilitating child-adult and child-child interactions and increasing a child’s sense of belonging and well-being.

Qian and Pan (2006), who researched a 5-year-old immigrant Chinese girl’s literacy acquisition over a 4-year period, noted that cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) usually lags behind Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) (Ellis, 1994). While Lee’s manner at preschool indicated some difficulties with communicating with others (BICS), he showed strong evidence of being able to verbally express meaning, take on the persona of several characters and switch between the characters’ accents – all in English. His rendition also revealed good understanding about storybook graphic and linguistic conventions.

When considering Lee’s proficiency with verbal-visual correlations, and his understanding and application of literary conventions, alongside the findings of Qian and Pan (2006) and Peng et al. (2006), several features of Lee’s experience of

visual narrative are notable. Firstly, Lee's drawing-stories were dynamic and changeable, as he drew and composed his story concurrently, as an internal cognitive and external visual dialogue. His detailed graphic record did not demand a written form as "self-stories are rarely written down" allowing them to be "volatile, and subject to change depending on the audience and circumstances" (Kraus, 2006, p. 107). Lee made small changes to "Bob's Farm, Farmer Bob" as he retold his story to his mother and then to me – making changes depending on his audience. Secondly, the social nature of the art experiences was important. He could predict that not only would his family be an interested and immediate audience, but he would share this story with a wider audience when I visited. Thirdly, Lee's home environment supported authentic interests and encouraged narrative forms of expression. At home Lee drew spontaneously without interruptions on topics of personal interest. In educational settings drawing was more likely to be fostered around current classroom themes or curriculum foci. Furthermore, not only does Chinese tradition value didactic narrative to convey such things as moral and social standards (Miller, Wiley, Fung, & Liang, 1997), but Lee's propensity to draw and share visual narratives was encouraged by his family.

While Lee's parents were not financially wealthy, they made educated choices and invested in a "variety of material resources that were beneficial to their children's learning" (Li, 2007, p. 295). Parental support, especially in terms of "organizing the home space, the child's time and his or her access to materials" (Ring, 2006, p. 63), has been noted in other research and was clearly important for Lee, as was the positive verbal persuasion, emotional support and veracious experience which helped sustain his positive drawing self-efficacy (Richards, 2009).

The regular social interactions around Lee's drawing episodes were clearly motivating to him and contributed to the overall value of his drawing experiences and his educational, artistic and socioemotional development. Drawing at home also allowed Lee to communicate in English and Mandarin when necessary, and "this language would be expected to symbolise a most meaningful and emotionally loaded communication between them" (Tannenbaum & Howie, 2002, p. 411). In Lee's case, communication in Mandarin with his mother was required in order to describe Green Sheep's emotional state. Therefore, it could be argued that researchers and educators need to consider the positive features associated with discussing with young children their self-initiated home-based art and find ways to access young immigrant children's ideas, knowledge and concerns through such discussion, which may at times involve more than one oral language.

Multimodal Transformations

For Lee, transformation was a theme of his drawings and a daily reality for him as he navigated the social paths of preschool and home life. As a family member, he shared everyday competencies, knowledge and routines that were rich in bilingual conversations, texts and images. His home and family life supported his art

experiences in that drawing was regarded as a legitimate learning activity with the provision of scheduled and structured time and space and materials. His family provided positive emotional and cognitive support, treating him as a capable and contributing member of this learning community. As a result of these conditions, drawing was an empowering process that mediated his social experiences at home and at preschool – allowing him to share with others, take leadership roles, make sense of experience, learn to communicate in two languages and explore complex concepts.

Drawing was important to Lee as it afforded him a level of confidence in communication that exceeded his oral communication capabilities. Furthermore, it appeared that the nature of his art experiences (especially his home-based ones), coupled with the research processes (in which he had regular visits and was treated as a knowledgeable and competent person), facilitated his confident participation in art experiences, which then gave him a sense of agency as an expert.

These insights suggest that children like Lee, who have difficulties communicating in the dominant instructional language, may develop more interactive and emotionally satisfying relationships with their peers and teachers if they have more opportunities to communicate and participate through drawing and other modes. An important feature would include having responsive audiences for their multimodal experiences and some co-participants. Given that immigrant ESL children may experience an absence of same-age friends in educational settings, this role could be assumed by teachers and adults until such time as stronger peer relationships are formed. Young children can also be reliant on their mother tongue in order to communicate emotionally difficult situations. Therefore, matching linguistically-like adults with young children in educational settings could be beneficial – especially when children have control within the relationship to generate their own images or art works and adults have understandings about the nature of early childhood art experiences.

Drawings and illustrations have assisted ESL and immigrant children to develop language skills (Astorga, 1999), express cultural perspectives (Peng et al., 2006) and cope with dilemmas (Baghban, 2007). As this chapter has demonstrated, access to immigrant children's spontaneous art and graphic narratives, retold from their point of view, can provide powerful insights into complex social and linguistic worlds. They provide teachers with understandings about cultural values and concerns, which can be important especially when, as in Lee's situation, there are disjunctions between home and preschool experience. Hedges (2007) suggests that understanding and building on children's funds of knowledge has the potential to transform early childhood teaching-and-learning environments.

The value of educator-child interactions around the creation and interpretation of visual texts (art) is clear, and these can be most meaningful when there are strong connections between children's home-based experiences and those had in the early childhood settings. These connections will not just form as a matter of course, especially when immigrant families are linguistically challenged by the dominant language, or the educational settings do not actively seek their input. It was evident that Lee's self-initiated artworks were not just personally satisfying for him but important

educational experiences as he created complex stories and games. His Farmer Bob story was one of many such stories in which he graphically and verbally created complex narratives that included multiple characters, dialogues and actions – all the while exploring bigger ideas of racial acceptance, social justice, friendship and belonging. Surely Lee is not unique in such explorations, and as educators we need to not only be open to hearing and seeing these extraordinary accomplished multi-modal stories as expressed through spontaneous art, but we need to actively bring them into the arena of adult-child interactions within educational settings. This is the challenge that Lee sets for us all if we are to learn from his story and respond to his call for social justice for children whose racial or ethnic backgrounds differ from the mainstream in their particular community.

References

- Anning, A., & Ring, K. A. (2004). *Making sense of children's drawings*. Berkshire, UK: Open University Press.
- Astorga, M. C. (1999). The text-image interaction and second language learning. *The Australian Journal of Language and Literacy*, 22(3), 212–233.
- Australian Government DEEWR. (2009). *Belonging, being and becoming: The early years learning framework for Australia*. Canberra, Australia: Commonwealth of Australia. Retrieved from <http://docs.education.gov.au>
- Baghban, M. (2007). Immigration in childhood: Using picture books to cope. *The Social Studies*, March/April, 2007, 71–76.
- Barone, T. (2007). A return to the gold standard? Questioning the future of narrative construction as educational research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 13(4), 454–470. doi:10.1177/1077800406297667.
- Bodrova, E., & Leong, D. J. (2007). *Tools of the mind: The Vygotskian approach to early childhood education* (2nd ed.). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Pearson Education, Inc.
- Brooks, M. (2005). Drawing as a unique mental development tool for young children: Interpersonal and intrapersonal dialogues. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood*, 6(1), 80–91.
- Clandinin, D. J., & Connelly, F. M. (2000). *Narrative inquiry: Experience and story in qualitative research*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Crafton, L. K., Silvers, P., & Brennan, M. (2009). Creating a critical multiliteracies curriculum: Repositioning art in the early childhood classroom. In M. Narey (Ed.), *Making meaning: Constructing multimodal perspectives of language, literacy, and learning through arts-based early childhood education* (pp. 31–51). New York/London: Springer.
- Dewey, J. (1934/2005). *Art as experience*. New York: Penguin Group (USA) Inc.
- Dyson, A. H. (1993). From prop to mediator: The changing role of written language in children's symbolic repertoires. In B. Spodek & O. N. Saracho (Eds.), *Yearbook in early childhood education: Language and literacy in early childhood education* (Vol. 4, pp. 21–41). New York: Teachers' College Press.
- Einarsdottir, J., Dockett, S., & Perry, B. (2009). Making meaning: Children's perspectives expressed through drawings. *Early Child Development and Care*, 179(2), 217–232.
- Ellis, R. (1994). *The study of second language acquisition*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Griebling, S. J. U. (2009). *Designs for making a tree: An ethnographic study of young children's work in the visual arts*. (Doctor of Education Ed.D. dissertation), University of Cincinnati, Cincinnati.
- Griebling, S. J. U. (2011). Discoveries from a Reggio-inspired classroom: Meeting developmental needs through the visual Arts. *Art Education*, 64(2), 6–11.

- Hedges, H. D. (2007). *Funds of knowledge in early childhood communities of inquiry*. Unpublished thesis. Massey University, Palmerston North, New Zealand.
- Joerdens, S. H. (2014). 'Belonging means you can go in': Children's perspectives and experiences of membership of Kindergarten [Article]. *Australasian Journal of Early Childhood*, 39(1), 12–21.
- Konishi, C. (2007). Learning English as a second language: A case study of a Chinese girl in an American preschool. *Childhood Education*, 83, 267–272. Annual Theme 2007.
- Kraus, W. (2006). The narrative negotiation of identity and belonging. *Narrative Inquiry*, 16(1), 103–111.
- Kress, G. (1997). *Before writing: Rethinking the paths to literacy*. London: Routledge.
- Lee, C. D., & Smagorinsky, P. (2000). Introduction: Constructing meaning through collaborative inquiry. In C. D. Lee & P. Smagorinsky (Eds.), *Vygotskian perspectives on literacy research: Constructing meaning through collaborative inquiry* (pp. 1–15). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Li, G. (2007). Home environment and second-language acquisition: The importance of family capital. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 28(3), 285–299.
- Lui, K. C., & Blila, S. (1995). Ethnic awareness and attitudes in young children. *Contemporary Education*, 66(3), 146–149.
- Miller, P. J., Wiley, A. R., Fung, H., & Liang, C.-H. (1997). Personal storytelling as a medium of socialization in Chinese and American families. *Child Development*, 68(3), 557–568.
- Moran, S., & John-Steiner, V. (2002). *Creativity in the meaning: Vygotsky's contemporary contribution to the dialectic of creativity and development*. Retrieved from http://www.unm.edu/~vygotsky/c_make.pdf
- Peng, H., Fitzgerald, G., & Park, M. K. (2006). Producing multimedia stories with ESL children: A partnership approach. *Journal of Educational Multimedia and Hypermedia*, 15(3), 261–284.
- Pink, S. (2001). *Doing visual ethnography: Image, media and representation in research*. London: Sage.
- Qian, G., & Pan, J. (2006). Susanna's way of becoming literate: A case study of literacy acquisition by a young girl from a Chinese immigrant family. *Reading Horizons*, 47(1), 75–96.
- Richards, R. D. (2009). *Jake just does scribbles but I do pictures: Drawing self-efficacy and the messages four- to nine-year-old children give and receive about their drawing*. Köln, Germany: LAP Lambert Academic Publishing.
- Richards, R. D. (2012). *Young children's art experiences: A visual ethnographic study with four children in their homes, early childhood centre and schools*. (Doctor of Philosophy Ph.D. thesis), University of New England, Armidale, NSW, Australia.
- Richards, R. D. (2014). The private and public worlds of children's spontaneous art [Article]. *Studies in Art Education*, 55(2), 143–156.
- Ring, K. (2006). What mothers do: Everyday routines and rituals and their impact upon young children's use of drawing for meaning making. *International Journal of Early Years Education*, 14(1), 63–84.
- Tannenbaum, M., & Howie, P. (2002). The association between language maintenance and family relations: Chinese immigrant children in Australia. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 23(5), 408–424.
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1962/1934). *Thought and language* (trans. Hanfmann, E. & Vakar, G.). Cambridge, MA: Massachusetts Institute of Technology.
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes. In M. Cole, V. John-Steiner, S. Scribner, & E. Souberman (Eds.), *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes* (pp. 94–119). Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Vygotsky, L. S., & Luria, A. (1934). *Tool and symbol in child development*. Retrieved 09 April 2010 <http://www.marxists.org/archive/vygotsky/works/1934/tool-symbol.htm>
- Wink, J., & Putney, L. (2002). *A vision of Vygotsky*. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

- Wright, S. K. (2005). Children's multimodal meaning-making through drawing and storytelling. *Teachers College Record* ID Number 12175. Retrieved from <http://www.tcrecord.org>
- Wright, S. K. (2011). Meaning, mediation and mythology. In D. Faulkner & E. Coates (Eds.), *Exploring children's creative narratives* (pp. 157–176). London: Sage.

Rosemary D. Richards Waiariki Institute of Technology, Rotorua, New Zealand

Rosemary Richards is a Senior Lecturer at Australian Catholic University (Australia) and, from July 2016, at Waiariki Institute of Technology (Rotorua, New Zealand). As a teacher, artist, and researcher, she is especially interested in young children's perspectives on art experiences and art self-efficacy. Research interests also include early childhood art education theory and knowledge, child-sensitive methodologies, narrative inquiry, ethnography and visual methodologies.

Chapter 8

Children, Elders, and Multimodal Arts Curricula: Semiotic Possibilities and the Imperative of Relationship

Rachel Heydon and Susan O'Neill

Abstract This chapter explores the affordances of multimodal curricula and pedagogy within intergenerational learning programs. The aim is to provide an understanding of how semiotic possibilities can be promoted within children's meaning making and the reciprocity of intergenerational relationships. Drawing on findings from our intergenerational multimodal arts research, we discuss how intergenerational learning programs can provide skipped generations (e.g., young children and elders) with collaborative, systematic, and shared learning opportunities through multimodal arts practice. These opportunities are co-constitutive of multimodal literacies and communal agency, which are of fundamental significance for fostering intergenerational relationships and children's expansive *literacy options* (i.e., the ways they have for making meaning of and representing the world) and *identity options* (i.e., the ways they have for seeing themselves in the world). We present new tools for thinking about and planning multimodal arts and literacy curricula in early childhood education that are responsive to the fast-paced changes in communication technology and capable of promoting literacy practices across the life span in mono- and intergenerational settings.

Keywords Intergenerational learning • Literacy options • Identity options • Multimodal arts • Technology • Communal agency • Semiotics • Digital art • iPad

R. Heydon (✉)
Western University, London, ON, Canada
e-mail: rheydon@uwo.ca

S. O'Neill
Simon Fraser University, Burnaby, BC, Canada

Introduction

“...what I’m afraid of is dark and a monster!”

“I’m scared of spiders.”

“I am afraid of...lions.”

“Grrr...” Everyone at the table laughs, as the teacher continues to query the rest of the group. “How about you, Rishma, what are you afraid of?”

This discussion of “scary things” may be typical among topics that teachers might introduce in early childhood classrooms across the world. What is different in this example is that the discussion took place in an intergenerational art class made up of skipped generations, preschool-aged children and elders who resided at the retirement home attached to the child care center. The discussion was used by the intergenerational art teacher to open the day’s session and get participants talking about ideas that they could all connect to, regardless of their age. The discussion also served as a catalyst for the session’s art making, for this day as they did twice weekly, participants were provided the opportunity to combine a rich, meaningful theme (e.g., fears) with a new art technique or medium to express something about it. They were also invited to document the process and products of class in their digital art portfolios—an electronic repository where each person stored what they wanted to record and share from class (e.g., videos of art making, photographs of finished art projects, oral recordings of themselves talking about what they’ve made, and the like).

This account of the intergenerational art class illustrates responses to two key imperatives of the contemporary age. The first is bringing together skipped generations at a time when there has been reduced intergenerational contact in many contexts; this is despite the fact that the literature has identified the numerous benefits of intergenerational relationships (e.g., Gregory, Long, & Volk, 2004). The second is addressing the urgent need for literacy curricula that are responsive to rapid changes in communication technology (e.g., Wohlwend, 2013), making good on children’s right to freedom of expression, defined as the right to communicate “either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of the children’s choice” (UNCRC, 1990, Article 13), and promoting lifelong literacy that can keep open literacy practices across the life span (Heydon, 2013). Specifically, the art class showcases intergenerational learning programs and multimodal pedagogy that leverage the affordances of multimodal arts practice as responses to these imperatives. The goal of this chapter in a book on multimodal perspectives of language, literacy, and learning in arts-based early childhood education is to promote an understanding of the potential for using intergenerational multimodal arts curricula and pedagogy to expand children’s literacy options (i.e., the ways they have for making meaning of and representing the world) and identity options (i.e., the ways they have for seeing themselves in the world). We also highlight a fundamental finding confirmed through all of our intergenerational research: the reciprocity between people’s opportunities for expansive literacy options, identity options, and intergenerational relationships.

Our promotion begins by introducing intergenerational learning programs and curricula and highlighting arts practice within multimodal literacy. Then we focus

on illustrating the reciprocal link introduced above. Throughout, to illustrate our points, we draw on examples from the art class introduced at the outset of the chapter. Our hope is to provide new tools for educators to think about and plan for arts and multimodal literacy education in early childhood with implications for mono- and intergenerational settings.

Intergenerational Learning Programs

Formal intergenerational learning programs provide skipped generations with collaborative, systematic, and shared learning opportunities. Intergenerational programs, in general, have been identified as taking four main forms: elders providing a service to children, younger people serving elders, intergenerational groups performing community service, and shared site programs as in the art class we described above (Marriage & Family Encyclopedia, n.d.). These models, however, are more guidelines than rigid categories, and the types of practices and activities within them are neither exhaustive nor universal. The introduction to a special issue on shared site programs in the *Journal of Intergenerational Relationships* (Jarrott, Kaplan, & Steinig, 2011), for example, explains how contributions to the issue opened up the definition of shared sites from a focus on “common models, such as child care centers co-located with nursing homes or adult day services facilities” which did not apply “across all countries and cultures” to the idea of shared intergenerational spaces “in outdoor settings, work environments, and individuals’ homes” (pp. 343–344). What one might recognize as an intergenerational model is situational; it is tied to time, place, and culture.

Each model of intergenerational programming comes with its own affordances, that is, things that it can do or provide. Systematically planned intergenerational programs have been found to create a sense of continuity in children’s lives when they might not have access to familial intergenerational relationships or interaction, the understanding that learning is lifelong (Brummel, 1989), the chance to better understand the other generation which can minimize fears that children or elders might have of each other, a fostering of participants’ acceptance that “aging is a normal and natural part of the life cycle” (Penn State College of Agricultural Science, 2003), and increased appreciation for diversity (Jarrott & Bruno, 2007). Other opportunities identified in the literature include:

- Dispelling stereotypes across generations (Mackenzie, Carson, & Kuehne, 2011)
- Nurturing intergenerational respect and caring (Mackenzie et al., 2011)
- “improving mental, physical, and social health of all parties” including participants, their families, and the people working in the project (i2i Intergenerational Society, 2014, n.p.)
- Constructing patience and understanding on the part of elders for “modern culture,” thanks to time spent with school-aged students (i2i Intergenerational Society, 2014, n.p.)
- “sharing elder wisdom with children and youth” (i2i Intergenerational Society, 2014, n.p.)

- Providing authentic contexts for children to care for others which in turn provides opportunities “to develop personal and social responsibility” (Mackenzie et al., 2011, p. 208)

The benefits of intergenerational programs have been well documented for over a decade (Kuehne & Kaplan, 2001).

Regarding the affordances for literacy learning specifically, the literature suggests that formal intergenerational learning programs can lead to the creation of relationships and expansion of literacy and identity options (e.g., Heydon, 2012). In terms of literacy, it seems that much can be lost when people of different generations are segregated as research has identified literacy practices that children in particular can acquire as they interact with, for example, grandparents (Gregory et al., 2004). In passing down their knowledge to children, elders can experience generativity, perpetuating a form of optimism or forward looking (e.g., McAdams, 1993). The significance of community, which relies on individual contributions that are valued and shared, is also central to the concept of generativity, “whether historically, presently, or as perceived for the future” (O'Donnell & McTiernan, 2013, p. xiii). Intergenerational learning programs also generate communal agency, which Mead (1938) described in his social developmental theory as “a co-constructive, reciprocal interrelation between selves and their societies” that enable “integrative theorizing across personal, interpersonal, social, and cultural levels of human experience” (p. 183). Communal agency is “reactive, creative agency” by virtue of its “social constitution” and “multiple perspectivity” (Martin & McLellan, 2013, p. 189). It is “derived from immersion and participation with others within sociocultural practices and perspectives” and “includes reactivity to those same practices and perspectives” (Martin, 2007, p. 435). This captures the communal and participatory opportunities for relationship building that are embedded within intergenerational learning programs.

Our ongoing review of the literature has identified a host of essential criteria for intergenerational learning programs that include the need to: promote equal group status where “each participant” regardless of age “has something to contribute and something to gain from the contact setting” (p. 5), provide opportunities for participants to work toward “common goals” (p. 5), and be “on-going...to establish relationships,” and include a curricular...component” (Friedman, 1997, p. 105). This last criterion raises questions of what should be taught in intergenerational learning programs, how, and by whom. A variety of studies strongly suggest the affordances of multimodal arts curricula in intergenerational learning programs. Such curricula have focused on visual art (e.g., LaPorte, 2004), singing (Beynon & Alfano, 2013), or both (e.g., Heydon & O'Neill, 2014).

Studies of intergenerational literacy and multimodal curricula and practices in particular are still needed. Questions remain about what, how, and why children and elders communicate together and with what implications for literacy education in both inter- and monogenerational situations. Research has identified domains such as home and places of worship as those that can offer intergenerational opportunities that support children's literacy acquisition. Less is known about the effects of formal intergenerational curricula and the implications for children's and elders'

literacy and identity options. Our work thus seeks to build on existing literature by documenting and analyzing the literacy practices created through intergenerational multimodal arts curricula. It is also designed to provide needed supports for such programs with curricula being a key to successful programming.

Rationalizing Intergenerational Multimodal Art Curricula

The literature and our research have identified important knowledge that rationalizes the importance and uses of intergenerational multimodal curricula. This literature also provides a lens for viewing such curricula. We next describe some of this literature highlighting the connections identified between art and literacy, multimodal literacy and intergenerational curricula, literacies and identity, and literacies and human relationships. We also introduce the notion of multimodal pedagogy.

Art as Literacy

It has been argued that the arts do not just facilitate or contribute to literacy, but are in fact literacies in their own right (e.g., Albers, 2007). Understandings of literacy from multimodal literacy explain how this may be. Multimodal literacy denounces definitions of literacy that see it only as a “linguistic accomplishment” and is part of a movement to go beyond “the habitual conjunction of language, print literacy, and learning” (Jewitt, 2008, p. 241). Print literacy refers to the traditional reading and writing of linear texts. Modes, in multimodal literacy, are “a regularized organised set of resources for meaning-making” and can include “image, gaze, gesture, movement, music, speech and sound effects” (Kress & Jewitt, 2003, p. 1). Multimodal literacy thus means “the use of several semiotic modes in the design of a semiotic product or event, together with the particular way in which these modes are combined” (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001, p. 20). Most communication is multimodal, but changes in communication technology and shifts to the digital have rendered visual (e.g., images) and aural (e.g., music) modes ever more important (Kress, 1997). Multimodal literacy amplifies the social nature of modes and meaning making.

Multimodal literacy is underpinned by *social semiotics*. Social semiotics is a “form of enquiry” (van Leeuwen, 2005, p. 3) to human meaning making that is “concerned with human semiosis” (Hodge & Kress, 1988, p. 261) which involves the conjunction of signifiers (how to communicate something) and signifieds (what to communicate) into signs (Albers, 2007). Semiosis is a “social phenomenon” and social semiotics attends to the “sources, functions, contexts and effects” of semiosis as well as the “social meanings constructed through the full range of semiotic forms, through semiotic texts and semiotic practices, in all kinds of human society at all periods of human history” (Hodge & Kress, 1988, p. 261). In the intergenerational art class, meaning making occurred through multiple modes and media in an expressively social milieu.

Multimodal Literacy and Intergenerational Curricula

By studying intergenerational curricula for well over a decade, we understand that arts-oriented curricula viewed through the lens of multimodal literacy is useful for expanding participants' literacy and identity options (e.g., Heydon, 2007). Generous opportunities for meaning making through a variety of modes and choosing the most apt mode for the occasion of the communication (e.g., Jewitt & Kress, 2001) form the basis for one's literacy options. Many forms of early childhood curricula, especially from Waldorf education and the toddler and infant schools of Reggio Emilia, actively prioritize multimodal literacies through arts and include opportunities for expressive and receptive communication that capitalize on young children's "competencies" (Clark & Moss, 2011, p. 2) (e.g., singing, dancing, drawing, painting, storytelling). Such an emphasis is appropriate given that established research has noted that literacy options are often most expansive early in life with children having "not yet settled into the fairly narrow range of methods of communication used by the adults around them" (Fraser & Gestwicki, 2002, p. 249), specifically, print literacy (i.e., reading and writing linear text). Practices such as drawing, cutting, and song sharing have been found to promote print literacy (e.g., Kress, 1997; McKee & Heydon, 2015) while also being key literacies in their own right (e.g., Gillen & Hall, 2013). Further, curricula that invite expansive use of modes and facility with them could help to keep open adults' literacy options; for instance, one of our studies of young children's and elders' literacy practices in an intergenerational program (Heydon, 2012) reinforced that children experimented more with modes and media in their literacy practices compared to the narrower practices of the elders and saw elders engage with artistic modes in a bid to support and engage with the children (Heydon & O'Neill, 2014). *How* the children and elders were communicating had implications for *what* they were communicating—a finding that has implications for the participants' identities.

Multimodal Literacy and Identity

In our efforts to open up identity options for young and old or create new possibilities for identity formation (Cummins, 2001), we drew on a definition of identity as "a way of describing a sense of self that is in practice" (Pahl & Rowsell, 2005, p. 155). A literacy practice is "what people do with literacy" and involves "value[s], attitudes, feelings, and social relationships (Barton & Hamilton, 2000, p. 7). Such practices take account of "processes internal to the individual" but also "social processes which connect people with one another" and "include shared cognitions represented in ideologies and social identities" (pp. 7–8). Both literacies and identities are socially situated and enacted and both have socio-material and affective constituents. Whether integrating digital technology into an art class's established repertoire of tools as we did in the art class at the opening of this chapter or promoting song sharing to enhance participants' collaborative art making as we did in another program (Heydon & O'Neill, 2014), the overriding lesson taught by all of the

intergenerational multimodal arts curricula we have studied (e.g., Heydon, 2013) is that there is a reciprocal relationship between participants' literacy options, identity options, and opportunities for relationship building. Expansive literacy options have been correlated with expansive identity options (Pahl & Rowsell, 2005) with each creating new possibilities for individuals and communities (Heydon & Rowsell, 2015). Our studies have found that intergenerational relationships can mobilize opportunities for expanded literacy and identity options; for instance, we have found that intergenerational multimodal literacy curricula provide opportunities for shared meaning making which fosters intergenerational relationships. Literacy practices carry and ascribe meaning to people's interactions with their environments and each other. Such curricula may thus support people to transcend social isolation and construct new possibilities for how they see themselves and the world (Heydon, 2013).

Multimodal Literacy and Human Relationships

As mentioned, Mead's (1938) perspectival approach to communal agency provides a lens for understanding reciprocity and the imperative of relationships in fostering the shared meaning making that takes place through intergenerational social interactions. Drawing on this sociocultural perspective, Martin and McLellan (2013) couple notions of psychological selfhood and agency as a form of communal agency that "emphasizes the necessary historical, cultural, and social embeddedness of our psychological lives" thereby replacing "self-absorption and self-interest with personal and social goals and ideals that include the social virtue of collective flourishing as a primary life goal" (p. 178). In the contemporary world of reciprocity, people's narratives or "storied lives" illuminate the capacity and desire for shared meaning making, which is in contrast to the discourses that so often surround public representations, and possibly private understandings, of the lives of young children and elders. The term *reciprocity* implies equity or comparable exchanges between individuals and groups, and this includes "expressive resources such as love and status" that "feature significantly in the ideological construction of the caring relationship" (Izuhara, 2010, p. 6).

Rooted within intergenerational learning programs is the need to establish caring relationships that are capable of generating a sense of connectedness. Connectedness encompasses many aspects of relatedness, such as belonging (Wenger, 1998) and social inclusion (Crisp, 2010). Although the term connectedness is used in different ways, an overarching focus is on the psychological state of *belonging*—a sense of feeling "cared for, acknowledged, trusted, and empowered within a given context" (Guerra & Bradshaw, 2008, p. 12). Having a sense of connectedness is also tied to values that are relational in that they need to work in both directions: people need to feel valued and cared for, *and* they need to care about their own social environment and feel that they make a valuable contribution (Stetsenko, 2012). Within intergenerational multimodal arts programs, this idea of *relationality* has been extended beyond the sense of connectedness that is created through social interaction alone to recognize various ways young children and elders engage with nonhuman, multimodal, and technological objects and the significance of these in their everyday lives.

Multimodal Pedagogy

We have also learned that *multimodal pedagogy* is key in promoting expansive literacy and identity options in intergenerational curricula and beyond. Multimodal pedagogy is a rapidly evolving educational concept and practice. It has been defined in a variety of ways—some that rely on the inclusion of print literacy (e.g., Walsh, 2011), others less so (e.g., Stein, 2008), and some that are quite focused on the digital turn in literacy studies (e.g., Murcia, 2014) and, again, others less so (e.g., Heydon, 2007). Despite this heterogeneity in the multimodal pedagogy literature, it nonetheless shares common roots. First, multimodal pedagogies begin from an appreciation as being “a multiple semiotic activity” wherein “teachers and learners make selections from the representation(al) resources available to them to represent their meaning within the context of communicative practices” (Stein & Newfield, 2007, p. 920). Multimodal pedagogies then go beyond. They are about the engagement of multimodality and include the provision of spaces and opportunities for people to *learn about* and *through* multimodal communication. Pedagogies generally invite participants to acquire facility with an array of semiotic resources, understand what these resources afford (or not), identify and play with the relationships between modes, and “consider the issues of text design” (e.g., Ryan, Scott, & Walsh, 2010, p. 478). There is also a strand in the literature that recognizes that literacies, regardless of their form, are not ends in themselves nor are they neutral. Multimodal literacies allow people to do things, generate knowledge, see the world in particular ways, and relate to that world and the things in it in particular ways (e.g., Hamilton, Heydon, Hibbert, & Stooke, 2015). As such, the literature is brimming with calls for multimodal pedagogies to be *participatory* pedagogies (e.g., Hibbert, 2013) that can express, navigate, and challenge asymmetries of power (e.g., Stein, 2000) and help people, especially those who are minoritized as young children and elders can be (Heydon, 2013), create and read texts that reflect “positive” or affirming identities (Cummins, Mirza, & Stille, 2012, p. 35).

The Reciprocal Link Between Multimodal Arts Practices, Literacy and Identity Options, and Intergenerational Relationships

With a good taste of the relevant literature to provide a base for the discussion, the rest of this chapter provides examples and analyses borne from our research, of children’s and elders’ opportunities for expansive literacy options, identity options, and intergenerational relationships within the context of intergenerational multimodal arts programs that we have helped design and studied. Throughout, we also provide illustrations of multimodal pedagogies.

Sample Curricula and Pedagogies

The advice in this chapter is located in over a decade of studying intergenerational curricula. For example, the *Starting from the Strengths* study compared different forms of intergenerational curricula and found that those that relied on art promoted new resources for participants' literacies and affirmed positive identities (e.g., Heydon, 2013). We have studied preexisting intergenerational art programs (e.g., Heydon, 2007) and have experimented with such curricula. We tested combining singing and art to further promote multimodality; thus, as coinvestigators in the *Advancing Interdisciplinary Research in Singing (AIRS)*, we introduced singing into an intergenerational art curriculum and learned about the nature of aural and visual modes, how people practice them, and the implications for intergenerational relationship building (e.g., Heydon & O'Neill, 2014). Three other studies run by team members integrated digital media into intergenerational curricula: the *Intergenerational Digital Literacies Pilot* created an intergenerational multimodal curricula for kindergarteners and community elders which combined touch screen technologies (e.g., iPads), school curriculum outcomes, children and elders' interests and knowledge, and multimodal arts that featured singing. Findings suggest the importance of sensory engagement in relationship building and multimodality as key for its production (e.g., Heydon & Rowsell, 2015) as well as the myriad opportunities for children's print literacy development afforded by multimodal ensembles, that is, the bringing together of diverse modes and media (e.g., McKee & Heydon, 2015). Last, *Paint Brushes and iPads: A Study of Multimodal Literacy and Pedagogy in an Intergenerational Art Program* (Heydon, 2013–2014) looked at how iPads could be resources in a mature intergenerational art class, and this is the study we introduced at the outset of this chapter.

Pedagogical Features of a Supportive Intergenerational Session

Thanks to the various programmatic structures, ages of participants, and contexts, through the above studies, we learned elements that are critical for rich and authentic intergenerational multimodal arts curricula and, we might say, of multimodal pedagogy. Important is that the intergenerational program sessions that best support positive outcomes are those that include at least the following five pedagogical features. These features can be differently structured to fit the circumstance.

(Re)acquainting Participants and Fostering Community

Feature one promotes strategies to (re)acquaint participants with each other and foster community and a sense of safety. In the intergenerational art class, the teacher supported participants to share names and contribute an idea to a collective

discussion. This discussion could then segue into an aspect of the art project in that session. For example, on the day when participants shared fears, our study recorded that the teacher modeled for participants how to introduce themselves and share something that frightened them by doing so first herself. She also actively invited discussion; for example, when she noticed child participant Jane, seemingly looking like she wanted to contribute, she asked, “Do you know what you’re afraid of, Jane?”, thus reinforcing her name for the group and the topic of conversation. When Jane’s voice was enthusiastic but quiet, the teacher scaffolded the technique of appropriate communication in this classroom where many people were hearing impaired, reminding, “Okay, can you say your name out loud so everyone can hear it?” After Jane said, “My name is Jane and what I’m afraid of is dark and a monster,” the teacher summarized for the group, “Dark and a monster” and punctuated this with a theatrical “Oh!”

Further in the service of guiding people in how to interact and drawing participants out to facilitate intergenerational interaction, the teacher promoted a playful tone such that as participants shared, they laughed along with each other and responded in other fun ways; for instance, after a child participant said, “My name is Ryan and I am afraid of...lions,” there were numerous exclamations around the table including a “Grrrr” from an adult participant which promoted even more laughs. This opening time was integral to participants having something to communicate in the art making and sufficient camaraderie and sense of safety to use others as resources and to take risks in the art making.

Establishing a Catalyst for the Session

Feature two is a catalyst for the day’s session that could further promote conversation and ease participants into the mode(s) and media they would be invited to use. In the example from the intergenerational art class, following the catalyst for contemplating the content of their art (i.e., fears), the teacher turned the focus to the technical aspects of the day’s project and how participants would design and execute their “visual texts” (Albers, 2007). Specifically, the participants were learning to use charcoal and stencils and would be invited to experiment with shading, the concept of value, and positive and negative space.

The teacher scaffolded the participants’ experimentation by leading them in a shared viewing of a selection of Kathe Kollwitz charcoal drawings of mothers and children. The images were viewed on iPads so that they could be efficiently called up, regarded up close, and manipulated as desired (e.g., made larger to facilitate vision needs or the desire to zoom into particular detail). The teacher demonstrated a practice project and invited all to complete it before they moved on to the highlight of the session—creating and using stencils for charcoal rubbings of things that can be scary. The opportunity to practice the art technique was significant as we have learned in our research that no matter how important process can be in art making, having a product that one is proud of and wants to share is paramount for engagement.

Explicit Instruction

Feature three is time for explicit instruction, modeling, and support to work through the day's project. In the intergenerational art class, this entailed the teacher's modeling of the practice project and participants working through it. Specifically, the teacher showed participants how to cut out a stencil from tag board and then use a cotton ball to push charcoal onto paper from the edge of the stencil to begin to form a design. Participants were guided in how to make parts of the design lighter or darker depending on how much charcoal they used. This set them up for their main project, which was to create stencils of images that might be scary, and then use the charcoal technique to actualize them on the paper.

Sustained Opportunities for Text Making

Feature four is sustained opportunities to work on the project and draw on fellow participants for support. This is the main portion of intergenerational sessions. In the intergenerational art class, participants were encouraged to notice what each other was doing, confer with each other, and draw on a plethora of resources to support their art making. For instance, Rachel was working as a participant observer on the session in question. After showing the elder, Rose, how to use an iPad to pull up an image of a black cat that Rose wanted to use as reference for her visual text, Rachel helped to connect Rose and child participant, Rishma. Noticing that Rishma was watching what Rose was doing, Rachel said, "Rishma, do you see how Rose has a black cat that she's going to put on hers?" Rishma moved closer and this prompted another child participant, Jane, to lean in and say, "I want to put a black cat on too." Rachel invited Jane over and set her up with Rose and Rishma, so that before long, all three of the participants were drawing black cats in tandem and helping each other to do so.

Closing and Sharing

The last feature is to provide closure to the session and opportunities to share what people have created in class. In the intergenerational art class, for instance, toward the end of the session, the participants choose what they wanted to document from the session and placed it in a digital portfolio. The portfolio ran on the Book Creator App (Red Jumper, 2014) for iPad. Each participant had his/her own portfolio and included multimodal and multimedia items such as short videos of the process of art making, digitally made art work, or photographs of artwork to which they could add narration or print messages. On the charcoal day, Rose, Rishma, and Jane each uploaded her drawing to her portfolio. The texts all contained some version of "Rose's cat": Rose's text juxtaposed white and black cats (Fig. 8.1), Jane's layered the cat on top of a house with spiders coming out of it (Fig. 8.2), and Rishma's had

Fig. 8.1 Rose's cats**Fig. 8.2** Jane's visual text

a positive cut out of the cat (from her stencil) ovetop of a line of white cats (Fig. 8.3). When placing their visual texts into the portfolio, the members of the trio did so in a different way: Rose superimposed an audio recording of herself meowing loudly ovetop of her visual text; Rishma wrote a print caption for hers, “A cat that’s going to get a haircut,” and added an audio recording of herself saying, “My picture is...a cat parade, and, and the other cat is lost, and, and it’s hiding behind the wall.” Jane asserted herself saying through an audio recording, “I like this spider and the cat and...on the house...and the, the other house and the cat and...I’m done.” These portfolios could be revisited by participants during class, at other points during the week, shared with family and friends (by being sent digitally by the teacher), and then used as installations at the end-of-year intergenerational art show.

Fig. 8.3 Rishma's visual text in the e-Portfolio



Supporting Participants' Meaning Making: Key Lessons

A core takeaway from our research into intergenerational multimodal arts curricula is the reciprocity that exists between multimodal textual engagement (and hence literacy options), identity options, and relationship building. In this section we refer to the intergenerational art class to unpack how this reciprocity worked therein and illustrate how the multimodal intergenerational pedagogies created this opportunity.

What to Signify

In keeping with Friedman's (1997) advice on intergenerational programming and the literature cited previously on multimodal literacies and pedagogies that emphasized the social and purposeful nature of semiosis, the content of the text making in the curriculum (or what to signify) was meaningful to both generations. Focusing text production on emotions allowed diverse generations to be drawn together, induced dialogue, communal agency, and a sense of connectedness and gave participants a common point of departure thereby strengthening multimodal literacy learning and relationship-building opportunities. Furthermore, the creation and reading of meaningful texts provided opportunities to see one's self reflected in new and positive ways as per the notion of identity texts (Cummins & Early, 2011). More specifically, participants were able to see commonalities (e.g., we all have fears regardless of age). Participants were encouraged to collectively and individually play with fears and reimagine them in ways that could empower them. We saw this in the audio recording of Rose's loud meowing which she overlaid on her visual text in the portfolio and in Rishma's and Jane's remixing of fear-inducing images

into something where they could create new narratives and gain control. Witness, for example, that by the time of the portfolio, Jane ended up using the word “like” to describe what she had previously described as scary, and Rishma made the once scary cats be part of a parade, complete with haircuts! We also see evidence of equal group status, with participants all being seen as capable communicators through subject matter that was relevant and authentic to each; we were able to document them supporting each other and sharing ideas. Hence communal agency fostered generativity (elders passing along their thoughts to the children) and children also being experts (by passing along their thoughts).

How to Signify

Consistent with the literature on multimodal pedagogies (e.g., Ryan et al., 2010), this example illustrates how intergenerational multimodal curricula can create opportunities to develop (increased) facility with new and known modes and media (how to signify something), thereby enhancing literacy options. Scaffolding the text making in the art class, participants viewed an expert artist’s charcoal drawings (Kathe Kollwitz) and entered into a dialogue with these drawings by practicing with the same medium. Participants then had an opportunity to work with real art materials to create a finished, proficient text. There were other elements that supported this acquisition of facility. First were the additional tools which we considered placed resources (Prinsloo, 2005), that is, “resources situated by social practices that have local effect” (p. 87). For instance, the iPads were a tool among many in the service of the goals of the participants and the program. No tool was important in and of itself. Second, the scope and sequence of the sessions addressed all aspects of text making including what to signify (i.e., the content) and how (i.e., the signifier). Third, participants had a community of people with whom they interacted such as the intergenerational art teacher, volunteers (and researchers), and fellow participants (e.g., Rose working with Rishma and Jane). This facilitated the production of texts that were technically competent and worthy of inclusion in portfolios. Noteworthy is how children and elders were invited to be text designers (New London Group, 1996) in these open literacy events; for instance, the participants all made texts that looked different and came with a different narrative, even if they were sometimes shadows of each other, as in the case of Rose, Rishma, and Jane whose texts shared common images. The pedagogical scaffolding to know and manipulate the modes and media aided here; for example, participants were invited to use correct technical terms (e.g., value) and experiment with what the media could do (e.g., practicing the technique of using the charcoal). Of course being a capable communicator has implications for identity options, opening up new avenues for feeling one’s power and control over expression—a necessary part of multimodal pedagogies (Stein, 2000).

Leveraging the Social

Meaning making is, by its very nature, a social endeavor. We have emphasized this point through the chapter, and we now bring into starker relief the opportunities for intergenerational relationship building afforded by the multimodal text making and sharing. The intergenerational art class example shows the social nature of literacies when we see Rose, originally alone with the iPad, composing a cat when children, Rishma and Jane, show interest, but all continue to work alone. By the end of the session, unity was mediated by the multimodal task (Fig. 8.4). This was no accident, but rather, the result of careful planning of curricula which drew on equal group status, promoted identity options, and facilitated intergenerational interaction at every turn beginning with the sharing at the start of class.

Key affordances of the intergenerational multimodal art curriculum illustrated in the example are located within the process of mutuality and interdependence that foster relationship building within particular learning ecologies. This notion of a learning ecology provides an interface between activity, materiality, networks, human agency, and the construction of identities within the contexts that render young children's and elders' experiences personally and collectively meaningful (Barnett, 2012; Barron, 2006). As such, multimodal arts learning ecologies include young people's engagement in their own learning ventures as well as interconnected layers of their reflection and action on the social, artistic, and literacy practices that are taking place around them (O'Neill 2016). This draws attention to the reciprocal ontological entanglement of literacies, identities, and relationships. Indeed, as Williams (2008/1985) points out, learning ecologies is a "thick concept" (as cited in Barnett, 2012, p. 8), as it is a multifaceted and multidimensional description of reciprocal relationships and at the same time a value-laded explanation for how relationships are co-constitutive. This conceptualization captures both the embeddedness and sense of connectedness of young children and elders within learning systems that they are ultimately [at least in part] responsible for. And, these learning systems are fragile; they contain elements of communal agency, responsibility,

Fig. 8.4 Rishma and Rose working together on making a cat stencil



meaning, and creativity that are interconnected and yet fluid and responsive. Our research identifies the pivotal role of intergenerational multimodal arts curriculum in supporting symmetrical relationships between young and old, thereby enabling the interest and knowledge of the participants to interact with the modes themselves (e.g., art and singing) to generate literacy options and identity options (Heydon & O'Neill, 2014).

Implications for Multimodal Arts Education In and Out of Intergenerational Contexts

The lessons of the intergenerational multimodal art curriculum and the rest of the research knowledge pointed out in this chapter have implications for multimodal literacies, arts education, and multimodal pedagogy in and outside of intergenerational contexts. Boiled down, some key takeaways include that:

- Multimodal pedagogies must attend to both signifier and signified and the occasion of the communication.
- Literacies are social and enhanced by having a purpose and audience for texts.
- People's meaning making can be enhanced when they are communicating together.
- Educators have an important role to play in producing literacy learning opportunities, but literacy and identity options can also be enhanced by having the people doing the communicating support to each other (e.g., peers or intergenerational pairings).
- Children are capable communicators who have much to teach and share with others, including elders.
- Multimodal pedagogy demands more than the engagement of multiple modes and media; it at the very least requires explicit pedagogies to acquire increased facility with the target modes and media.
- Educators might audit the demands they place on learners when they ask them to engage in multimodal practices and then ensure that their pedagogies are supporting learners to achieve these demands.

References

- Albers, P. (2007). *Finding the artist within: Creating and reading visual texts in the English language arts classroom*. Newark, DE: International Reading Association.
- Barnett, R. (2012). The coming of the ecological learner. In P. Tynjälä, M.-L. Stenström, & M. Saarnivaara (Eds.), *Transitions and transformations in learning and education* (pp. 9–20). New York: Springer. doi:10.1007/978-94-007-2312-2_2.
- Barron, B. (2006). Interest and self-sustained learning as catalysts for development: A learning ecology perspective. *Human Development*, 49, 193–224. doi:10.1159/000094368.

- Barton, D., & Hamilton, M. (2000). Literacy practices. In D. Barton, M. Hamilton, & R. Ivanič (Eds.), *Situated literacies: Reading and writing in context* (pp. 7–15). London: Routledge.
- Beynon, C. A., & Alfano, C. (2013). Intergenerational music learning in community and schools. In D. Elliott, K. Veblen, S. Messinger, & M. Silverman (Eds.), *Community music today* (pp. 121–132). Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Brummel, S. W. (1989). Developing an intergenerational program. *Journal of Children in Contemporary Society*, 20(3–4), 119–133.
- Clark, A., & Moss, P. (2011). *Listening to young children: The mosaic approach*. London: National Children's Bureau and the Joseph Rowntree Foundation.
- Crisp, B. R. (2010). Belonging, connectedness and social exclusion. *Journal of Social Inclusion*, 1(2), 123–132.
- Cummins, J. (2001). *Negotiating identities: Education for empowerment in a diverse society* (2nd ed.). Los Angeles: California Association for Bilingual Education.
- Cummins, J., & Early, M. (Eds.). (2011). *Identity texts: The collaborative creation of power in multilingual schools*. Sterling, VA: Trentham Books.
- Cummins, J., Mirza, R., & Stille, S. (2012). English language learners in Canadian schools: Emerging directions for school-based policies. *TESL Canada Journal*, 29(SI6), 25–48.
- Fraser, S., & Gestwicki, C. (2002). *Authentic childhood: Exploring Reggio Emilia in the classroom*. Albany, NY: Delmar Thomson.
- Friedman, B. (1997). The integration of proactive aging education into exciting educational curricula. In K. Brabazon & R. Disch (Eds.), *Intergenerational approaches in aging: Implications for education, policy and practice* (pp. 103–110). Binghamton, NY: The Haworth Press.
- Gillen, J., & Hall, N. (2013). The emergence of early childhood literacy. In J. Larson & J. Marsh (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of early childhood literacy* (2nd ed., pp. 3–17). London: Sage.
- Gregory, E., Long, S., & Volk, D. (Eds.). (2004). *Many pathways to literacy: Young children learning with siblings, grandparents, peers, and communities*. New York: RoutledgeFalmer.
- Guerra, N. G., & Bradshaw, C. P. (2008). Linking the prevention of problem behaviors and positive youth development: Core competencies for positive youth development and risk prevention. In N. G. Guerra & C. P. Bradshaw (Eds.), *Core competencies to prevent problem behaviors and promote positive youth development*. *New Directions for Child and Adolescent Development*, 122, 1–17. doi:10.1002/cd.
- Hamilton, M., Heydon, R., Hibbert, K., & Stooke, R. (2015). Introduction. In M. Hamilton, R. Heydon, K. Hibbert, & R. Stooke (Eds.), *Negotiating spaces for literacy learning: Multimodality and governmentality* (pp. 1–14). London: Continuum.
- Heydon, R. (2007). Making meaning together: Multimodal literacy learning opportunities in an intergenerational art program. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 39(1), 35–62.
- Heydon, R. (2012). Multimodal communication and identities options in an intergenerational art class. *Journal of Early Childhood Research*, 10(1), 51–69.
- Heydon, R. (2013). *Learning at the ends of life: Children, elders, and literacies in intergenerational curriculum*. Toronto, Canada: University of Toronto Press.
- Heydon, R. (2013–2014). *Paint brushes and ipads: A study of multimodal literacy and pedagogy in an intergenerational art program*. Unpublished grant proposal for the Faculty of Education, Western University, London.
- Heydon, R., & O'Neill, S. (2014). Songs in our hearts: The affordances and constraints of an intergenerational multimodal arts curriculum. *International Journal of Education & the Arts*, 15(16). Retrieved November 20, 2014 from <http://www.ijea.org/v15n16/>.
- Heydon, R., & Rowsell, J. (2015). Phenomenology and literacy studies. In K. Pahl & J. Rowsell (Eds.), *Routledge handbook of literacy studies* (pp. 454–471). London: Routledge.
- Hibbert, K. (2013). Developing a wisdom of practice with multiliteracies-in-use. In J. Bainbridge & R. Heydon (Eds.), *Constructing meaning: Teaching the language arts K-8* (5th ed., pp. 491–527). Toronto, Canada: ThomsonNelson.
- Hodge, R., & Kress, G. (1988). *Social semiotics*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.

- i2i Intergenerational Society. (2014). *Goals of IG immersion*. Retrieved from <http://www.intergenerational.ca/>.
- Izuhara, M. (2010). Introduction. In M. Izuhara (Ed.), *Ageing and intergenerational relations: Family reciprocity from a global perspective* (pp. 1–12). Bristol, UK: The Policy Press.
- Jarrott, S. E., & Bruno, K. (2007). Shared site intergenerational programs: A case study. *Journal of Applied Gerontology*, 26(3), 239–257.
- Jarrott, S. E., Kaplan, M. S., & Steinig, S. Y. (Eds.). (2011). Shared site intergenerational programs. *Common space, common ground [special double issue]*, 9(4). Retrieved from <http://www.tandf.co.uk/journals/spissue/wjir-sil.asp>.
- Jewitt, C. (2008). Multimodality and literacy in school classrooms. *Review of Research in Education*, 32(1), 241–247.
- Jewitt, C., & Kress, G. (2001). *Multimodal learning and teaching: The rhetorics of the science classroom*. London: Continuum.
- Kress, G. (1997). *Before writing: Rethinking the paths to literacy*. London: Routledge.
- Kress, G., & Jewitt, C. (2003). Introduction. In C. Jewitt & G. Kress (Eds.), *Multimodal literacy* (pp. 1–18). New York: P. Lang.
- Kress, G., & van Leeuwen, T. (2001). *Multimodal discourse: The modes and media of contemporary communication*. London: Arnold.
- Kuehne, V., & Kaplan, M. (2001). *Evaluation and research on intergenerational shared site facilities and programs: What we know and what we need to learn. Project SHARE Background Paper#1*. Washington, DC: Generations United.
- LaPorte, A. M. (2004). *Community connections: Intergenerational links in art education*. Reston, VA: National Art Education Association.
- Mackenzie, S. L., Carson, A. J., & Kuehne, V. S. (2011). The meadows school project. *Journal of Intergenerational Relationships*, 9(2), 207–212. doi:10.1080/15350770.2011.568343.
- Marriage & Family Encyclopedia. (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://family.jrank.org/pages/903/Intergenerational-Programming-Program-Models.html>.
- Martin, J. (2007). Educating communal agents: Building on the perspectivism of G. H. Mead. *Educational Theory*, 57(4), 435–452.
- Martin, J., & McLellan, A.-M. (2013). *The education of selves: How psychology transformed students*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- McAdams, D. P. (1993). *The stories we live by: Personal myths and the making of the self*. New York: William Morrow & Company.
- McKee, L., & Heydon, R. (2015). Orchestrating literacies: Print literacy learning opportunities within multimodal intergenerational ensembles. *Journal of Early Childhood Literacy*, 15(2), 227–255.
- Mead, G. H. (1938). *The philosophy of the act*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Murcia, K. (2014). Interactive and multimodal pedagogy: A case study of how teachers and students use interactive whiteboard technology in primary science. *Australian Journal of Education*, 58(1), 74–88.
- New London Group. (1996). A pedagogy of multiliteracies: Designing social futures. *Harvard Educational Review*, 66(1), 60–92. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com>.
- O'Donnell, D., & McTiernan, K. (2013). Storied lives: Connecting life course narrative identities and eudaimonic happiness in later life. In A. Nicolas & I. Flaherty (Eds.), *Growing up, growing old: Trajectories of times and lives* (pp. 151–176). Oxford, UK: Interdisciplinary Press.
- O'Neill, S. A. (2016). Young people's musical lives: Learning ecologies, identities and connectedness. In R. A. R. MacDonald, D. J. Hargreaves, & D. Meill (Eds.), *Oxford handbook of musical identities*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Pahl, K., & Rowsell, J. (2005). *Literacy and education: Understanding the new literacy studies in the classroom*. London: Sage.
- Penn State College of Agricultural Sciences. (2003). *Developing an intergenerational program in your early childhood care and education center: A guidebook for early childhood practitioners*. University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University.

- Prinsloo, M. (2005). The new literacies as placed resources. *Perspectives in Education*, 23(4), 87–98.
- Red Jumper. (2014). *Book Creator for iPad* (Version number 3.2) [Mobile application software]. Retrieved from <http://www.apple.com/itunes/>.
- Ryan, J., Scott, A., & Walsh, M. (2010). Pedagogy in the multimodal classroom: An analysis of the challenges and opportunities for teachers. *Teachings and Teaching: Theory and Practice*, 16(4), 477–489.
- Stein, P. (2000). Rethinking resources in the ESL classroom: Rethinking resources: Multimodal pedagogies in the ESL classroom. *TESOL Quarterly*, 34(2), 333–336. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org.proxy1.lib.uwo.ca/stable/3587958>.
- Stein, P. (2008). *Multimodal pedagogies in diverse classrooms: Representations, rights and resources*. London: Routledge.
- Stein, P., & Newfield, D. (2007). Multimodal pedagogies, representation and identity: Perspectives from Post-Apartheid South Africa. In J. Cummins & C. Davison (Eds.), *International handbook of English language teaching* (pp. 919–930). New York: Springer.
- Stetsenko, A. (2012). Personhood: An activist project of historical becoming through collaborative pursuits of social transformation. *New Ideas in Psychology*, 30, 144–153. doi:10.1016/j.newideapsych.2009.11.008.
- United Nations General Assembly. (1990). *Convention on the rights of the child*. New York: United Nations. Retrieved from <http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/ProfessionalInterest/crc.pdf>.
- van Leeuwen, T. (2005). *Introducing social semiotics. [electronic version]*. London: Routledge.
- Walsh, M. (2011). *Multimodal literacy: Researching classroom practice*. Newtown, Canada: Primary English Teaching Association (e:lit).
- Wenger, E. (1998). *Communities of practice: Learning, meaning and identity*. Cambridge University Press.
- Williams, B. (2008/1985). *Ethics and the limits of philosophy*. London: Routledge.
- Wohlwend, K. E. (2013). *Literacy playshop: New literacies, popular media, and play in the early childhood classroom*. New York: Teachers College Press, Teachers College, Columbia University.

Rachel Heydon Western University, London, ON, Canada

Dr. Rachel Heydon is a professor in Western University that specializes in curriculum theory and research especially as they relate to literacy, early childhood, and intergenerational learning. Her recent studies concern kindergarten literacy curricula and intergenerational multimodal literacy programs. Her books include *Constructing Meaning: Teaching Elementary Language Arts K-8* (with Joyce Bainbridge) and *Learning at the Ends of Life: Children, Elders, and Literacy in Intergenerational Curricula*.

Susan O’Neill Simon Fraser University, Burnaby, BC, Canada

Dr. Susan O’Neill is a professor of Arts Education and a director of Multimodal Opportunities, Diversity and Artistic Learning (MODAL) Research Group at Simon Fraser University. Her interdisciplinary background is in psychology, education, and music, and her current research focuses on youth engagement in multimodal arts and digital media, intergenerational arts, and intercultural learning.

Chapter 9

Children's Engagement with Contemporary Art in the Museum Context

Brigita Strnad

Abstract This chapter provides examples of educational activities for young children at the Maribor Art Gallery in Slovenia (UGMIUmetnostna galerija Maribor). Through these museum experiences, children learn about themselves and their world as they examine and explore works by contemporary Slovenian and international artists. Discussion of the activities enacted in this authentic context of the museum demonstrates how museum educators can design multimodal opportunities for children to make meaning of the different types of artistic expression including painting, as well as performance and multimedia installations in which various contemporary media combine and diverse disciplines merge. Further, the chapter reveals how interactions among children, artworks, artists, museum space, and the museum educator, sometimes including children's families, can support children's gradual discovery of the art exhibition and themselves through play and direct engagement with contemporary art in its authentic museum space.

Keywords Museum education • Contemporary art • Dialog • Aesthetic experience • Art making • Slovenian art • Multimedia installations • Museum workshops

The museum is an authentic space where art creates opportunities for educational situations that can significantly embrace and enhance the curricular content of early childhood classrooms. Visiting an art museum or gallery allows early childhood educators to meet a primary principle of educational quality which emphasizes: "... that for a child only the best examples are appropriate and good enough. There's no need for bringing aesthetically disputable artworks in a child's environment" (Zupančič & Duh, 2009, p. 13). Further, the museum is an environment in which children become acquainted with the national and international cultural heritage. By experiencing educational approaches aimed at supporting aesthetic experiences, young children develop different personal competencies, such as creativity, connections among disciplines, expression of ideas, complex observation and problem

B. Strnad (✉)
Maribor Art Gallery, Maribor, Slovenia
e-mail: brigita.strnad@ugm.si

solving, development of dialog, empathy, self-organization, etc. Otto (1992, p. 43, as cited in Jank & Meyer, 2006, p. 209) states that aesthetic experience and activity force us to accept the unpredictable, ambiguous, and ambivalent. Aesthetic upbringing is an essential part of the general education and must be represented within the canon of educational disciplines. The museum can effectively support these goals of modern upbringing and education to develop creative individuals who will take responsible advantage of their knowledge to have a positive impact on society.

This chapter focuses on work with younger children in the context of museum education and contemporary art. My interest lies in the elements that influence the learning process, such as the museum space and the direct contact with quality artwork that provides the child with rich sensorial stimulation, helps the child develop a dialog that unwinds around the artwork, and leads to a rich aesthetic experience. These elements also include play and art experiences as a method of dialog, support and an encouragement for advanced observation, comprehension, and experience of displayed artworks. Furthermore, the role of the museum pedagogue and other accompanying persons will be discussed.

The Educational Potential of Exploring Contemporary Art

Bračun Sova (2014) writes: “It is expected of art museums as cultural institutions having an educational function and collections of knowledge sources to not only display artworks, but also interpret them to visitors individually and in connection to history, style etc.” (p. 226). Illeris (2006) also suggests, “the concept of learning plays an important role in the construction of audience positions in contemporary museum and gallery education and museology” (p. 16). He adds that learning is a process that includes cognitive, emotional, and social dimensions and various levels of interaction and reflection, wherein viewers build their knowledge “in a quite independent and personal fashion, connected to individual learning styles as well as to a broad range of socially and culturally embedded factors” (ibid.). Such learning encourages the search for different ways that lead to knowledge, problem solving, and broad worldviews and, thus, backs up the character of contemporary art.

Art, Play, and Change

Modern times provide artists with possibilities for researching and studying diverse means of expression, and their unique creations are open to various interpretations in relation to the persons viewing and experiencing the works. Stallabrass (2006) says that contemporary art allows artists, as well as viewers, a corresponding freedom of observation and play of ideas and forms, not “attempting to divine artists’ intentions, but in allowing the work to elicit thoughts and sensations that connect with their own experiences” (p. 3). As exemplified in the conceptual art of the 1960s, it is less important what an artwork represents, but how it addresses us; art

engages the viewer in socially critical ways; it gets involved in ecology, politics, feminism, values, and mutual relationships; it addresses society and everyday life. Such art does not ask for a passive but for an active viewer who communicates with the artwork. As Čufer (2006) notes, the viewer is “an athlete of the eye,” meaning that contemporary art demands active participation in which viewers develop the ability to organize their own view and aesthetic delight as well as emotional and moral purification, with the help of individually gained values, knowledge, and observations (p. 294).

This engagement of the viewer dispels the commonly held belief that only experts (teachers, museum pedagogues) can provide the only correct interpretation of the art. Reliance on expert views offers no possibilities for recognition of and reflection on differences or changes. Change, the new aesthetic experience, however, is the goal of observing, understanding, and experiencing art. Gadamer (2004) writes that experience is the true nature of the artwork; it changes the spectator: by comparing art with play, play offers the joy of (re)cognition of an object or of ourselves, as we are able to recognize more than we know. Things we take for granted are called into question, and this leads us to development and growth.

Opportunities for Young Children to Make Meaning

The global goals of art education in the Slovenian preschool system are: experiencing, recognizing, and enjoying art; developing aesthetic perception and artistic awareness; recognizing individual art genres; developing ways of expression and communication with art; and developing creativity and specific artistic capabilities. Fine art is an important and rich study field for young children; hence, artistic creativity and responsiveness to fine art need to become balanced during preschool art education. In this process, we need to consider that the development of the aesthetic sense is a long-term process consequently resulting in a permanent enrichment of life for each individual. Savva and Trimis (2005) also agree: “Learning to look at art is a skill that requires time and effort. Thus, it is suggested that repeated visits to art museums and to other places of cultural interest should be an important component of art learning” (p. 13). As a result, one of the main points of discovering art is not to learn more about the theory of art or the artist, but more about the visitors themselves and the world in which they are living; to “help develop an integral personality, an intellectual, emotional and creative human being” (Byszewsky, 2003, p. 3).

It is reasonable to invite our youngest to get to know art, oneself, and the world through museum experiences. “In preschool period, artistic experience is shown to be a form of activity which supports the learning process on the highest level possible. In this period, when the child’s verbal and mathematical-logical intelligence is not very strong, art helps the child to exteriorize its silent knowledge and actively develop its own theory of mind through listening to oneself and others, observing their artistic creativity and argumentation” (Kroflič, 2010, pp. 49–50). Processes that help children experience artworks can be internalized and developed in ways that can enhance their relationships in everyday life.

The democratic tendencies at the end of the nineteenth century and especially in the twentieth century formed the museum into a space open to everyone, and this provides another aspect of modern education – lifelong learning. Gibbs, Sani, and Thompson (2007) state “The subject addressed by LLML [Lifelong Museum Learning] aroused great interest among museum professionals throughout Europe, especially at a time when the museum’s role is widening and stretching to embrace and support lifelong learning, social change, intercultural dialog...” (p. 9). If life-long learning is perceived as something that needs foundation in early childhood, museums should consider the youngest children in the formation of their educational scheme, in order to help them systematically develop a positive relationship toward art throughout their lives.

The Museum Space

Institutions such as museums and galleries belong to the external learning space in a wider sense (Blažič, Ivanuš Grmek, Kramar, & Strmčnik, 2003, p. 328). When visited by children who are accompanied by their teachers, museums and galleries work to diversify and enhance school lessons and to inform pupils about different sources of knowledge. Additionally, museums prepare a range of activities accessible to children and families who visit in their leisure time. “Family groups go to museums to find things out together, as a way of spending time with each other and doing something educational. This type of learning is often described as social, or collaborative, learning. It cements family relationships and relies on interaction among members” (Gibbs, Sani & Thompson, 2007, p. 9).

A Different Kind of Learning Environment

Museum spaces pursue a different experience for creation of thoughts and emotions than the typically more narrowly defined spaces of schools. In a museum, we can find spaces that offer unusual sensory experiences or “obscure labyrinths” of contemporary art installations that can make us feel frightened or confined – it is an important part of the aesthetic experience. A visually impaired person who visited an exhibition at our gallery commented on the experience with the exhibition space: “I entered a dark room, light flashed up and down and from side to side, the sound startled me. Some visitors came from the opposite side. I was excited and curious at the same time about what was going on over there, we’re at the gallery after all. I considered asking. I approached Brigita with my fear. She kindly invited me to view it again together. I listened and watched, so I realized it was a visual and sound installation that was a part of the exhibition” (Herzog & Strnad, 2014, p. 314). Since darkening and noise were a part of the artistic appeal, they should not be overlooked. It is therefore very important to appropriately prepare children (visitors) to such confrontation. For example, preparing children for this particular exhibit

involves considering a suitable number of children simultaneously entering the darkened space, the time they will spend in this space, and the choice of a suitable adult accompanying and being in dialog with them to ensure they will process the “unpleasant” moment into an aesthetic experience.

Preparing Young Children for the Museum Space

The museum space principally supports the aesthetic message of the artwork that is a part of the artistic interpretation. Hence, the confrontation with the museum space is an important part of the learning unit. Children who are visiting the museum for the first time need to adapt to the new space. They are exposed to new information which usually greatly differs from the information of the child's everyday space. They also meet new people (museum guide, guard, etc.) who can make them feel uncomfortable at first, or they are simply intensively engaged in discovering something new. It is therefore vital for the children to firstly seize the space, inspect it, and compare it to spaces already known to them. Bračun Sova and Strnad (2012) explain, “Before they become acquainted with a certain fine art exhibition, we need to help children to conquer the new gallery space and establish a positive connection to the people they meet here” (p. 30). The authors describe an example of working with younger children in the museum that included playing with a puppet, which helped prepare children for their experience. So, as museum pedagogues, teachers, or family, it is vital to think about how children are guided through the art museum, how and what we will discuss with them, what are we going to explain them, and what other activities should be included for them to internalize the place and feel at home in order to embark on the art exhibition.

Direct Contact with Works of Art

The museum offers a fully aesthetic and authentic experience in a place that is dedicated to exhibiting high-quality artworks. Despite the quality of today's media (books, photography, video, and the Internet), it is impossible to get complete information about artworks through these sources. At the museum, however, as the visitor views paintings, sculptures, and installations, she/he experiences real-size works and undistorted colors. The visitor can also experience movement, sound, scent, and other elements that are often included in a contemporary artwork. As many of those aspects are missing in reproductions, visual art educators have developed a new method for helping visitors engage with art objects. Duh and Zupančič (2013) describe this process as a method that

ensures that the reproduction and art education do not convey only informative data but also the aesthetic components of artwork. In the method of aesthetic transfer, the presentation of chosen works of art has to allow the observation (child, student) and the artwork, whereby the sensory stimulus is tied directly to memories, experiences, emotions and associations. (p. 74)

Just visiting an art exhibition, however, cannot fully satisfy the child's need for research and learning. Especially in contemporary art, mere contact is not sufficient

as it can be superficial and lead to misunderstanding, incomprehension, and rejection of the art. For this reason, the interpretation scheme is one of the most significant factors influencing the creation of a learning environment in the museum. It is decisive in how and to what extent the museum contributes to the expansion and consolidation of the aesthetic experience. In order to understand and experience art, visitors must follow a path of creative observation, reflection, comparison, self-questioning, and research.

Developing a Dialog

The word *dialog* denotes a conversation, usually between two people. Gadamer (2004) described a dialog as:

a process of coming to an understanding. Thus it belongs to every true conversation that each person opens himself to the other, truly accepts his point of view as valid and transposes himself into the other to such an extent that he understands not a particular individual but what he says. (p. 385)

Hence, the dialog is a process with no fixed knowledge as in a dialog we try to understand the view of the other and thus examine and change our own. Developing a dialog is a useful way for visitors (children) to discover the world of art. Burnham and Kai-Kee (2007) observe, “the galleries are not primarily considered places where art historical information is transferred. They are instead redefined as places where conversation takes place around works of art and where the project of interpretation is constantly enacted” (p. 11). These may develop a dialog between the children, the artwork, and the pedagogue or some other adults where everyone’s ideas are equally accepted, thus encouraging interactions between members and inspiring decentralized learning opportunities. By developing reciprocal dialogs with children, the adult is neither someone who understands and interprets a piece of art correctly nor the person whose view of the artwork is sacred. This may help the adult find something new in the artwork, which he/she was not able to see before. In this process, a dialog is developed in which all participants enrich their artistic experience and, by doing so, the children feel heard, accepted, and important. As Durant (1996) supports: “when all children are encouraged to express their own authentic voices, their own perceptions and ideas, and to share these with others in the group, everyone’s understanding increases”(p. 20). Therefore, adults should encourage children to express their ideas about issues uncovered in the art and inform them about their own views and the perspectives of others – they should develop a dialog with them.

Multimodal Meaning-Making in the Museum

In order to help children observe, talk, compare, understand, and feel more comfortable and self-confident in the gallery setting, it is also useful to include different tasks, games, and art making into this process. Marjanovič Umek and Zupančič (2006) believe that:

through play, children develop a different context of reality outside their everyday experience. The fundamental part of play is an 'imaginary' context in which an activity is carried out. The player is aware of the fact that this 'is not for real'. In the playful, imaginary, alternative context, individual acts are based on the original, normal, 'real' reality. (p. 8)

If, in the art museum context, we replace the word "play" with "art," the meaning remains the same. In that way, art has some of the characteristics of play, which can convey new experiences to the player (recipient). If art itself is a kind of play, then play as an activity focused on an object can be also included in the museum's activities for children. With the help of play, children feel satisfied with such activity and develop better abilities to make meaning through the artworks.

Playing with Words

An integral part of the aesthetic experience is the interpretation of art through methods of conversation, description, comparison, and explanation. Listening, observing, imitating, and "reading" the work of art can involve methods that include expression with words and elements of the play. By playing with words, the museum pedagogue can lead the children to develop creative interpretations. Methods such as describing the artwork, searching and logically integrating artistic relationships to the work, exploring feelings about the work, and integrating with familiar knowledge and experiences are all of great importance. The pedagogue, for instance, after explaining the objective characteristics of an artwork, might ask "How big is this sculpture? What is it made of? What is its color?" When questions involve technical or objective characteristics of artworks, there are likely to be only one or two possible answers, for example, "the sculpture is 2 meters high" or "there is a lot of red color." However, when discussing the subjective experience about art, there are likely to be many different answers. While the pedagogue's subjective interpretations need to be articulated to the same extent as the children's (visitors') interpretations, it is important to keep in mind that they may never create the feeling that his/her interpretation is the best or the only answer.

Playing with Movement

In many cases of contemporary art, the visitors' physical interaction is important for their interpretation. Body and movement are often necessary for a full aesthetic experience. For example, the visitor often has to enter the physical space of an installation. So, instead of standing in front of an artwork, the visitor is actually in it. At contemporary art exhibitions, there are many possibilities for movement. However, if there is none, one option is to create an opportunity for children to move during the educational experience. In Fig. 9.1, the boy's reaction on passing through the artwork is noted as he stoops, pushes his arms against the body, quickens his step, carefully looks around, and his face expression changes.

Fig. 9.1 The young visitor reacts on passing through the artwork



Tours at the Maribor Art Gallery often include such playing, for example, children physically mimic an action, subject, or person related to the artwork they observe and learn about (Fig. 9.2). Such activity implicitly intertwines with the method of conversation, in which children verbalize their observations and experiences and substantiate them through visual artistic recreation. Conversation and explanation methods also involve sitting in a (semi)circle. In doing so, children do not block each other's view of the artwork; they all see each other's faces and have eye contact. It enables everyone's equivalent inclusion in the conversation.

Children's Art Making as Meaning-Making

Children's active engagement in art-making processes underpins the museum's main goal of making quality works of art accessible to children who visit. Through artistic expression in direct confrontation with artworks which serve as quality examples made by adult artists, children observe, tell stories, select, deliberate, connect – interpret. The aim is to create in-depth opportunities for understanding artworks through an artistic process. While leaving a child alone in front of an artwork, he/she will probably attend to it only for a short period. While talking to the child in front of an artwork and encouraging careful observation and explanation, the time will extend. However, when children perceive information from an artwork and can



Fig. 9.2 Through their bodies, children express their observation: the artwork is high, pointed at the top, resembles a tree, dwarf, mountain, etc.

employ understanding in their own drawing or painting, they observe the artworks on display carefully and for a longer time.

When the child visually recreates the art piece, he/she will observe it intensively and absorb the details for even longer (Figs. 9.3 and 9.4). Thus, the possibility of art making, based on exhibited artworks, means that the quality time spent with an artwork can be extended. Consequently, it has been our experience at the museum that, through this process, children remember and internalize the artwork in a more profound way. Pedagogues at the Maribor Art Gallery have observed that children interpret artworks through their own artistic creativity, as well as by expressing their feelings toward it. First, they have to find the artwork, which they will imitate. They do this by searching, comparing, making judgments, and then, finally, choosing the one they prefer. Rather than “teach” how to imitate the works, we encourage them to express their own perception of the experience, which children at the age of 5 are already able to do. Through recreating the artwork in their own way, they highlight the elements of the artwork which they experience as most important. By doing so regularly, the elements become gradually structured and blend in with other life experiences, enriching the child’s individual expression and instigating exposure and embracement of diversity.



Fig. 9.3 The children observe and sketch a sculpture from different sides



Fig. 9.4 Ela (8 years), three drawings of an exhibited sculpture

Museum Pedagogues and the Importance of Other Adults

If the role of museum pedagogues in the past was to mediate the artist's or the curator's explanation, their present role involves "including everyone in the translation of the artwork/.../The educators who are responsible for these conversations have a central place in the future museum" (Burnham & Kai-Kee, 2007, p. 11).

Challenges of Role and Relationship

In regard to the work with younger children, it is vital to acknowledge that children rarely encounter a museum pedagogue. Alternately, the museum educator is not familiar with each new group of young visitors, in regard to dynamics or individual needs. Escorting adults play a significant role during the exhibition's visit. The educator's humanness and sensitivity to make children feel accepted and comfortable is critical. The adult escort can offer key information that helps establish a positive relationship. Additionally, when escorts actively participate in the experiences, children seemed to show a higher motivation. Through the escort teacher's (or parent's) active participation, this shared connection and learning of content conveyed may continue to develop long after the museum visit.

In regard to the influence of parents as positive role models in the museum, Gibbs et al. (2007) suggest:

... when adults feel at home in a museum, and interested in its exhibits, they are more likely to transmit these feelings to the children and the family will learn more as a result /.../ When they do, they appear to facilitate deeper levels of learning. (p.62)

Thus, teachers and other adults must consider their roles in concert with the museum pedagogue in order to support the learning experience.

Educational Activities for Children at the Maribor Art Gallery

The Maribor Art Gallery (UGM) is one of the leading museums for modern and contemporary art in Slovenia; it importantly shapes both the art scene at home and internationally. The well-structured education program addresses different generations, ethnic groups, and educational institutions. The activities presented hereinafter progressed within the subscription program Young Friends of the UGM 2014–2015 for children aged 4–11. Also included are responses by children from other groups, additionally explaining the children's response to art and emphasizing essential differences in planning activities.

The activities – out of 20 throughout the year – took place at the UGM Studio showroom designed for the presentation of the latest contemporary art production, while other activities were realized at the central venue involving the gallery's collection and other temporary exhibitions. The annual subscription facilitates regular, active art exploration within 20 creative workshops taking place on Saturdays. The work at Saturday's creative workshops is premised on developing a dialog between all participants (children, gallery staff, parents) and encountering through the visual expression of children.

Workshop Format

Saturday's creative workshops (90 min) are generally comprised of four stages:

1. Independent viewing of the exhibition
2. Guided tour through exhibitions
3. Creative visual art workshop
4. Validation

The stages follow up logically, form a range of children's activities at the exhibition, and involve information processing through language, action, and visual expression.

Independent Viewing of the Exhibition

Children inspect the exhibition on their own at first with no additional information about the artworks. They are "left on their own" to gather first impressions and be resourceful, while the pedagogue observes their movement around the place, what they are more or less attracted to, and listens to their conversations in order to adjust further activities. Some children pay greater attention to a certain artwork, while others move quickly through the exhibition. Some of them examine the exhibits on their own, whereas others socialize standing in front of the artworks. We have noticed that children who repeatedly visit the gallery are better self-organized than the ones being there for the first time. Additionally, children's attention appears to slacken sooner when viewing exhibitions of two-dimensional works and lasts much longer at modern three-dimensional and multimedia installations. Savva and Trimis (2005) also observe the children's higher interest for three-dimensional artworks: "The strong preference of children for three-dimensional artworks may result from their real experience with space and the art object itself, thus providing them the opportunity to view and actually feel the space, the size, and the form of the art object" (p. 7). The exhibitions are even more attractive to children, if they include movement, visual effects, or sounds. The duration of this stage depends on the children's feedback. If we notice their interest, we give them the chance to prolong the viewing, but if they "don't know what to do," we move on to the second stage.

Guided Tour Through Exhibitions

A guided tour through the exhibition motivates the children for an absorbed observation of the exhibited works and provides them with basic information, for instance, the author's name accompanied by a picture. Artists are not introduced to children for the sake of remembering them. Zupančič and Duh (2009) write about the introduction of the artist as follows: "Based on the photographs, they were able to feel the man of flesh and bones who had authored all those masterpieces which they learned about..." (p. 105). A play of words helps children to internalize difficult terms like performance or installation – again, not with the intention to remember

them, but to come in touch with them as they will surely come across them eventually and adopt them with time. We have not discussed too complicated exhibition titles, such as “Temporary Objects and Hybrid Ambiences,” as children at this age have not yet developed enough complex structures of thought for sophisticated concepts. On the other hand, we use simpler terms as a means for understanding the exhibition. This year, children also viewed the exhibition entitled “Heroes We Love”; since they already have adopted the term *hero*, we started the conversation about heroes known to them as an introduction to different “heroes” in works of art.

Experiencing an artwork begins with exploring its features that trigger a child's impression or emotion. By implementing questions, descriptions, conversations, listening to each other, and various tasks and games, we help them to recognize and realize these feelings. After gaining a deeper insight to the artwork's broader context, they can either change their opinion about the exhibition or stick to it. Yet, this time it is more conscious and better conceived.

Creative Visual Art Workshop

Visual art expression is regarded as a method by which younger children deepen their understanding and experience of the exhibition. Children at UGM Saturday workshops may use tools and materials similar to those used by the artist, try to recreate the same motifs, or tackle a (visual) problem. The aim is not the final product, but the child's development in the process of building an aesthetic sense as the basis of validating visual artworks. The visual assignment needs to be adapted, simplified, and didactically designed to meet the children's age level. We also derive from the personal features of a child: twenty Saturday workshops per year enable the museum pedagogue to become better acquainted with the children and include this knowledge into his or her work.

Children physically remain at the exhibition venue and are being “exposed” to the artworks/qualitative role models during the creative process. Working directly in the exhibition space does not always offer optimal conditions for carrying out visual art activities and often leads to certain limitations, such as bad lighting, presence of other people, and danger of damaging artworks, among others. Therefore, the assignments need to be adjusted to the space or the space itself to the assignments for a certain time. This line of work is usually conducted at Saturday workshops, while we advise teachers accompanying organized groups to revive the knowledge gained at the gallery in kindergarten or at school at a later stage.

Validation

“Artistic validation as the concluding phase of the creative process derives from the fact that every concluded work needs a verification process by employing appropriate communication and didactic procedures” (Duh, 2004, p. 12). In our case, the validation of children's artifacts takes place among works of art that inspired them. Children describe their own works, explain their motivation and process, and are

guided toward the validation of their own work, similarly, as we did with exhibited works. We use questions like: What material did you use? Where did you find it? What did you want to compose? Whom/What does it represent? What title have you chosen? Why? What title would your parents choose for your work? Approval, such as “You’re a very good observer” or “You explained that well,” also forms the basis of the feedback information and encourages children to further independent research and thinking. Parents join in during this phase; they listen to the children and take part in the conversation. Like in the previous stages, the museum pedagogue needs to provide a relaxed atmosphere and encourage children as well as parents to most freely express their thoughts and observations.

Sample Workshops Focused upon Featured Artists

Practical applications of meaning-making processes in the museum are demonstrated in the following two examples. The first is a workshop featuring the artist Marko Batista, and the second focuses upon exhibits by Nina Slejko Blom and Conny Blom.

Marko Batista, Temporary Objects and Hybrid Ambiences

It is hard to align Marko Batista with a certain art movement, since his works are commenced at the intersection of performative and intermedia practices, sound and visual installations, as well as physical and sensorial experiments. By creating hybrid technological, electromagnetic, or chemical systems, he juxtaposes the mystification of technology and simultaneously creates new ways of considering it (see Hribernik, 2014).

A program for a kindergarten school group and for children accompanied by their parents was carried out during the exhibition. The school group was not a regular visitor to the gallery, so it was important to prepare the children in advance, especially in case of entering a darkened space. Since fear of darkness among preschool children is quite common, we informed the teachers about this and together searched for solutions how to prepare the children to face darkness. A teacher from a Maribor kindergarten reported on conversations with children about darkness before coming to the gallery: they read stories (*Darkness sneaking up...*) and played with pocket torches (flash lights) in a darkened playroom. We agreed with the teacher that one of the children should be accompanied by a familiar person (grandmother). At their arrival to the gallery, we avoided talking about darkness but, rather, invited them to the tour and let them first illuminate the space with pocket torches. The advanced preparation helped as, soon, they put away the torches and we began our activities.

The children who were regular visitors to the gallery’s exhibition program needed no preliminary preparations. Activities related to Batista’s exhibition were the fifteenth of this season, so the children had a good understanding of the gallery



Fig. 9.5 Multimedia installation by Slovenian artist Marko Batista

space and staff. Nevertheless, darkness was still an emotional burden to them. In the conversation that followed the second stage, the children primarily mentioned the darkened room as the most disturbing element. On the other hand, they were positively motivated by the things occurring in darkness. Only one of the girls was reluctant to enter at first, so the museum pedagogue accompanied her until she relaxed and joined the other children.

The first stage of the children's workshop was more extensive than the usual, since the exhibition offered many sensorial stimuli (Fig. 9.5). "Countless" lights attached to the exhibits, moving objects, and various scents they perceived attracted the children. The children's movement through the space was not linear (from one exhibit to another) but related to the sound they heard at a particular exhibition part or the movement of objects they reacted to. Besides, they often returned to a certain exhibit (e.g., to the object making noisy "sounds" in intervals). They were quite attracted to the light elements: they placed their hands into streams of light and tried to touch the images projected on the wall. The children communicated a lot with each other; they enthusiastically presented their observation, like when someone discovered that the sound came out of a pipe. We also observed that they responded with their voices, (e.g., laughing or screaming) while being suddenly surprised by an exhibited object.

The children were sensually and emotionally quite excited by the independent exhibition tour. They were highly motivated to explore things by themselves and extremely enjoyed the process. However, this does not mean that they understood and aesthetically experienced the exhibits. They needed to be led through the pro-

cess of deeper observation, integration, and comprehension during the following three stages.

The second stage (guided tour) started with the search for answers to the questions: “How did the artist make his work?” “Which objects do you recognize in the artwork?” “Where does the wire lead and what is it for?” We encouraged the children to recognize the materials, which the artist (they have “met” in the video) used to design his objects: metal pipes, wires, table lamps, speakers, bottles, different computer parts, etc. Emphasis lay mostly on sound inclusions, and it was interesting to observe that the children self-initiatively searched for the sound source and how the objects were made. Krpan (2014, p. 9) writes that Batista has been researching the sound tightly connected to the manufacture of instruments which enable open compositions and by being exhibited allow an insight to the phenomenology of sound, material, and sound-providing equipment.

The children realized that the artist composed his artwork of objects they know from their domestic environment and are powered by electricity, like most of the things at home. Thus, through art they became aware of the modern way of life and linked it to art. Further, we passed to an open-ended question: “Why did Marko create these artworks?” The responses mostly referred to unused objects: “because they are old and broken;” “to avoid throwing them away,” “he made something new out of them.” Hereby, we addressed the themes of ecology and recycling. We asked the children to think of new titles for the artworks. The majority chose titles associated with objects or animals: for the child that chose the title *Big Mouse*, the object resembled a mouse due to its two circular elements. We compared the titles and directed the conversation toward asking questions like “Why do you think the artwork reminds Ana of a city?” This way, they tried to see things from someone else’s perspective: “Because she thought these were houses and block of flats!” We also compared the objects’ everyday usage with their new utilization gained in the art installation: a pipe is used for running water through it, while in its artistic function, it spreads sounds and becomes a kind of speaker or an instrument. This idea served as the basis for carrying out the workshop.

Children were previously informed to search for different objects at home and bring them to the workshop, so that we could design “instruments.” They created instrument objects by arranging the objects across the room or putting them together with adhesive tape, wires, etc. Some used water to pour into the objects’ interior (which they saw among the exhibits) and thus noticed that the sound changed by “drumming” on the object. One child came up with the idea to dye the water by adding color, so we made it available to him. They created sounds generally by pounding on objects with hard materials. They also crafted an object made of bottles and by blowing into them they produced a sound.

By creating their own “instrument,” the children played in varied fields: music, sculpture, spatial design, physics, chemistry, etc. They designed the artifacts individually at first and later connected and cooperated within a performance (Fig. 9.6). The children positioned themselves around the exhibition venue and individually played on their own instrument. One child was assigned the role of a documentalist who recorded the performance as an art form of limited time. The audience con-



Fig. 9.6 A performer, a camerawoman, and an observer

sisted of parents, and, as usual, the video recordings were later sent via e-mail to the parents with the request to watch and discuss them with their children.

Nina Slejko Blom and Conny Blom, *On the Shoulders of Giants*

The work of Nina Slejko Blom (Slovenia) and Conny Blom (Sweden) derives from their playful fascination with the giants of the art world – the icons of classic art, music, literature, and film. With their interventions and interpretations, the two artists problematize the status enjoyed by the original work of art. This exhibition proved to be less “exciting” to the children during the independent tour. Artworks were hanging from the walls or placed on bases similar to the “white cube.” The exhibition included a sound installation not perceived by the children. They also overlooked some other elements, such as an inscription on the wall written in pencil, a switch on the wall, a book on a chair, etc. The children often turned to the pedagogue with the question: “Is this also a part of the exhibition?” Mostly older children developed a negative attitude toward the exhibition in the first stage: “My younger sister can do that as well!” (girl, 9 years). On the contrary, younger children have no pre-designed notion of art and are more open to accepting new things. They did not reject the exhibition but were not enthused about it either.

We started our joint confrontation with the exhibition with the question: “Why did you ask me, whether the speaker is also exhibited?” The children answered: “It is weird for the speaker to be a part of the exhibition!”... “Why?” ... “Because, he didn’t make it by himself (the artist).” ... “Because, the artist did not create it himself, you are not sure, if it is a part of the exhibition or not?” ... “Yes.” ... “What is the purpose of a speaker?”... “To listen to it.” ... “Do you hear something now?” ...

“No!” ... “Why not?” ... “It’s not working!” ... We moved closer to the object and listened again. This time, they perceived noises, human voices, sounds of instruments, etc. The artist Conny Blom had “copied” and organized “pauses” of great classic music pieces into a new composition (*4’ 33 Minutes of Stolen Silence*, 2006). We realized that the pauses were not “clear” but contained “interruptions” due to recording. The artist played with the idea of authenticity, but it was our aim to inspire the children’s awareness. Previously, they thought that the speaker was not working and that someone left it there unintentionally, but by being quiet, they were able to hear something.

In the next stages, Nina and Conny were introduced to the children through their photographs. We focused on the food motif that ran throughout the exhibition in varied forms: real food, action, photography, and painting. First, we inspected a grapefruit placed on a white sculpture base (Conny Blom, *Grapefruit [After Yoko Ono]*, 2014). The children first believed it to be artificial; one child suggested it was made of clay and painted. We allowed them to touch the grapefruit and check, if it is real. We asked them: “Having a grapefruit at home, do you also think of it as unreal? Do you test it by touching it?” Next, we viewed a painting of orange carrots bound together with blue and black wire and a wristwatch (Nina Slejko Blom, *Scenes from Real Life*, 2010/11). It reminded the children of dynamite with a watch that counts down the time of explosion. Then, we looked at photographs (Fig. 9.7) of white food meals that Nina ate the whole month in order to “prepare” to paint white paintings (*Fake [Robert Ryman, Untitled 65]*, 2011).

As children realized that the artist had been eating only white food for a whole month, they seemed surprised. One child asked, whether she became ill, while another child speculated that she must have become paler after a month. In any case,

Fig. 9.7 Nina Slejko Blom, *Eating, After Satie*, 2010, color photograph



they made the correct assumption that this diet must have had an impact on the artist and empathized with her situation by uttering, "Yuck, I couldn't eat that!"

The children brought food of their favorite color to the workshop from their home. We wanted to encourage them to look at food from a different angle, namely, as an object with artistic value, so we offered other objects (umbrella, hammer, phone, etc.) that can change the meaning of food (like the watch "changed" carrots into dynamite in Conny's object). First, the children played with the objects and designed different compositions on a white cloth. They photographed the resulting "paintings" by themselves and afterward ate the edible parts in order to become fit for the painting task (Figs. 9.8 and 9.9). The creative workshop offered the children a personal experience that additionally enhanced their sensitivity to and sense of witnessing quality.

During the validation process, the children gave a very emotional and rapturous narration about the emergence of their paintings and about how they ate the "painting," describing the process rather than their product. They also talked about the exhibition: "Mom, those paintings there have only white food, and Nina ate it the whole month!" Since we were still at the exhibition venue, this was considered an

Fig. 9.8 Zoja (7 years) created an installation of bananas, wrapped cheese, and headphones



Fig. 9.9 After Zoja ate the fruit and the cheese, she painted the motif from memory



invitation to another exhibition tour accompanied by their parents. The validation process should include the viewing of photographs taken by the children, but for reasons of space and time, we were not able to carry it out. However, we presented the photographs next to the paintings at the children's exhibition at the end.

Conclusion

Within the educational role of the art museum, cultural relevance is established when children become familiarized with their own as well as other cultural values and traditions through art. Art museums become important social spaces for multi-modal meaning-making through planned opportunities for sharing among individuals, who are listening to each other, developing empathy, and exploring society and their own role in it. Besides, the aesthetic experience in an authentic place of art becomes richer and more intense through direct confrontation with the artwork. It can help individuals to explore, develop, and expand their personality through all their life stages. Thus, the art museum represents an important environment for young children.

Some exhibitions, especially those containing many sensorial stimuli, hold great attraction for children and motivate them to investigate further. However, mere contact with art is not sufficient. It is vital to adequately prepare children for the gallery visit and ensure adult escort through conversation, listening, explanation, encouragement, and activities that encourage multimodal meaning-making. The experiences from Maribor Art Gallery described in this chapter demonstrate a multimodal perspective of language, literacy, and learning in the context of a contemporary art museum and offer insights not only for other museum pedagogues but also for teachers and families of young children as they learn about themselves and their world through art.

References

- Blažič, M., Ivanuš Grmek, M., Kramar, M., & Strmčnik F. (2003). *Didaktika* [Didactics]. Novo mesto, Slovenia: Higher Education Centre, Institute for Research and Development.
- Bračun Sova, R. (2014) *Pedagoška vrednost interpretativne sheme umetnostnega muzeja* (doktorska disertacija) [The pedagogical value of the interpretative framework in a Slovene Art Museum (doctoral thesis)]. Ljubljana, Slovenia: Faculty of Education.
- Bračun Sova, R., & Strnad, B. (2012). *Zigro v kiparski svet Dragice Čadež* [Through play into the sculptural world of Dragica Čadež]. Ljubljana, Slovenia: Faculty of Education.
- Burnham, R., & Kai-Kee, E. (2007, Summer). *Museum Education and the Project of Interpretation in the Twenty-First Century*. *Journal of Aesthetic Education*. 41(2), 11–13. Retrieved May 25, 2015 from: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4140189>

- Byszewsky, J. (2003). *Drugačen muzej* [Inne muzeum – The other museum]. Ljubljana, Slovenia: Slovenian Museum Association.
- Čufer, E. (2006). Atletika očesa, Krst pod Triglavom – vprašanje zapisovanja in branja sodobnih scenskih praks [Athletics of the eye, baptism under Triglav – The issue of outlining and reading contemporary performing practices]. In B. Kunst & P. Pogorevc (Eds.), *Sodobne scenske umetnosti* [Contemporary performing arts] (pp. 294–309). Ljubljana, Slovenia: Maska.
- Duh, M. (2004). *Vrednotenje kot didaktični problem pri likovni vzgoji* [Validation as a didactic problem in fine art education]. Maribor, Slovenia: Faculty of Education.
- Duh, M., & Zupančič, T. (2013). Likovna apreciacija in metoda estetskega transferja. In *Revija za elementarno izobraževanje* (pp. 71–86). Maribor: Pedagoška fakulteta.
- Durant, S.-R. (1996). Reflections on museum education at dulwich picture gallery. *Art Education, National Art Education Association*, 49(1), 15–24.
- Gadamer, H. G. (2004) *Truth and method* (2nd rev. ed). London/New York: Continuum.
- Gibbs, K., Sani, M., & Thompson, J. (2007). *Lifelong learning in museums. A European handbook*. Ferrara, Italy: Edisai.
- Herzog, J., & Strnad, B. (2014). Proaktivnost slepih in slabovidnih pri dojemaju abstraktne in figuralne umetnosti [The proactivity of blind and visually impaired in perceiving abstract and figurative art]. In: *Revija za elementarno izobraževanje* [Journal of Elementary Education]. Maribor, Slovenia: Faculty of Education, 75–88.
- Hribernik, A. (2014). Fluidno mesto vpisa umetniškega dela, postprodukcija in asemblaž [The fluid space of inscription of artwork, postproduction and assemblages]. In: J. Krpan, A. Hribernik, I. Hiršfenfelder, L. Zagoričnik (Eds.), *Marko Batista: začasni objekti in hibridni prostori* [Marko Batista: Temporary objects and hybrid ambients]. Ljubljana, Slovenia/Slovenj Gradec, Slovenia: Aksioma – Institute for Contemporary Art/Koroška Gallery of Fine Arts.
- Illeris, H. (2006). Museums and galleries as performative sites for lifelong learning. *Museum and Society*, 4(1), 15–26.
- Jank, W., & Meyer, H. (2006). *Didaktični modeli* [Didaktische Modelle/Didactical models]. Ljubljana, Slovenia: National Education Institute Slovenia.
- Kroflič, R. (2010). Etična in politična dimenzija projekta Reggio Emilia [Ethical and political dimension of the Reggio Emilia Project]. In T. Devjak, M. Batsitič Zorec, J. Vogrinc, D. Skubic, & S. Berčnik (Eds.), *Pedagoški koncept Reggio Emilia in Kurikulum za vrte: podobnosti in različnosti* [The pedagogical concept of Reggio Emilia and the curriculum for kindergarten: Similarities and diversities] (pp. 11–66). Ljubljana, Slovenia: Faculty of Education.
- Krpan, J. (2014). Slikanje z zvokom [Painting with sound]. In: J. Krpan, A. Hribernik, I. Hiršfenfelder, L. Zagoričnik (Eds.), *Marko Batista: začasni objekti in hibridni prostori* [Marko Batista: Temporary objects and hybrid ambients]. Ljubljana, Slovenia/Slovenj Gradec, Slovenia: Aksioma – Institute for Contemporary Art/Koroška Gallery of Fine Arts.
- Marjanovič Umek, L., & Zupančič, T. (2006). *Psihologija otroške igre: od rojstva do vstopa v šolo* [The psychology of child's play: From birth to school enrollment]. Ljubljana, Slovenia: The Scientific Research Institute of the Faculty of Arts.
- Savva, A., & Trimis, E. (2005). Responses of young children to contemporary art exhibitions: The role of artistic experiences. In: T. Barone & L. Bresler (Eds.), *International Journal of Education & The Arts*. Retrieved July 8, 2015, from <http://www.ijea.org/v6n13/v6n13.pdf>.
- Stallabrass, J. (2006). *Contemporary art. A very short introduction*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press. Retrieved July 9, 2015, from <http://www.amazon.com/Contemporary-Art-Very-Short-Introduction/dp/0192806467>.
- Zupančič, T., & Duh, M. (2009). *Likovni odgoj i umjetnost Pabla Picassa: likovno-pedagoški odgoj u Dječjem vrtiću Opatija* [Art education and the art of Pablo Picasso: Art teaching project at Opatija Kindergarten]. Opatija, Croatia: Opatija Kindergarten.

Brigita Strnad Maribor Art Gallery, Maribor, Slovenia

Brigita Strnad is a senior curator and the head of the Education Department at Maribor Art Gallery and also works as an external expert at the Faculty of Education of the University of Maribor. She is an author and coauthor of many projects and articles on the subject of museum education for preschool and school children and in the field of working with special needs groups in the context of art museum. Currently, she is attending a doctoral program in Education Science at the Faculty of Education of the University of Maribor.

Chapter 10

Children in Crisis: Transforming Fear into Hope Through Multimodal Literacy

Donalyn Heise

Abstract Current interest in preparing students for success in the twenty-first century has resulted in redefining what it means to be literate. Educators recognize the importance of utilizing multiple modes of literacy to help students navigate the varied texts children now encounter. But what about young children who lack access or who live in crisis, such as those experiencing homelessness? How can early childhood educators prepare all children for success in the digital age when some children lack basic needs of safety, food, and shelter? In this chapter, I advance the notion of art within a multimodal literacy framework and a meaning-making endeavor that contributes to the needed discussion on how to provide access to knowledge and necessary skills to students who have minimal access to resources. I draw upon my years as an art teacher/researcher with young children who are homeless in a variety of settings, including P12 schools, community programs, and intergenerational arts/literacy programs in shelters for homeless families. Throughout the chapter, examples are provided and common principles are explained. I share insights from students, parents, teachers, and researchers and contend that multimodal literacies in the context of homelessness can be useful in engaging students in the construction of personal and shared meanings that contribute to resilience and transformation of perspectives. Considerations to guide instruction for children in crisis include: (1) context, (2) certainty, (3) choice and control, (4) creativity, and (5) contribution. I conclude with implications for schools and shelter programs in the United States and abroad.

Keywords Multimodal literacies • Homelessness • Art education • Resilience • Children in crisis • Visual literacy • Early childhood

D. Heise (✉)

Advance Learning, Inc, Austin, TX, USA

e-mail: dheise2@yahoo.com

© Springer International Publishing AG 2017

M.J. Narey (ed.), *Multimodal Perspectives of Language, Literacy, and Learning in Early Childhood*, Educating the Young Child 12,

DOI 10.1007/978-3-319-44297-6_10

191

Introduction

Growing up in a media-saturated environment of the Internet, video games, social media, and hundreds of television channels potentially changes the ways children learn, communicate, and interact with others. These digital forms require the ability to integrate multiple forms of information including images, music, drama, and video. Educators recognize the importance of developing literacy across multiple modes in order to help students navigate the growing number of texts children will encounter as technology spurs further advances (Callow, 2008; Sanders & Albers, 2010). But what about young children who lack access – children who are living in crisis, such as those experiencing homelessness? How can early childhood educators prepare all children for success when some children lack basic needs of safety, food, and shelter?

In this chapter, I advance the notion that understandings of visual art are critical to discussions of multimodal literacies as meaning-making endeavors. Further, I seek to contribute to the critical dialogue on how to provide access to the knowledge and skills required to be multiliterate in this digital age to children who may have minimal access to resources. The chapter draws upon my work of 15 years as an art teacher and researcher with young children who are homeless in a variety of settings, including P12 schools, community programs, and intergenerational art and literacy programs that took place in shelters for homeless families. Throughout the chapter, I provide examples and explain the principles that are common across these pedagogical samples. I share insights from children, parents, teachers, and researchers and contend that understanding the process and value of developing multimodal literacies in the context of homelessness can be useful in engaging all in the construction of the personal and shared meanings and transformation of perspectives that contribute to resiliency. Considerations of the following are suggested for meaningful instruction of children living in crisis: (1) context, (2) certainty, (3) choice and control, (4) creativity, and (5) contribution. I conclude with considerations and implications for schools and shelter programs in the United States and abroad.

Homelessness

Concurrent with the need for multimodal literacy to address the emergence of new media technologies is the prevalence of homelessness in the United States. According to the Department of Housing and Urban Development Annual Homeless Assessment Report to Congress (2015), 23 states and the District of Columbia experienced an increase in homelessness between 2007 and 2013. It is estimated that 1 in 30, or approximately 2.5 million children in the United States are homeless (Bassuk et al., 2014). Of particular concern, is the number of very young children who are homeless. More than half of the children in federally funded shelters are under the age of 6 (Bassuk et al., 2014; U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development,

2015). However, most homeless children do not stay in shelters. Almost 75 % of children who are homeless temporarily live with others, often sleeping on couches or on the floor. Many live in unstable situations, such as in cars, motels, abandoned buildings, or public spaces. Refuting a common public misperception, homelessness is not only found in urban areas. Recent research indicates that families, single mothers, and children make up the largest group of people who are homeless in rural areas (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2015). Persons using shelter programs in suburban and rural areas rose 10.2 % from 2013 to 2014 (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2015). Most children who are homeless are also suffering from poverty (National Center on Family Homelessness, 2014). Poverty and housing instability can be harmful during early childhood and can contribute to physical, mental, and emotional difficulties (Burt et al., 1999; Hodas, 2006). The National Center on Family Homelessness (2014) reports a high level of stress in young children who are homeless, and many have experienced trauma from extreme poverty, exposure to violence, and mental health issues (Perlman, 2015). Young children who are homeless are disproportionately more likely to experience risk factors such as chronic health conditions, food insecurity, child maltreatment, and exposure to violence in comparison to their peers who live in more stable environments (Perlman, 2015). According to the National Center on Family Homelessness (2014), very young children who are homeless are at risk of having emotional problems serious enough to require professional care.

Repeated exposure to these risk factors can negatively affect development and educational outcomes (Sandel, Sheward, & Sturtevant, 2015). Homelessness during early childhood has been linked to early school failure (Perlman & Fantuzzo, 2010), developmental delays (Grant et al., 2007), learning disabilities (Rafferty, Shinn, & Weitzman, 2004), and poor social-emotional development (Perlman, 2015). The achievement gap tends to persist and worsen over time (Obradović et al., 2009). According to the research from the Harvard University's Center on the Developing Child (Shonkoff et al., 2012), extreme and chronic stressors such as those experienced by young children who are homeless – poverty, hunger, and residential and school instability, often without the support of a caring adult – can result in toxic stress. Toxic stress can disrupt healthy brain function and the metabolic system and increases the likelihood that the child will experience developmental delays and educational difficulties (Shonkoff et al., 2012). These authors cite lack of awareness as one of the challenges in addressing needs of homeless children.

School-age homeless children face barriers to enrolling and attending school, including transportation problems, residency requirements, inability to obtain previous school records, and lack of clothing and school supplies (NAEHCY, 2013). To address these issues, The McKinney-Vento Act's Education for Homeless Children and Youth (EHCY) Program, reauthorized in December 2015 by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), entitles homeless children and youth to a free, appropriate public education, including a preschool education, equal access to quality education, funding for transportation to allow children to continue to attend the student's school of origin, and immediate enrollment in programs even if documents are missing. But awareness on the part of teachers and administrators is crucial to provide the support and resources needed to provide appropriate education for all students.

Children who have experienced crisis such as homelessness and accompanying poverty are not only feeling trauma from lack of a stable home but loss of routines within a supportive community that can result in feeling overwhelmed. It can increase feelings of fear and lack of control (APA, 2000; Hodas, 2006). Children's ability to understand, make meaning of, and recover from trauma are influenced by their perspectives, social connections, and resourcefulness (Hodas, 2006). Researchers advocate a strengths-based framework that is grounded on understanding of and responsiveness to trauma and ask that opportunities be created for survivors to rebuild their sense of control and empowerment (Hopper, Bassuk, & Olivet, 2010). If, as indicated above, the stress associated with homelessness can affect relationships, language, cognitive development, and physical and emotional health, then attention to the context of homelessness is key to addressing the needs of this vulnerable population (Heise & MacGillivray, 2011; Hodas, 2006; Perlman, 2015). A recent survey found that positive early childhood experiences contribute to positive outcomes for children suffering from homelessness (Perlman, 2015). A similar study in Australia found that positive experiences in art benefitted homeless individuals by increasing interpersonal function and social participation (Thomas, Gray, McGinty, & Ebringer, 2011). Specifically, it provided a means of expression and transformation through positive public recognition and social inclusion. If art experiences can provide these positive outcomes in addition to academic outcomes, then a multimodal approach to literacy development can facilitate meaningful learning within the context of children living in crisis.

Meaning-Making in the Context of Homelessness

A multimodal approach to literacy can provide meaningful learning opportunities in the context of homelessness. It moves beyond transference of knowledge to meaning-making, beyond decoding and encoding, but also recoding and reflecting. This integrated approach utilizes the arts and takes into consideration not only knowledge and information but cultural data in an effort to help young children understand themselves and make sense of their world. It can help students learn to interpret and communicate across multiple modes and social contexts and address cognitive and affective domains.

Teachers are expected to successfully educate all of their students. This requires sensitivity to the context of students' lives. Paulo Freire (Freire & Freire, 2004) stressed the importance of opportunities for all individuals to share and speak from their own experience, embrace a critical perspective to see connections and differences in situations, and act as change agents in their world. Ntseane (2011) builds on the work of Freire and the notion of cultural sensitivity and warns against continued marginalization of diverse cultural contexts. Although directing his work with adult learners, Mezirow's (1990, 2000) transformative learning theory has relevance for children in that he articulates meaning-making that focuses on cognitive and affective dimensions and argues that critical reflection can shape how we understand our experiences. A multimodal approach with attention to context and that utilizes multiple senses can be beneficial for all students.

Some art educators call this a multisensory approach to education (Bolin & Blandy, 2003; Spont, 2010). Visual art education is a multisensory experience in that it includes multiple ways to respond to art, multiple interpretations of media, and multiple ways to tell our own stories. Through manipulating art media, we use multiple senses, we hear the sounds of kneading clay, we physically construct as we carve or form clay, and we use touch as we feel the paint brush sliding across smooth or textured surfaces. A multisensory approach integrated with text can expand the capacity of learners to engage in meaning-making and provide multiple modes of inquiry that guide learning about self, others, and the world.

This multimodal approach engages learners in the processes and content of art as meaning-making endeavors. More than merely instructing students to illustrate a story or complete a step-by-step craft project, it includes artistic processes of creating, presenting, responding, and connecting. By creating art, young children make meaning by investigating, discovering, and developing awareness of perception. They convey meaning through the decisions regarding presentation of art. By looking at art and engaging in discussion, we respond to and interpret intended meaning of the artist, but we also create personal and shared meaning related to our experiences and cultural background. And we can make cross-cultural connections through art.

Similar to expressive arts therapy, a multimodal approach in early childhood classrooms considers the aesthetics of art secondary to the use of artistic processes that promote learning. Creative modalities provide individuals with opportunities to express thoughts and feelings, communicate nonverbally, achieve insight, and experience the power of art to heal (Malchiodi, 2003). While I am not advocating that educators assume the role of therapist, I recognize the potential of multimodal approaches as a meaning-making endeavor for all students and particularly for children living in crisis. Incorporating visual art, movement, music, drama, and writing may be helpful into group work where interaction is preferred and encouraged. It can strengthen group dynamics and provide access for individual students who respond to kinesthetic and sensory experiences and can offer opportunity for meaningful self-expression.

A multimodal approach recognizes the meaning embedded in an object. For example, an object can have meaning when we use our senses to recall and share memories of personal or collective narratives. A drawing is simply marks on a paper until we attach meaning to it. Then the marks contain the meaning of the maker or viewer. The next section presents guidelines for teaching children who are homeless, followed by examples of multimodal in action.

Guidelines for Teaching Children Who Are Homeless

Utilizing a multimodal approach that includes art can enhance meaning-making and help young children living in crisis overcome the barriers that may interfere with learning. My research on the role of art and literacy for educating marginalized populations, including young children who have experienced homelessness,

emphasizes multimodal and visual art as essential tools for creating personal and shared meanings that contribute to resiliency. The following considerations were developed to guide the design and implementation of effective education for students who have experienced homelessness: (1) context, (2) certainty, (3) choice and control, (4) creativity, and (5) contribution. I offer a brief summary of each in the subsections that follow.

Context

Attention to the context is important, with greater awareness and sensitivity to children who are homeless and living in crisis. Some children who lack basic needs of food, shelter, and security may lack trust and confidence. Recognizing that some behaviors and responses are ways of coping with past trauma can inform instruction. All students and their families should be treated in a respectful, supportive, dignified, and nonjudgmental manner. Open and respectful communication is necessary and includes ethical behavior and respect for the child's privacy and confidentiality. Some children do not want to be identified as homeless to others. Lessons should not reveal nor single out children who are homeless. Children living in crisis may behave in ways that are similar to behaviors related to attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), behavioral disorder, or oppositional defiant disorder (Cook et al., 2005). Teachers should use available resources to learn more about the context of homelessness and be in communication with specialists, such as school psychologists and counselors. Caution should be exerted to avoid perpetuating negative stereotypes of homelessness. Understanding the context of the children's lives can help educators design and implement an appropriate curriculum to meet the needs of all students.

Certainty

Establish a safe and supportive physical and emotional classroom environment where basic needs are met and diversity is valued. This includes safe use of materials and tools and a nurturing environment where all ideas are treated with respect. Feelings of uncertainty can trigger intense reactions and interfere with learning. Knowing routines and what to expect can help students feel safe.

Choice and Control

Children who have experienced homelessness may feel that much in their lives is out of their control. Providing curriculum and instruction that provides choices in materials or processes can facilitate much needed mastery or competence derived

from experience. Using an inquiry approach that utilizes open-ended prompts can stimulate divergent thinking, encourage experimentation and discovery, and embrace multiple perspectives and solutions to problem-solving. Focusing on themes, such as hope or fear, allows multiple ways for students to interact with curriculum content. Rather than controlling thoughts or behavior, focusing on choices and mastery of media can help students living in crisis regain a much needed sense of control of something in their lives.

Creativity

Creativity involves the ability to transcend traditional ideas to create meaningful new ideas, interpretations, or relationships. It encompasses the novel or original. Children who have experienced homelessness need certainty in their lives, but they also need variety, novel ideas, or approaches to problem-solving. Multimodal literacies provide multiple forms of communication and opportunities for students to engage, explore, think, and convey ideas using visual imagery, gestures, and sounds. It can help students to think critically and explore multiple solutions to problems, as well as encourage multiple perspectives on an idea or issue.

Contribution

Create a culture of care and community where students learn to support one another and take responsibility for the well-being of each other and the total community. Being able to contribute to the well-being of another can enhance self-esteem and provide a sense of purpose. It encompasses meaningfulness or the quality of having value or significance. Students who are homeless may be perceived as having nothing to offer society. My work with children who are homeless has proved contrary to this. Curriculum and instruction that includes opportunities for social justice, to critically reflect on issues and/or to respond by contributing to the well-being of another, can be beneficial to all students.

The following sections offer examples of multimodal literacies for children experiencing homelessness in a multiage classroom and in a shelter setting. Insights from students, teachers, parents, and shelter staff are shared.

Multimodal Learning in Action for Children Living in Crisis

Formal and informal settings provide opportunities for youth who are homeless and others living in crisis to develop and express personal voice. The following represents a multiage classroom in a school with low socioeconomic status where 85 % of students are on free or reduced lunch. The students range in age from 6 to 8 years

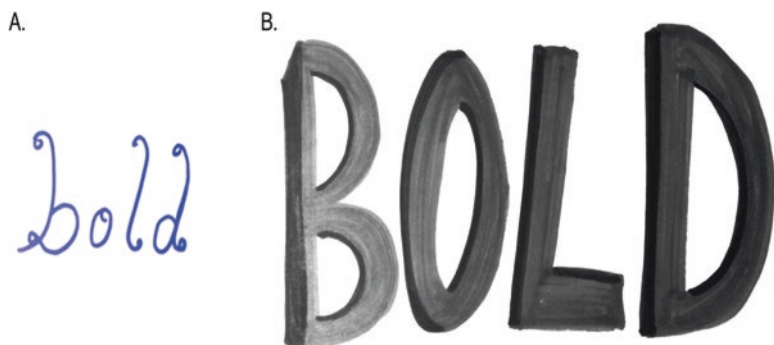


Fig. 10.1 Visual analysis of the word *BOLD*

old and are considered at risk in that most are performing on or below academic standards. In a class of 20, three students are living in homeless shelters, and five students are residing in unstable housing, living with friends and moving often.

Introducing Visual Literacy

Students were shown two images depicting the word “bold.” One was written in small curvy lower case blue font, and the other image consisted of large black bold capital letters (Fig. 10.1). The teacher asked them what that word spelled, then guided them in the following visual analysis activity. When asked which one best communicates the concept of bold, the students not only unanimously answered “B,” but most deepened the tone of their voice to say the word out loud. Several students stood and created bodily gestures that resembled flexed arm and shoulder muscles of bodybuilders. When guided to share why they thought B was the most bold, children’s verbal responses revealed attention to the color, size, direction, and shape of the letters and understanding of these visual elements to communicate meaning.

These young students used multiple modes to communicate attached meaning by connecting embodied action. Boys and girls alike associated prior conceptions of body builders and strong muscles as representations of the concept of bold. Yet different meanings also emerged. One 8-year-old girl suggested that bold can also mean that someone was “bold enough to wear crazy clothes, even if most people don’t wear the kind of clothes that you like.” As she spoke, she pranced and used her body to showcase the colorful outfit she was wearing that day. A young boy challenged this notion of the concept of bold, and a short dialog ensued. The students finally agreed that both definitions of bold might be true.

Then, the teacher showed them two examples of the word “fear,” one written in small green curvy font and another in large black font using only capital letters



Fig. 10.2 Visual analysis of the word *FEAR*

(Fig. 10.2). The children indicated that the letters were not bold but “scratchy.” One student said she thought example B was “scary,” and several other students agreed. As they talked about example B, which they thought was the best way to communicate fear, they used gestures such as wide eyes and holding on to each other. One student covered her eyes with her hands, and another created a body pose that made her appear to be afraid. In addition, they changed their voices to sound shaky and weak. Using multiple modes of communication, the children responded to visual texts and used visual evidence to justify their opinions and then used embodied action to interact and share their interpretations of the content.

A class discussion on the concept of fear guided students to identify their perception of fear as good or bad. All the students thought fear was bad. One 6-year-old said that she thought fear was bad because she didn’t like being afraid. The class brainstormed examples of fear. Student responses included being afraid that you might get run over if you don’t look before you cross the street, fear that you would not have any food, and fear that someone would hurt you. One student said that fear is when you think you will get kidnapped on your way home; another elaborated that you can get shot if you are out too late. One boy shared, “I’m afraid of monsters even though I know they aren’t real.” When asked, “can fear be good for you?”, students’ responses included “yes, if you are afraid you will get run over you will be careful when you cross the street”; “If it [fear] keeps you from doing something you should do, like if you are afraid to go on the slide because you think you will fall or you think you won’t like it but you would really miss out on fun if you don’t.” One young student exclaimed, “So, fear can be good for you cause it keeps you safe!” This indicates her perspective had changed. The teacher then asked, “What can you do if you are afraid?” Students’ responses included, “tell someone,” “be brave,” and “hide.”

They applied what they learned about visual analysis and took the concept of conquering fear one step further by reflecting on images of gargoyles. All students moaned and cringed when looking at them and said they thought they looked scary. The teacher revealed that a long time ago, gargoyles were called grotesques and were attached to the tops of buildings. The people believed that gargoyles would scare away evil spirits, so they were used to protect those inside the building. One child's response suggests a newly developed perspective, "So, in a way, these ugly scary things were actually good!" The teacher asked, what did they see that made them look scary? Students shared some of the visual attributes that they thought communicated scariness, such as big eyes, open mouth, large teeth, muscular jaws, and wings. One girl started to talk about her perception of monsters, stumbled on her words, started her sentence three times as she desperately tried to communicate what she was trying to say, then finally gave up, saying, "it's hard to explain. Can I just draw it or do I have to say it?" This is consistent with Eisner's view that the arts help children learn what cannot be said (Eisner, 2002).

Creating Fear-Eating Monsters

After looking at the images, talking about them, and creating sounds and gestures, the children designed and created drawings of monsters to eat all their fears (Fig. 10.3). The teacher intentionally gave them choices in colors and drawing materials. Some chose wide tip markers, others used fine point markers, and some chose crayons or colored pencils. One boy seemed to use the process of drawing to discover and construct meaning; he talked as he drew, erased, and changed the forms on the page. At the end of the lesson, the drawings were displayed. Instead of an art critique focusing on principles and elements of design, students shared their personal stories that served as inspiration for their creations. When asked if their perceptions of fear had changed as a result of the lesson, one little boy shared, "not all fear is bad. Some is healthy and can protect you, while some is bad. I'm gonna eat the ones that are bad!" and then he proceeded to mimic chomping sounds with his mouth. One girl stated that "monsters don't exist. Well, the really bad, really evil ones don't always look bad, they are not always what they look like. I mean, technically it's the monster on the inside that is scary." As the students created monsters to eat their fears, they started talking about what happens in their future, including visions of hope, no more monsters, no more fear, and hope for a place with flowers everywhere and happy people (Fig. 10.3).

Using a multimodal approach allowed students opportunities to not only express themselves using multisensory modes but also empowered them as they created monsters designed to conquer their fears. In doing so, they become change agents in their lives. As one child said, "my monster's gonna eat all the scaries away."

Another defended her choice to not draw a monster by saying, "I don't like monsters, so I'm gonna draw things that made me happy, like singing faces, cupcakes and cheese-its" (Fig. 10.4). This hopeful act of focusing on sources of joy is considered one of the protective factors believed to foster resilience (Heise, 2014; Heise &

Fig. 10.3 Drawing: monsters. Boy, age 6



Fig. 10.4 Drawing: happy monsters. Girl, age 5



MacGillivray, 2013). Other protective factors include facing fears and trying to solve problems and being optimistic and flexible (Haglund, Nestadt, Cooper, Southwick, & Charney, 2007; Heise, 2014; Heise & MacGillivray, 2013). In creating monsters to “eat” their fears, they engaged in creative problem-solving and may have gained control of fear that could have hampered their sense of security. Students were allowed choices in the creative process and supported in a nurturing environment. The act of drawing was a process of problem-solving and discovery. By sharing and talking about their drawings in a nurturing environment, they used the power of art and language to communicate their life experiences, their perceptions

of fears, and their power to change those perceptions. As they engaged in critical reflection, they discovered and communicated individual and shared perceptions. The teachers intentionally created consistency in routines to promote certainty for every child. The safe, supportive environment contributed to respectful communication where all perspectives were valued.

Being able to identify feelings and express them in a safe environment through a variety of communicative forms is important for all who experience adversity. But as one teacher explains, “It enhanced my understanding of the power of art to reach at-risk students. It seemed to give them a voice and the tools to say it with” (personal communication). A university student shared, “I thought I was coming here to teach art to children, I never realized the extent that art and movement and talk are the tools to teach kids about life.” These insights suggest that using a multimodal approach informed their own teaching and learning.

In the visual analysis activity, students used visual evidence to justify how a character has been made to look scary or not (size, color, direction of lines), to identify possible intent of author/artist and effectively communicate using images and text. It addressed the affective domain, having students determine if they liked or disliked the image and justify their opinions. This thematic activity was exploratory, discovery, and interpretive. It didn't focus just on the elements and principles of design but explored how the artwork makes one feel, the sounds and movement inspired with art. Using themes such as fear and hope created authentic learning that was relevant to the context of the children's lives. It connected learning to real life. Multiple perspectives on an issue were investigated and negotiated; fear can paralyze one to inaction, and fear can protect from harm. Ultimately the children transformed their negative reactions of fear and focused on hope.

Using art and a multimodal approach can address complex issues that concern children living in crisis and help them make sense of their world. In the context of homelessness, basic needs of safety, food, and shelter are monumental. Emotional needs are paramount. Not all students will experience homelessness, but all will experience challenges in their lives. We can transform our perspective and reconfigure the meanings we assign to events in our lives (Kagan, 1994). Changes in our thinking and behaviors can facilitate change and transform negative attitudes that may interfere with meaningful learning. As educators we need to provide students with access to multimodal literacies for language development and for meaningful learning, social justice, change, and transformation.

Encouraging New Perspectives

Engaging with multimodal literacies can empower learners to consider different perspectives, such as recognition of the positive protective role of fear, the stifling role fear can have in our lives, and the ability to transform fear into hope. The following section highlights multimodal strategies in a shelter that transformed negative assumptions and reframed narratives of homeless individuals.

The “I hope...” Experience

People are often generous around the holidays. For weeks prior, the homeless shelter staff had been collecting donations of toys, candy, and sophisticated electronics for the children at the shelter. The children were dressed in their best clothes and eagerly ran with smiles on their faces to the large pile of presents for them. Excitement filled the room as they received their gifts. This party at a homeless shelter is the result of many volunteers and community members who donated to this charity. The volunteers in attendance beamed with pride and joy as they watched the less fortunate receive their gifts. Research does show a strong association between kind emotions and helping others to the giver's health and well-being (Post, 2005). Might the act of giving benefit those who are homeless as well?

The homeless have nothing, so they should not be asked to give anything. (Teacher, personal communication)

The assumption that individuals who are homeless have nothing to give presumes that gifts must be material objects purchased with money. The following represents an intergenerational art class in an emergency shelter for families who are homeless that used multimodal strategies to challenge negative stereotypes and reframe narratives. The children ranged in age from 5 to 10 years. The population was largely Hispanic, with several African-American families and one Caucasian family. The population was transient, with families moving in and out of this family emergency shelter that allowed participants to stay for up to 3 months. The number of participants ranged from 10 to 30 participating youth and mothers. Children, mothers, university students, and researchers worked collaboratively, all participating in the activities, sitting side-by-side in this informal setting. The act of sitting among the participants was intended to challenge the power structure often inferred with the teacher or the one who is standing, commanding, and instructing. Instead, a collaborative learning approach was utilized and leadership was shared among all participants.

The “I Can’t, but I Can...” Experience

Before embarking on a clay project, the group brainstormed individual strengths. Participants were first asked to record in their visual journal a list of all the things they *cannot* do. Those who could not write were encouraged to draw pictures illustrating their ideas. All were invited, but not required, to share their responses. Responses offered included: I can't see my dad. I can't have a cat. I can't play outside when I want to. I can't go hang out with friends after school. I can't sing. I can't do a summersault. Then they were asked to make a list of all the things they *can* do. Participants eagerly shared their responses with the group. The facilitator asked each person to add to their own list if they heard anything that inspired them. When one young boy heard a response that resonated with him, he jumped up and down in his chair, smiled, and added to his list. In doing so, he let the author know that he

thought that ideas were great. They shared, listened, and affirmed each other. These visual journals created a safe place to write, draw, paint, and collage any thoughts and ideas. Responses included: I can sing. I can dance. I can listen to music. I can draw. I can listen. I can hug my child. I can learn. I can play. I can walk. One mother shared that making the first list of things she could not do was easy, but it was harder to think of things she could do. A 6-year-old shared it was fun to hear all the things the others can do. Prompts stimulated creative thinking and fluency of ideas. Participants were encouraged to emphasize and build upon their strengths as they prepared for extending hope to others in the subsequent Milagros activity.

The Milagros Experience

Colorful polymer clay was distributed prior to any instructions on what to do with this art material. The adults waited patiently for instructions before touching the material. The children picked it up immediately and squeezed, poked, twisted, and stretched the clay. As they manipulated it they smiled and made joyful noises. In doing so, they were exploring the characteristics and limitations of the material. They found out how far you could stretch it before the clay pieces broke apart. They also found out that the pieces could be rejoined easily. They mimicked the sound of the clay as they poked it, and they found out that it gets softer as you manipulate it. The adults had to be encouraged to play with the clay. After time to explore this art medium, a brief introduction to the folk art of Milagros was given. Participants learned that the word milagro is Spanish for miracle and has been used in many cultures to serve as an offering or wish for something or someone. Although they can be found in a variety of materials, many metal ones were found in religious settings as an offering to a loved one. A symbol of an eye may be used to depict hope for sight for a loved one or a rain cloud to hope for rain to feed the crops. Teachers must take care when borrowing from cultural traditions so that it is an authentic reference (Ballengee-Morris & Taylor, 2005). In this activity, Milagros were approached in a manner that respected their use within the culture.

Following the introduction, an inquiry exercise led by a university student guided visual analysis and interpretation of a variety of images of Milagros. Inquiry prompts were simple and served as a guide to encourage all to look, respond, interpret, analyze, and justify their opinions based on visual evidence. Sample prompts included, "What is the object? What do you think it means? What do you see that tells you that?" One student said the Milagro with an image of an arm might mean that they hope to be strong. Another student thought the arm represented pain in that arm and hope for healing. Multiple interpretations were shared and the possibility of multiple meanings determined.

Participants then created a Milagro using clay to communicate their hope for another. Finished projects were displayed and the intended meanings shared with the group. One student made a house for his mother. Another child created an arm because he said that since his father got shot he could no longer move his right arm. One student frowned and responded, "I didn't know that." Another student shared a

similar disability of his cousin who couldn't walk and was in a wheelchair. One mother created a Band-Aid out of clay to give to her child because her wish was "to take away his hurt." Other mothers nodded their heads in agreement with this sentiment. This dialogue provided opportunities to discover commonalities and shared meanings. Many of the mothers wanted to alleviate their child's pain. Many of the participants knew someone who had been injured. Empathy and respect seemed to emerge as they learned from each other.

Throughout this project, multiple forms of feedback were used – self, peer, and facilitator. Participants were asked to pick one Milagro and find something positive to say about it. Suggestions included: Was this work creative, imaginative? Did the work have an original design? Did it depict expressive use of color or line? Was it an interesting way to depict their wish for another? Was it intriguing? What would you like to ask the artist? Having these suggested prompts gave participants a starting point to encourage critical reflection using art terminology and deeper analysis. Using an inquiry method stimulated creativity and fluency of student responses but also eventually resulted in students asking questions in their investigation and development of meaning.

Facilitator feedback was offered during the art-making process and included positive feedback that emphasized participants' efforts and achievement. Similar to what a classroom teacher might use, feedback focused on the persistence, workmanship, creativity, imagination, problem-solving skills, and ability to effectively communicate intended meaning. In this context, positive feedback was more productive than school-based assessment such as grades.

Self-evaluation included reflecting on the following: What did you learn about the art in this process (art processes, art materials, images for communicating intended meaning, etc.)? What did you learn about yourself by engaging in this process? What did you learn about others? What problems did you face in making the Milagro and how did you solve the problem? If you could do it over again, what would you do differently? Responses revealed new perspectives on art and the role of art. For example, one 10-year-old child shared, "I used to think good art was art that looked good. Now I like stuff that makes you think." A mother echoed that by saying, "Yeah! Art doesn't have to look real, you know, look like a photograph. It can be good if it makes you wonder!" A younger child thought that art can be a secret code that says something. These examples suggest recognition of art as a tool for stimulating thought and as a form of communication. Others reflected on the process of creation and insights on failure. For example, one child shared, "I learned that it's okay to not get it right the first time, if you make a mistake, you just start over." This implies that not getting it right the first time is acceptable and that being persistent is valued. In this safe environment, failure was viewed as a step toward progress.

Individual reflections demonstrated personal experiences and how art helped enhance interpretations and see multiple perspectives and provided ongoing opportunities for constructing meaning. By focusing on contributing to another or focusing on a future of hope enabled them to reflect on who they are and who they want to become. Art and multimodal literacies with consideration of context, certainty, choice, creativity, and contribution brought new understandings and new perspectives and helped transform negative stereotypes.

Although the final products, the clay Milagros, were strikingly beautiful, creative, and original, the meaning created and conveyed was valued over the aesthetics of the object. Learning was personalized and allowed for a variety of perspectives. Focusing on giving something, a wish for someone else, was empowering and seemed to develop empathy. It addressed cognitive and affective, using feelings and emotions coupled with content knowledge and process skills. Learning was situational and meanings socially constructed. Extending hope, a wish to help another, or helping another with the process of creating the Milagros seemed to give them a sense of purpose. Learning was reciprocated as children helped adults with clay, adults helped children, and university students facilitated the process. They learned from each other as we moved beyond teacher-centered instruction to collaborative learning. One child shared, "It made things equal." A mother added, "Yeah, if I forgot how to do something, [the child] would remember and show me!" Another child was elated that he "got to be a helper instead of always being the one who always needs help with stuff." These responses suggest confidence and pride in themselves and others. Prompts stimulated creative thinking and linked learning to real life. Giving choices empowered responsible learning and provided for personalization of the learning experience.

Ongoing Feedback-Informed Learning

University students reflected on their own transformation of perspectives. One student shared that what struck her most was the role of themes. She now realized the purpose of themes extended beyond stimulating ideas for art making to "allow every student to enter from where they are, their own interests, culture, and ability level to something much more meaningful than a typical art assignment, you know, one that just instructs students on the techniques of how to make a pretty work of art" (personal communication). Another university student revealed a change in her perspective of homeless children. "I know I shouldn't but before I met them I did feel sorry for them, worried if that would show. Now I know they are kids, kids who just want to be kids. Kids who sometimes want to forget their problems. And they are so much stronger than I imagined" (personal communication). This suggests an initial stereotype of homelessness as someone fragile, rather than someone who is resilient. One teacher shared that in the past she had taught students who were homeless or highly mobile and found that some withdraw and struggle to interact with others while some students act out with inappropriate behaviors. She concluded that using multimodal literacies seemed to engage all the students.

This multimodal approach helped students develop personal voice by empowering them to question, reconsider, and reframe identity. Not only did it provide opportunities to discover, consider, empathize, and extend well wishes, it gave them opportunity to reconceptualize what it meant to be in need. It helped them reframe their narratives from one who has nothing to give to members who can contribute acts of compassion to others, thereby enhancing a sense of purpose and vision for their future.

Conclusions and Implications

These multimodal experiences demonstrate meaningful learning for children who are homeless. Providing certainty through routines that help children feel safe and choices that allow students to feel control over a part of their lives, while creatively contributing to the well-being of another, not only addresses academic curricular goals but enhances protective factors that promote resilience. Children who are homeless or living in crisis may experience stress from loss, hunger, insecurity, exposure to violence, or other trauma. But housed children may have also experienced crisis to some degree. Consideration of: (1) context, (2) certainty, (3) choice and control, (4) creativity, and (5) contribution offered as guidelines to multimodal learning, can increase children's participation in meaningful quality education, and may improve their opportunities for success in school. Understanding and sensitivity to the context of children's lives while providing a multimodal approach to learning can potentially benefit students in schools and shelter programs in the United States and abroad. Multimodal learning in the context of homelessness can be useful in engaging students in construction of personal and shared meanings. Inquiry prompts stimulate thinking and insights that help them orient themselves in their worlds. Early childhood educators and other adults can employ multimodal literacies to enhance meaningful learning and challenge negative assumptions that can perpetuate a cycle of failure. It can give voice to children's ideas and help them gain confidence and pride in their abilities.

References

- American Psychiatric Association. (2000). *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders*. 4. Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Association. Text revision, 589–594.
- Ballegee-Morris, C., & Taylor, P. G. (2005). You can hide but you can't run: Interdisciplinary and culturally sensitive approaches to mask making. *Art Education*, 58(5), 12–17.
- Bassuk, E. L., DeCandia, C. J., Beach, C. A., & Berman, F. (2014). *America's youngest outcasts: A report card on child homelessness*. Retrieved from <http://www.homelesschildrenamerica.org/>.
- Bolin, P. E., & Blandy, D. (2003). Beyond visual culture: Seven statements of support for material culture studies in art education. *Studies in Art Education*, 44(3), 246–263.
- Burt, M., Aron, L., Douglas, T., Valente, J., Lee, E., & Iwen, B. (1999). *HOMELESSNESS: Programs and the people they serve*. Retrieved from <http://www.urban.org/>.
- Callow, J. (2008). Show me: Principles for assessing students' visual literacy. *The Reading Teacher*, 61(8), 616–626.
- Cook, A., Spinazzola, J., Ford, J., Lanktree, C., Blaustein, M., Cloitre, M., et al. (2005). Complex trauma. *Psychiatric Annals*, 35(5), 390–398.
- Eisner, E. W. (2002). *The arts and the creation of mind*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Freire, P., & Freire, A. M. A. (2004). *Pedagogy of hope: Reliving pedagogy of the oppressed*. New York: Continuum.
- Grant, R., Shapiro, A., Joseph, S., Goldsmith, S., Rigual, L., & Redlener, I. (2007). The health of homeless children revisited. *Advances in Pediatrics*, 54, 173–187.

- Haglund, M. E., Nestadt, P. S., Cooper, N. S., Southwick, S. M., & Charney, D. S. (2007). Psychobiological mechanisms of resilience: Relevance to prevention and treatment of stress-related psychopathology. *Development and Psychopathology*, *19*(03), 889–920.
- Heise, D. (2014). Steeling and resilience in art education. *Art Education*, *67*(3), 26.
- Heise, D., & MacGillivray, L. (2011). Implementing an art program for children in a homeless shelter. *Studies in Art Education*, *52*(4), 323.
- Heise, D., & MacGillivray, L. (2013). Fostering resilience in an intergenerational art and literacy program for homeless families: An analysis of curriculum. In *2013 VSA Intersections: Arts and special education* (pp. 103–146). Washington, DC: Kennedy Center for Performing Arts.
- Hodas, G. R. (2006). *Responding to childhood trauma: The promise and practice of trauma informed care*. Pennsylvania Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services. Retrieved from <http://www.nasmhpd.org/>.
- Hopper, E. K., Bassuk, E. L., & Olivet, J. (2010). Shelter from the storm: Trauma-informed care in homeless service settings. *The Open Health Services and Policy Journal*, *3*, 80–100.
- Kagan, J. (1994). *The nature of the child*. New York: Basic Books.
- Malchiodi, C. A. (2003). Expressive arts therapy and multimodal approaches. In C. A. Malchiodi (Ed.), *Handbook of art therapy* (pp. 106–119). New York: The Guilford Press.
- Mezirow, J. (1990). *How critical reflection triggers transformative learning. Fostering critical reflection in adulthood* (pp. 1–20). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Mezirow, J. (2000). *Learning as transformation: Critical perspectives on a theory in progress*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth (NAEHCY 2013). *Early care and education for young children experiencing homelessness*. Retrieved from <http://center.serve.org/nche/downloads/briefs/early-childhood.pdf>.
- National Center on Family Homelessness. (2014). *America's youngest outcasts: A report card on homelessness*. Retrieved from <http://www.homelesschildrenamerica.org/>.
- Ntseane, P. G. (2011). Culturally sensitive transformational learning incorporating the Afrocentric paradigm and African feminism. *Adult Education Quarterly*, *61*(4), 307–323.
- Obradović, J., Long, J. D., Cutuli, J. J., Chan, C. K., Hinz, E., Heistad, D., et al. (2009). Academic achievement of homeless and highly mobile children in an urban school district: Longitudinal evidence on risk, growth, and resilience. *Development and Psychopathology*, *21*(02), 493–518.
- Perlman, S. (2015). *Access to early childhood programs for young children experiencing homelessness: A survey report*. Orlando, FL: NAEHCY. <http://naehcy.org/>.
- Perlman, S. M., & Fantuzzo, J. W. (2010). Timing and impact of homelessness and maltreatment on school readiness. *Children and Youth Services Review*, *32*, 874–883.
- Post, S. G. (2005). Altruism, happiness, and health: It's good to be good. *International Journal of Behavioral Medicine*, *12*(2), 66–77.
- Rafferty, Y., Shinn, M., & Weitzman, B. C. (2004). Academic achievement among formerly homeless adolescents and their continuously housed peers. *Journal of School Psychology*, *42*(3), 179–199.
- Sandel, M., Sheward, R., & Sturtevant, L. (2015). Compounding stress: The timing and duration effects of homelessness on children's health. Center for Housing Policy and Children's Healthwatch. Retrieved from <http://www.childrenshealthwatch.org/>.
- Sanders, J., & Albers, P. (2010). Multimodal literacies: An introduction. *Literacies, the Arts & Multimodalities*, 1–43.
- Shonkoff, J. P., Garner, A. S., Siegel, B. S., Dobbins, M. I., Earls, M. F., McGuinn, L., et al. (2012). The lifelong effects of early childhood adversity and toxic stress. *Pediatrics*, *129*(1), 232–246.
- Spont, M. H. (2010). Looking beyond the visual: Considering multi-sensory experience and education with video art in installation. University of Texas Electronic Theses and Dissertations Repository. Retrieved from <http://hdl.handle.net/2152/ETD-UT-2010-05-1232>.

Thomas, Y., Gray, M., McGinty, S., & Ebringer, S. (2011). Homeless adults engagement in art: First steps towards identity, recovery and social inclusion. *Australian Occupational Therapy Journal*, 58(6), 429–436.

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. (2015). The 2014 annual homeless assessment report to congress. Retrieved December 2015 from <https://www.hudexchange.info/>.

Donalyn Heise Advance Learning, Inc, Austin, TX, USA

Dr. Heise is the co-director of Teacher Effectiveness for Art Learning, Advanced Learning, Inc., and an award-winning art educator with over 30 years of experience in K16 and community settings. She has conducted 100+ workshops and presentations at state, national, and international levels. She has published numerous articles and book chapters related to her research on art education and resilience for underserved populations.

Part III

Visions

Chapter 11

Studio Thinking in Early Childhood

Kimberly M. Sheridan

Abstract Studio learning environments provide important support for young children as they learn to create and interpret in visual art and design. In this chapter, I use the Studio Thinking Framework, developed from research at Harvard University's Project Zero that involved close observation of studio art classrooms to see what teachers intend to teach and how they teach it, to inform how we can think about learning in formal and informal early childhood education. I describe strategies teachers can use to create a studio environment that fosters children's development of habits of mind such as becoming more observant, more engaged and persistent, reflective on their work, and willing to explore and express ideas. I discuss how teachers can use this focus on developing students' habits of mind in the arts to build connections to other learning areas.

Keywords Visual arts • Child art • Studio Thinking • Studio environment • Child studio • Project Zero • Studio teaching • MAKESHOP • Children's museum

Ask someone what young children learn in the visual arts and they might respond that they learn to draw, paint, or shape with clay. Some might question the word "learn" and instead consider young children's work in the arts more in terms of opportunities for self-expression than learning. Thinking back to their own pre-school and elementary school days, they might conjure up images of holiday-oriented crafts and view the arts as a break from the real work of school. In all these views, the arts seem separate from other academic learning, and perhaps, to some, less important.

But in Harvard Project Zero's Studio Thinking project's investigation into what students are intended to learn through visual arts instruction, we found quite different answers. Through close analysis of studio arts classes, we found that students are taught to observe and become more attentive to their world and their work; they learn to engage in problems of interest and persist through difficulties. Students learn how to communicate ideas and feelings and how to interpret ideas in other visual forms such as paintings, films, and advertisements. They are taught to reflect on their work

K.M. Sheridan (✉)
George Mason University, Fairfax, VA, USA
e-mail: ksherida@gmu.edu

and working process, to try out new ideas, set challenges, and embrace learning from mistakes. They learn to imagine and plan in more complex and effective ways. Students learn “habits of mind” or ways of thinking in the studio that extend beyond the making of a specific drawing, sculpture, or digital video (Hetland, Winner, Veenema, & Sheridan, 2007; Sheridan, 2011; Sheridan, Clark, & Williams, 2013). In this view, the connections between arts and other areas of learning become more apparent and profound. Studio arts classrooms can foster ways of thinking that characterize the types of learning we want to happen throughout, in all areas of learning. In this chapter, I argue that this teaching and learning begins in early childhood.

Visual Arts in Early Learning Environments

The visual arts have long had a strong presence in formal and informal early childhood learning environments. Children’s books are richly illustrated and classrooms often contain many tools for 2-D (e.g., crayons, paints, markers) and 3-D (e.g., blocks, recyclables) art. In recent decades, these traditional arts have extended into tools and practices for digital creative production (e.g., computer programming, stop-motion animation, interactive storytelling) that have become more accessible to young children. Likewise, a broader, international maker movement in education has been growing over the past decade due to the invention of new tools, practices, and communities for tinkering, design, and creation that afford learning that combines arts, engineering, and new technologies (Halverson & Sheridan, 2014a; Litts, 2014; Peppler & Bender, 2013).

Schools, museums, libraries, and other learning spaces are increasingly developing programs and spaces that support learning to create with these traditional and emerging tools and technologies. For instance, at Pittsburgh Children’s Museum MAKESHOP, which attracts participants of all ages but especially toddlers through preteens, the materials for working include traditional tools and practices such as hand sewing, weaving, and woodworking. There is also a 3-D printer, a stop-motion animation station, and a table designed for toddlers and preschoolers to learn the basic concepts of object-oriented computer programming through play and interactive design. Artist-teachers facilitate children’s making through demonstrating tools, techniques, and processes and assisting in the design as needed, and the making is often in collaboration with other family members (Brahrs, 2014; Sheridan et al., 2014). MAKESHOP complements an art studio in the museum, which focuses more on the visual arts such as drawing, painting, printmaking, and sculpting.

However, the growing presence of studio activities, whether in traditional arts, crafts, or with new technologies; whether they are more focused on artistic representation or engineering design; and whether they take place in a museum, school, or library, does not mean that learners are developing the complex habits of mind we describe in the Studio Thinking project. There is often little guidance for educators for how to create successful studio learning environments for children’s art, design, and making experiences. In this chapter, I discuss how early childhood educators may use the Studio Thinking Framework to ensure that arts experiences promote understanding, rather than just activity.

Introducing the Studio Thinking Framework

The Studio Thinking Framework was initially developed from close observation and analysis of intensive, high school-level visual arts classes, looking at what habits of mind teachers intend to teach, how they go about teaching them, and how we know students have learned. Developed through repeated observations of classes (including close analysis of over 4000 videotaped teacher-student interactions in studio classes), interviews with teachers and students, and documentation of students' learning over the course of years of instruction, the Studio Thinking Framework identifies the types of thinking students develop through serious engagement in studio arts classes (Hetland et al., 2007).

The Studio Thinking Framework is comprised of two main parts. The first part which we refer to as “Studio Habits of Mind” identifies *what* is being taught in studio classrooms—the dispositions and ways of thinking the arts encourage. The second part of the framework, which we define as “Studio Structures,” illustrates *how* these habits are taught—how teachers organize and support children’s art learning. In what follows I first outline the framework and then discuss how it may be applied to early childhood contexts.

Studio Habits of Mind

Through our research, we identified eight Studio Habits of Mind studio arts classes seek to develop: Develop Craft, Engage & Persist, Envision, Express, Observe, Reflect, Stretch & Explore, and Understand the Art World (Table 11.1). These habits are not isolated skills; they are better described as dispositions. The habits are not independent of one another; most art learning integrates them in complex ways. Teachers may highlight a particular habit in a given lesson, but most studio lessons draw on all eight habits. This focus on habits of mind reflects a view that the aim of education is to develop a student who takes an engaged, attentive, creative, thoughtful, and skilled approach to work and working.

While we developed the framework through observation of arts classes, we think these habits of mind can and should be developed in all realms of learning. As Eliot Eisner (2002) describes, “Work in the arts is not only a way of creating performances and products; it is a way of creating our lives by expanding our consciousness, shaping our dispositions, satisfying our quest for thinking, establishing contact with others, and sharing a culture” (Eisner, 2002, p. 3).

Studio Structures

The second part of the framework is *how* these habits of mind are taught: the four Studio Structures that make up a studio class (Hetland, Winner, Veenema, & Sheridan, 2013). These are: Demonstration-Lectures, Students-at-Work, Critiques

Table 11.1 The Studio Thinking Framework: eight Studio Habits of Mind developed through studio art instruction

1	Develop craft	<i>Technique</i> : learning to use tools (e.g., viewfinders, brushes), materials (e.g., charcoal, paint). Learning artistic conventions (e.g., perspective, color mixing). <i>Studio practice</i> : learning to care for tools, materials, and space
2	Engage and persist	Learning to embrace problems of relevance within the art world and/or of personal importance, to develop focus and other mental states conducive to working and persevering at art tasks
3	Envision	Learning to picture mentally what cannot be directly observed and imagine possible next steps in making a piece
4	Express	Learning to create works that convey an idea, a feeling, or a personal meaning
5	Observe	Learning to attend to visual contexts more closely than ordinary “looking” requires and thereby to see things that otherwise might not be seen
6	Reflect	<i>Question and explain</i> : learning to think and talk with others about an aspect of one’s work or working process. <i>Evaluate</i> : learning to judge one’s own work and working process and the work of others in relation to standards of the field
7	Stretch and explore	Learning to reach beyond one’s capacities, to explore playfully without a preconceived plan, and to embrace the opportunity to learn from mistakes and accidents
8	Understand art world	<i>Domain</i> : learning about art history and current practice. <i>Communities</i> : learning to interact as an artist with other artists (i.e., in classrooms, in local art organizations, and across the art field) and within the broader society

Adapted from Hetland et al. (2007). *Studio Thinking: the real benefits of visual art instruction*. Teachers College Press: New York

and Exhibitions (Table 11.2). These structures are flexible components of a studio class; teachers use them in a variety of ways and sequences. Mini-demonstrations and critiques may punctuate student work time. Critiques of earlier work may begin a class. Exhibitions may be physical or digital, in school hallways or more formal events. Each of these studio structures involves strategies, techniques, and approaches that help develop students’ habits of mind.

Expanding Views of Studio Thinking Applications

On the surface, a framework developed from intensive high school art classes may seem to have limited connection with the general educational environments of early childhood. However, the Studio Habits of Mind are capacities that are fundamental to work in the arts, whether at the preschool or professional level. Nonart specialists and arts specialists, working with students at a wide range of levels and diverse contexts, have found the framework useful in designing and guiding instruction that develops Studio Thinking (Sheridan, 2011; Sheridan et al., 2013, 2014).

In my research at an informal, children’s museum setting, the MAKESHOP space at the Children’s Museum of Pittsburgh, we observed artist-educators consistently support young children’s making in ways that align with the Studio Thinking Framework. The following brief example is indicative of many we observed and illustrates this studio approach with young children (Fig. 11.1).

Table 11.2 The four classroom structures described in the Studio Thinking Framework

The Studio Thinking Framework: four studio structures
Studio structure 1: students-at-work
Students make artworks, often broadly guided by teachers' open-ended assignments
Assignments are open-ended but may specify materials, tools, and/or challenges
Teachers observe and consult with individuals or small groups
Teachers sometimes talk briefly to the whole class
Studio structure 2: demonstration-lectures
Teachers (and others) deliver information about processes and products and set assignments
Information is meant to inspire and engage students in thinking about the activity rather than instruct step-by-step
Information is immediately useful to students for their studio work
Information is conveyed quickly and efficiently to reserve time for work and reflection
Visual examples are frequent and sometimes extended (e.g., a teacher showing examples of artists who work with the material, demonstrating a process that will be used)
Interaction occurs to varying degrees
Studio structure 3: critiques
Central structure for discussion and reflection
A pause to focus on observation, conversation, and reflection
Focus on student works
Works are completed or in progress and display is temporary and informal
Studio structure 4: exhibitions
Public display of works and related texts such as artist statements
Involves selection and organization of works
Exhibition may be of just final works or may include documentation of process (e.g., photographs of students engaged in the process of making the artworks; sketches and drafts included alongside finished pieces)

Adapted from Hetland et al. (2013). *Studio Thinking 2: The real benefits of visual arts instruction*. Teachers College Press: New York



Fig. 11.1 Making at the Children’s Museum of Pittsburgh MAKESHOP

An Example from Children's Museum of Pittsburgh MAKESHOP

An artist-educator is primarily focused on a sewing area: a table with colored skeins of thread and tools such as needles, pins, embroidery hoops, and practice sewing cards at its center. Sorted in a large bin nearby are cloth scraps, buttons, elastic, and other materials. Children entering the sewing area are asked broad questions, such as “Would you like to try sewing?” or “What would you like to make today?” A 5-year-old visitor sees one of the shelves in the studio space has a collection of handmade toys other children have made [*exhibition*], and announces, “I want to make a stuffed animal!” The artist-educator suggests she sketch out several possible ideas and points to scrap paper and pencils. As the young girl sketches, the artist-educator circles around helping other children. When she returns, the girl shows her ideas and they discuss which ones would work best. To help, the artist-educator takes a stuffed bear made by a similarly aged child and asks the young girl to describe how she thinks it was made (*observe, reflect, develop craft*). Together they notice there is a back and front piece of cloth stitched together, and there are buttons for eyes. The girl notices elements: “This one is kind of scrunchy. This one has beads for eyes! Somebody drew on this one” [*observe*]. After looking at a few, the girl returns to her drawings and decides on a rabbit drawing, saying, “I want a white bunny and black beads eyes.” Later, talking to herself as she rummages through the material scraps, she adds, “I’m gonna put a bow on it. It’s gonna be a nice bunny not a wild bunny” (*envision, express*).

While the project was initiated and directed by the child, the studio environment had tools, materials, and exemplars and the guidance of an artist-educator to help her *envision* possibilities and *reflect* on what would work best. Throughout the project, the artist-educator circled around working with each child [*students-at-work*] and helped the young girl at key moments, such as helping her sketch on the cloth and holding it taut while she cut out the shape [*develop craft*]. While working, the girl asked herself questions aloud that show her thinking through the problem, such as, “How can I make it fat? Oh! I need two sides!” lifting up the two pieces and aligning them together [*reflect, envision, develop craft*]. In some parts, such as threading the needle, the artist-educator took more control but talked aloud the process and invited the child to help: “I’m putting the thread you chose into this tiny hole on the needle, I have to close one eye to see what I’m doing. Can you pull this string through for me? Thanks!” [*demonstration*]. When the girl ran into difficulty, the artist-educator helped her troubleshoot, such as when she accidentally sewed across the middle neck part, and they decided she could stuff the head part and the body part separately. Thus, this open-ended studio approach to making allows the child to choose the problem, envision how to approach it, and enact it while sup-

ported by an artist-educator who anticipates technical challenges and key decision points and provides “just-in-time” teaching and help.

Studio Thinking in Early Childhood Education

Although the preceding example takes place in a making center in a children’s museum, general early childhood classrooms are also well suited to using the Studio Thinking Framework to guide instruction. Many have remarked on the creativity and expressivity of young children’s artistic work and thinking. Howard Gardner calls age 5 the “golden age of creativity” (Gardner, 1982, p. 86). Whether they are formally working on something traditionally thought of as “art” or are expressing themselves aesthetically through different forms of play, the ages roughly between 3 and 7 years old are a time of metaphors and playful thinking (Gardner, 1990; Piaget, 1962; Sheridan & Gardner, 2012). Given these developmental proclivities, the arts can serve as an inviting entry point into many realms of learning.

Structuring the Early Childhood Classroom Like a Studio

Early childhood classrooms share many commonalities with studio classes. Students spend much of the class time engaged in work rather than listening to lectures. Their teacher may circle around, keeping children engaged in working and assisting as needed. Lectures are nearly nonexistent in early childhood classes, and when they occur they are brief, often combine telling with showing in some fashion, and are immediately relevant to students’ work at hand. Students’ work is frequently displayed throughout the classroom and school. This studio-like structure is an advantage for easily applying the Studio Thinking Framework to early childhood education.

Art-making experiences are typically present in early childhood general classrooms, whether it’s a preschooler painting at an easel, a kindergartener building a city scene with blocks, a first grader illustrating a story, or a second grader creating a geometric pattern with tangrams. These activities offer potential for developing the types of habits of mind described in Table 11.2, but they are often done with little instruction to scaffold more complex thinking. Early childhood educators can use the Studio Thinking Framework to envision ways to support children’s visual art making and set the foundation for developing students’ creative, disciplined, and reflective habits of mind. In what follows, I discuss how to use studio structures to target the development of students’ habits of mind through the common activities of young children such as block building and talking about children’s books.

Using the Studio Thinking Framework in Early Childhood Education: Block Building Example

Unit blocks are a mainstay in early childhood education. Many view blocks as supporting important learning and cognitive development in a variety of domains—social, logical-mathematical, aesthetic, and spatial. While important learning happens through open-ended free play with blocks, educators can use studio structures to scaffold and target complex thinking and building while still providing opportunities for exploration and experimentation with blocks.

Studio Structure: Students-at-Work

From an uninformed perspective, it may look as if the teacher's role during students-at-work is fairly minor—monitoring students' activities and keeping them engaged. However, we found that studio teachers used this time to gain important insights into how students think and work. Teachers observe students' work and working process and give them "just-in-time" advice to advance or deepen their thinking. While this advice is often conversational and informal, our analyses found art teachers consistently talked in ways to develop the Studio Habits of Mind.

An early childhood educator working to develop habits of mind through block building can take a similar approach while the students are working. For instance, if she is targeting observe and develop craft through highlighting the use of arches, she may casually point out features of the arches in students' buildings and ask them questions about what they notice about theirs' and others' arches. In her conversations with individual students, she may include questions about their strategies and techniques for building and find out where they struggled.

To a student who has mastered a simple arch construction, she may pose a more difficult technical challenge or ask them to assist a student who is struggling. When she gives feedback on students' work, she might reinforce the focus on *observe* with comments such as "you did some careful looking" and *develop craft* by pointing out parts that are built particularly well and parts that need further attention. To a student who opted not to build any arches, she would flexibly assess in the moment if and how she could highlight and support the habits of observe and develop craft in the building they chose to make. A teacher targeting *envision* and *stretch and explore* may focus more on what they are imagining or planning to do next and how they might elaborate or expand on that idea. He may encourage two students who have very different building styles or ideas to work together to form a collaborative building. His feedback may focus on noting good ideas or praising when students try something new, regardless of how successful the implementation.

Regardless of the particular habit(s) targeted in a session, a teacher nearly always works on *engage* and *persist* during the students-at-work time, encouraging students to find ways to become interested and stay interested and persist through the difficulties they encounter (e.g., their arch collapsing, not having the "right" blocks

to complete a structure). Modeling how to stay engaged is often important for young children, as they likely have not yet developed strategies for maintaining their attention on a project or for working through frustration. For instance, a teacher might build his or her own structure alongside a student and talk aloud how they handle frustrating parts, “Oh, I built that tall wall already but I forgot to put a door there. Hmm, maybe I can just take this part out? (Blocks fall). Oh no! It fell. At least I can rebuild (start rebuilding).” Alternatively, a teacher might step in when a child is expressing frustration that a structure fell and empathize, “That happened to me yesterday when I was building. I was so upset, but I realized I can rebuild just the part that fell,” and offer assistance on rebuilding if they want it.

Studio Structure: Demonstration-Lecture

Prior to, or midway through, a children’s building session with blocks, teachers might use an informal demonstration-lecture to highlight the types of thinking they wish to encourage in block use in a particular session. A teacher targeting *observe* and *develop craft* may demonstrate a particular skill such as building of arches. She may have posted images of buildings with arches around the block area and ask students to look closely at them and discuss how they might have been made. She might ask children to identify challenges they might run into in building an arch and demonstrate strategies for handling those challenges. Alternatively, a teacher targeting *envision* and *stretch* and *explore* might lead a discussion that involves getting students to imagine and plan what they are going to build and encouraging them to stretch beyond their initial conceptions.

For instance, if students were planning on building a city scene, he might ask them questions to generate memories of things they have seen or read about in cities, asking probing questions like “what are some different ways people travel around in cities?” or “what are some types of buildings?” As a group, they might explore how to represent their ideas with their blocks. The goal in this case would be to use the demonstration-lecture(s) to assist students in developing more detailed and elaborate mental images for what they were going to build, to encourage them to explore more possibilities than just what initially came to mind, to get excited about their ideas, and to provide some initial examples of building techniques that might help them make progress on their envisioned plan.

Studio Structure: Critique

Critiques are a central part of studio art classes and a powerful but often underutilized teaching structure. At various points during a project, the teacher may stop the working process and have students look at and discuss their work. Critiques encourage students to pause and reflect on what they have done and where they are going in a particular project.

Sometimes the works are looked at as a whole group, and sometimes students are asked to look at what one student has done if it illustrates a key idea. In a studio class, critiques provide important time for students to *reflect* on the formal and interpretive properties of the work and learn from one another. But critiques are not just a tool for reflection; they are also important to do midway through a project to help students collaboratively *envision* new ideas for their work.

Young children are often excited by the opportunity to look at and talk about their own and other's works. For instance, in the block example, time can be taken for students to look at each other's buildings, and discuss them in different ways. As with the other studio structures, the teacher can scaffold the discussion to target particular habits of mind. For instance, for the goal of *develop craft*, the teacher could ask students to point out the different strategies and techniques they see that make a building or arch sturdy or stable. As they try to describe the differences, they may need to use numbers, relative size, and positional words. They can be taught to notice and describe elements such as symmetry and patterns. They can discuss important design features such as functionality (e.g., is the arch the right size for what they want to go through it? is it built sturdy enough not to collapse?). If the targeted goal was developing the habit of mind of *envision*, much of the critique may instead focus on having children discuss how they might elaborate on structures.

This kind of discussion can get quite animated and complex as the children picture what something would look like with another layer, a balcony, or a turret and try to describe to one another what they envision. Or the envisioning might focus on how the block structure could be used in pretend play. The important learning here is that students are using an object that they see in front of them and mentally picturing different possibilities for it. They are both devising strategies on how to create those possibilities and how to communicate to one another their ideas for doing this.

This type of thinking process seems to be particularly fostered by the arts. Shirley Brice Heath, in her analysis of after-school groups, found that, in the arts, language that focused on imagining possibilities and creating plans to put them into action were much more common in arts-focused groups than those in sports or computers (Heath, 1999, 2001).

Studio Structure: Exhibition

Block buildings are temporary structures, but they can be exhibited through photographs. This can be done in a variety of ways: photographs of children's block buildings can be interspersed with other architectural photographs in the block area and an evolving book of block buildings can be printed out, have its own page on a class website, or be kept in a digital file to be circled through on a class computer. Photographs can be of completed buildings, can include process and steps in a building process, can be adorned with figurines and vehicles to be shown "in use," or can serve as a set for a simple narrated video where children describe their

building and their intentions. The aim of the exhibition is to create a record of artistic work and share it publicly (with the class, school, parents, and/or community).

This discussion of studio structures is not to suggest that early childhood education should be run exactly like art studios. Rather, the types of pedagogical structures we see in studios can be a useful tool for educators as they create and support open-ended learning experiences that develop students' habits of mind.

Developing Studio Thinking Through Talking About Art

Arts in early childhood education need not be limited to art-making experiences. Talking about art and visual culture provides a way to both develop students "Studio Thinking," and a complex and engaging forum for building young children's oral language and analytic skills. Studio Habits of Mind can be highlighted in children's every day encounters with visual objects in the classroom. For instance, reading picture books is a mainstay of early childhood education. As children look at the book illustrations, questions can be framed to target the particular Studio Habits of Mind a teacher wants to encourage:

1. Develop Craft—What do you think the artist used to make this picture? Have you ever used that material? If you were illustrating this book, what materials would you use? Why?
2. Engage and Persist—Do you think the illustrator spent a lot of time making these drawings? Why do you think he or she spent all that time?
3. Envision—What did you imagine this [specific character/scene] looked like? How is this the same or different from how the illustrator drew it? (Or, while reading the text, you might ask them to imagine how an author might illustrate it before showing them the illustration).
4. Express—How does this picture make you feel? What do you see in it that you think gives you that feeling? How does it fit with the mood in the story? What does this picture make you think about? How does it help you understand the story?
5. Observe—What stands out to you most in this picture? What do you have to look closely to notice? What are some of the colors (shapes, types of lines, objects, patterns) you can find?
6. Reflect—Question and Explain: What do you wonder about when you look at this picture? Evaluate—What do you think is good about the illustration? Why? Is there anything you think should be different? Why?
7. Stretch and Explore—What are some other ways you can think of to show this same scene in the book?
8. Understand Art World—What is the job of a book illustrator? What is the difference between a book illustrator and other kinds of artists? Would you be interested in doing that kind of work?

These represent just a few of the many questions that could be used to target different Studio Habits of Mind while looking at children's book illustrations. It is not essential (nor advisable!) that each "Studio Habits of Mind" be addressed in a given discussion. Rather, the eight habits of mind give insight to educators of the range of ways over the course of their interactions with children over time, on broad areas they can support children's learning.

These discussions can extend to the many forms that are important elements of children's visual culture: toys, food packaging, computer and video games, television shows and movies, and advertisements. Discussing these everyday objects helps children become more observant of and reflective about the world around them (e.g., Freedman, 2003; Wilson, 2004). For instance, art educator and theorist, Terry Barrett describes leading kindergarteners through an analysis and interpretation of the design and aesthetic properties of their teddy bears. Students discuss why a designer wouldn't make a teddy bear with sharp teeth and why the property of softness is more important than color in making a good teddy bear (Barrett, 2003).

Framing questions about artworks and visual culture around the Studio Habits of Mind yields important learning in a number of ways. For young children, talking about the properties of art works and other elements of visual culture provides a concrete reference for learning a new and rich vocabulary. Students learn a vocabulary of adjectives describing color, shapes, patterns, lines, and moods. They gain experience using a vocabulary of relational words as they describe what is above, next to, beneath, behind, or in the corner of a picture (and see the ways others might not understand if they are not clear or accurate in their terms). They learn words to describe the often wide and varied subject matter of the art works. And, particularly highlighted in the Studio Thinking Framework, they learn a vocabulary to describe thought processes, using words such as notice, wonder, look, feel, imagine, and plan as they think about the meanings of the work and the decisions that went into making it.

As students learn to adopt a vocabulary that highlights different thought processes (e.g., seeing, feeling, imagining, looking, noticing, wondering, planning) involved in the creation of artworks, they become more aware of their own thinking. Educational psychologists focus on the importance of this awareness, or metacognition, in learning and transferring learning to new situations (e.g., Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 1999; Bransford & Schwartz, 1999). While students usually develop metacognitive strategies later in elementary and middle school, at even the earliest ages, students can begin to think about the thoughts, decisions, and meanings that underlie the visual culture in their worlds and their own art-making processes. To be sure, a kindergartner's description and analysis of the design of his teddy bear or of his marker drawing of his family are going to be quite different than an adolescent's analysis of her art and visual culture. However, they both can be encouraged to develop the Studio Thinking described above in developmentally appropriate ways.

These discussions can be an important part of creating a classroom culture of thinking. A language of thought in the classroom can help children become more aware of their own thinking and can learn to adopt more complex and effective thought processes both inside and outside the classroom (Perkins, 1992; Ritchhart,

2002; Ritchhart & Perkins, 2000, 2005). As children engage in discussions with their teacher and one another, they gradually internalize the dialogue process into their own thinking (Vygotsky, 1962). They develop thinking dispositions that they can carry with them outside the classroom (Perkins, Jay, & Tishman, 1993; Perkins, Tishman, Ritchhart, Donis, & Andrade, 2000). Again, these metacognitive strategies are more developed and explicit in older grades, but an engaging studio approach that highlights thought processes seems like a good foundation for later development of metacognitive strategies.

Arts Integration

The habits of mind developed through studio arts instruction are broad habits that have correlates in many areas. Learning to *observe* is important whether you are doing science, art, social studies, gym, or just walking down the road. Being able to *envision* things not seen is central in math, science, creative writing, literature, and history. Most areas of learning require you to *engage* and *persist*, *express* ideas, and *reflect* on what you have learned. And to grow or innovate in any field or endeavor requires the ability to *stretch* and *explore*.

However, that the arts share habits of mind with other areas of learning does not mean that developing these habits of mind through studio art will then transfer those abilities to other areas of life and learning. For instance, we do not know whether learning to envision possibilities for a drawing makes you any more likely to envision possibilities for outcomes of a scientific experiment. Most psychological research has found that much of our learning is domain specific. Documenting transfer of learning from one subject to another has proved to be particularly difficult. In a meta-analysis of claims that learning in the arts transfers to other skills, Winner and Hetland (2000) found limited empirical evidence for the claim that studying the arts causes gains in other academic areas.

In my view, rather than thinking of learning in the arts as transferring abilities to other domains, it is more useful to consider the value of building thoughtful connections between the arts and other disciplines through arts-integrated curricula or projects. Integrating arts into other forms of learning can be an inviting pedagogical approach for young children, and over the years of schooling, it is important to learn the overlap and distinctions between fields, such as the different sciences and arts, which have been an important part of human inquiry and activity throughout history. The arts readily connect with other subjects in early childhood learning environments. Compared to secondary schools, the boundaries between academic disciplines are fluid in early childhood and elementary schools. The arts are a frequent part of “units” that transverse multiple boundaries. Arts integration into other academic units often focuses on content (e.g., when studying Ancient Egypt, students create their own hieroglyphs; when studying the family, students draw portraits of their family members). These arts activities can provide an engaging and memorable connection to the content.

The connections between literacy and visual arts learning in the early childhood classroom are particularly robust. Literacy learning is frequently saturated with visual forms in early childhood classrooms. Books are richly illustrated and children are encouraged to look at the pictures for contextual clues to the text. Students create narrative drawings to accompany their own oral and written stories. These links between visual and language arts are developmentally appropriate for young learners; researchers identify rich connections between students' interrelated development of writing, reading, and drawing (e.g., Atkinson, 1991; Baghban, 2007; Kendrick & McKay, 2004; McKay & Kendrick, 2001). These links also make for richly engaging and memorable learning experiences, as they engage multiple modalities and senses. Linking visual arts and language arts reflects current conceptions of literacy, which include a wide range of visual forms. In digital media, visual and textual forms are often intertwined and students need to learn how to create and interpret them in relation to one another (Flood, Heath, & Lapp, 2015; The New London Group, 1996). The arts are fundamentally a representational domain where learners come to understand how different tools, techniques, and media can be used to express ideas (Halverson & Sheridan, 2014b).

The Studio Thinking Framework provides an additional route to think about arts integration, one oriented around shared habits of mind. For instance, the habits of mind can be used to explore connections between drawing and writing. Both are important forms for communicating ideas, with drawing as a form of written communication preceding writing for many children. As discussed earlier, researchers have commented on the important connections between drawing and writing. The same can be said for habits of mind. In drawing, *observe*, that is, looking closely and noticing details and nuances, is importantly connected to *envision*, creating and manipulating mental images of things not currently seen. As students become more close observers, they also develop their visual memory and ability to create mental images to draw upon when they make their works. This same quality of being observant is important in storytelling, whether oral or written. Students who notice nuances and details, and then can draw on their memories of them when writing, can create richer, more descriptive, and engaging stories.

Projects that integrate writing and drawing can be specifically targeted on this shared value of *observe* and *envision*. For instance, students could be asked to draw and describe an event that took place in the school before. After they imagine, draw, and describe in words a place in the school that they had been before, then they could go to the room and *reflect* on how well they had envisioned what they had previously seen and how they could further elaborate or change their drawings or descriptions based on close observation. Listening to stories is another way to build connections between *envision* with words and images. Instead of looking at the illustrations in a story, students could be asked to close their eyes and imagine in detail what is going on in the story (a kindergarten student whose class tried this approach described it as "making movies of the book in our minds"). This active envisioning may make students more engaged and attentive to the story and, thus, improve their comprehension. It also helps them in the artistic process of translating words and ideas into visual forms. Furthermore, supporting this connection between

words and mental images gives students who may be predisposed to either learn more visually or verbally a route into both reading comprehension and visual art that builds on their strengths.

Addressing the Needs of Diverse Learners

The types of studio learning described here are open-ended and flexible; studio problems can be solved in many ways. One of the key advantages of this flexibility is that it addresses the needs of diverse learners. There are many forms of diversity in an early childhood classroom. Children may have different intellectual strengths and interests; they may be at developmentally different levels, and their cultural backgrounds may provide different experiences that prepare them for the classrooms. In his theory of multiple intelligences, Gardner identifies 8 (and ½) intelligences which reflect different human potentialities valued by our culture: linguistic, logical-mathematical, spatial, bodily-kinesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, musical, naturalistic, and possibly existential (Gardner, 2006). Research on assessing multiple intelligences showed that even young children aged 3–5 showed different patterns of strengths and weaknesses on assessments of multiple intelligences. While they did not make the claim that these differences were permanent attributes of the children, providing experiences in the preschool classroom that draw on the full range of intelligences allows each child experiences in areas of relative intelligence (Gardner & Krechevsky, 2006). I argue that studio approaches to learning are particularly essential for traditionally underserved populations as they provide the combination of flexibility and guidance for learners to identify personally and culturally relevant problems, draw on their strengths and skills, and create the situations in which they can be invested and successful (Scott, Sheridan, & Clark, 2014; Sheridan et al., 2013; Zenkov & Sheridan, 2012).

A Note to the Teacher with Limited Art Background

To this point I have focused on what research has found about the types of complex thinking that are involved in the working in the arts and how teachers can support that type of thinking in their students. However, in my interactions with teachers, I often find this work is just as important in transforming their own understanding of learning in the arts. All too often, while a teacher may recognize the importance of arts for learning, she may exclaim, something along the lines of, “I have no talent in art; I can’t draw at all!” or “I don’t really know much about art” when talking about her own abilities, interest, and experience in the arts. While many of us do not develop drawing skills beyond what we could do at 10–12 years old and the formal vocabulary of discussing artworks can seem esoteric, art is much broader than these conceptions. The Studio Thinking Framework describes a broader view for teachers

and students of what it means to be talented in art. Typically, as children move through elementary school, they regard the students who can draw most accurately representational or copy professional forms (e.g., cartoon characters) most precisely as the talented “artists” and students who do not perceive themselves as skilled are self-critical and drop out of working in arts (e.g., Davis, 1997; Soep, 2004). However, this conception of art represents very narrow skills (in Studio Thinking terms, it could be represented by a small slice of *develop craft* touched with a bit of *observe*). By broadening students’ and teachers’ conceptions to consider many elements of artistic thinking, there are more routes for success and the arts become more accessible and more aligned with contemporary arts practices.

A Shared Language for Learning

Thinking in terms of these Studio Habits of Mind and the activities that develop them can be a powerful way to clarify learning from complex, open-ended activities. An important aspect of the Studio Thinking Framework is that it can help educators see, label, and communicate to others the learning they observe in their classroom. Often early childhood educators sense the value of the playful, open-ended projects in their classrooms but lack a way to communicate more specifically what students learn to those who do not interact with the children in the classroom each day. The Studio Habits of Mind identify broad categories of learning that help teachers, students, parents, and others vested in the educational enterprise better describe and assess the complex learning that happens through the open-ended project characteristic of studio learning.

In our research, we gathered evidence for learning in the habits of mind by observing and documenting changes in students’ art work, their working process, and the way they talked about their work and working process. Teachers can similarly document students’ learning. In collaboration with the preschools of Reggio Emilia, Italy, and other schools in the United States, researchers at Project Zero have been investigating methods of documenting the learning that goes on in collaborative projects in early childhood classrooms (Project Zero & Reggio Children, 2001; Project Zero, Cambridgeport Children’s Center, Cambridgeport School, Ezra H. Baker School, & John Simpkins School, 2003, <http://www.mlvpz.org/index.html>). Teachers observe and then create visual and textual narratives of student working processes including records of what children say and photographs of their work and them working. This process makes the learning visible to the teachers, as the process of documenting often gives them greater insight into children’s learning and how to support it. It also creates compelling portraits of learning. For instance, students at a Reggio Emilia school were trying to depict the game of “Ring Around the Rosie” in a drawing. The documentation shows children’s initial drawings that solve the problem in one way (e.g., drawing the circle of children from a bird’s eye view, making a line of children rather than a circle, drawing very long arms to com-

plete the circle), their reflections on the limitations of their drawings, their methods for developing what they believed to be a more accurate representation, and their revised drawings. Documenting their struggles with the problem, their multiple approaches to the drawings, and their thinking behind it gives a more accurate and compelling vision of their learning than just hanging their final drawings on the wall (<http://www.mlvpz.org/documentation/projectc17b.html>).

Similarly, art-integrated approaches allow concepts to be explored in verbal and visual modalities. This is a richer exploration for everyone but also lets students who have relative strengths in one or the other modality both experience success in a modality of relative strength while simultaneously working in a modality of relative weakness.

Conclusion

Studio learning reflects the worlds in which children currently live and develops the ways of thinking they will need to thrive in the future. To be sure, making things has been central to human experience as long as we have been humans. However, a feature of much of the current sociocultural context is that more information is being communicated visually and more people are involved in activities requiring design and creative expression. Creating effective studio learning environments is more necessary as these design, creation, and making practices are increasingly a part of daily life and work. Henry Jenkins (2006) framed this shift as an evolution towards *participatory cultures*, where more of society's members are generating and publicly responding to digital media content through the Internet and social media. In the past decade, the Maker Movement has extended this digital creative expression to physical objects, with an increasing focus on small-scale design, invention, and manufacturing and educational environments that support this work (Halverson & Sheridan, 2014a). In his launch of his 2009 *Educate to Innovate* campaign, President Obama focused on the role of supporting learning through making and in 2014 hosted the first White House Maker Faire (<https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/06/18/fact-sheet-president-obama-host-first-ever-white-house-maker-faire>). The contemporary context highlights the kinds of learning and teaching that happens when we support children's making.

With any pedagogical approach, teachers must think through why they would give attention to this focus rather than others. I have argued that a studio model can provide engaging and important learning experiences for students with diverse intelligences, linguistic backgrounds, skills, experiences, and learning styles. Incorporating more visual and creative thinking helps students to be better able to function in the evolving world that requires learning to interpret and express in multiple media and modes. Taking a studio approach to open-ended creative activities does not necessarily add more time; rather it makes those experiences more thoughtful and able to be connected in meaningful ways to other areas of learning.

References

- Atkinson, D. (1991). How children use drawing. *Journal of Art and Design Education*, 10(1), 57–72.
- Baghban, M. (2007). Scribbles, labels, and stories: The role of drawing in the development of writing. *Young Children*, 62(1), 20–26.
- Barrett, T. (2003). Interpreting visual culture. *Journal of Art Education*, 56(2), 6–12.
- Brahms, L. (2014). *Making as a learning process: Identifying and supporting family learning in informal settings* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Pittsburgh).
- Bransford, J. D., Brown, A. L., & Cocking, R. R. (Eds.). (1999). *How people learn: Brain, mind experience and school*. Washington, DC: National Academy Press.
- Bransford, J. D., & Schwartz, D. L. (1999). Rethinking transfer: A simple proposal with multiple implications. *Review of Research in Education*, 24, 61–100.
- Davis, J. (1997). The “U” and the wheel of “C”: Development and devaluation of graphic symbolization and the cognitive approach at Harvard Project Zero. In A. M. Kindler (Ed.), *Child development in art* (pp. 45–58). Reston, VA: National Art Education Association.
- Eisner, E. (2002). *Arts and the creation of mind*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Flood, J., Heath, S. B., Lapp, D. (2015). *Handbook of research on teaching literacy through the communicative and visual arts, volume II: A project of the International Reading Association*. New York: Routledge.
- Freedman, K. (2003). *Teaching visual culture: Curriculum, aesthetics, and the social life of art*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Gardner, H. (1982). *Art, mind and brain*. New York: Basic Books.
- Gardner, H. (1990). *Arts education and human development*. Los Angeles: Getty Center for Education in the Arts.
- Gardner, H. (2006). *Multiple intelligences: New horizons*. New York: Basic Books.
- Gardner, H., & Krechevsky, M. (2006). Nurturing intelligences in early childhood. In H. Gardner (Ed.), *Multiple intelligences: New horizons* (pp. 89–112). New York: Basic Books.
- Halverson, E. R., & Sheridan, K. M. (2014a). The maker movement in education. *Harvard Educational Review*, 84(4), 495–504.
- Halverson, E. R., & Sheridan, K. M. (2014b). Arts education and the learning sciences. In R. K. Sawyer (Ed.), *Cambridge handbook of the learning sciences* (2nd ed., pp. 626–646). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Heath, S. B. (2001). Three’s not a crowd: Plans, roles and focus in the arts. *Educational Researcher*, 30(3), 1–7.
- Heath, S. B. (with A. Roach) (1999). Imaginative actuality: Learning in the arts during nonschool hours. In *Champions of change*, pp. 19–34. Washington, DC.: The Arts Education Partnership and The President’s Committee on the Arts and the Humanities.
- Hetland, L., Winner, E., Veenema, S., & Sheridan, K. (2007). *Studio thinking: The real benefits of visual arts education*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Hetland, L., Winner, E., Veenema, S., & Sheridan, K. (2013). *Studio thinking 2: The real benefits of visual arts education* (2nd ed.). New York: Teachers College Press.
- Jenkins, H. (2006). Confronting the challenges of participatory culture: Media education for the 21st century. Occasional paper for the MacArthur Foundation. Retrieved from http://digitalllearning.macfound.org/site/c.enJLKQNiFiG/b.2029291/k.97E5/Occasional_Papers.htm on January 27, 2006.
- Kendrick, M., & McKay, R. (2004). Drawing as an alternate way of understanding young children’s constructions of literacy. *Journal of Early Childhood Literacy*, 4(1), 109–128.
- Litts, B. K. (2014). *Making learning: Makerspaces as learning environments* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Wisconsin-Madison).
- McKay, R., & Kendrick, M. (2001). Children draw their images of reading and writing. *Language Arts*, 78(6), 529–533.

- Peppler, K., & Bender, S. (2013). Maker movement spreads innovation one project at a time. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 95(3), 22–27.
- Perkins, D. (1992). *Smart schools: From training memories to educating minds*. New York: Free Press/Macmillan.
- Perkins, D., Jay, E., & Tishman, S. (1993). Teaching thinking: From ontology to education. *Educational Psychologist*, 28(1), 67–85.
- Perkins, D. N., Tishman, S., Ritchhart, R., Donis, K., & Andrade, A. (2000). Intelligence in the wild: A dispositional view of intellectual traits. *Educational Psychology Review*, 12(3), 269–293.
- Piaget, J. (1962). *Play, dreams and imitation in childhood*. (C. Gattegno & F.M. Hodgson Trans.) New York: Norton.
- Project Zero, Cambridgeport Children’s Center, Cambridgeport School, Ezra H. Baker School, & John Simpkins School. (2003). *Making teaching visible: Documenting individual and group learning as professional development*. Cambridge, MA: Project Zero.
- Project Zero, & Reggio Children. (2001). *Making learning visible: Children as individual and group learners*. Reggio Emilia, Italy: Reggio Children.
- Ritchhart, R. (2002). *Intellectual character: What it is, why it matters, how to get it*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Ritchhart, R., & Perkins, D. N. (2000). Life in the mindful classroom: Nurturing the disposition of mindfulness. *Journal of Social Issues*, 56(1), 27–47.
- Ritchhart, R., & Perkins, D. N. (2005). Learning to think: The challenges of teaching thinking. In K. Holyoak & R. G. Morrison (Eds.), *Cambridge handbook of thinking and reasoning* (pp. 775–802). Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press.
- Scott, K. A., Sheridan, K. M., & Clark, K. (2014). Culturally responsive computing: A theory revisited. *Learning, Media and Technology*, 40(4), 412–436.
- Sheridan, K. (2011). Envision and observe: Using the studio thinking framework for learning and teaching in the digital arts. *Mind, Brain and Education*, 5(1), 19–26.
- Sheridan, K., Clark, K., & Williams, A. (2013). Designing games, designing roles: A study of youth agency in an informal education program. *Urban Education*, 48(5), 734–758. doi:10.1177/0042085913491220.
- Sheridan, K., & Gardner, H. (2012). Artistic development: Three essential spheres. In A. Shimamura & S. Palmer (Eds.), *Aesthetic science: Connecting minds, brains, and experience* (pp. 277–296). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Sheridan, K. M., Halverson, E. R., Litts, B., Brahms, L., Jacobs-Priebe, L., & Owens, T. (2014). Learning in the making: A comparative case study of three makerspaces. *Harvard Educational Review*, 84(4), 505–531.
- Soep, E. (2004). Visualizing judgment: Self-assessment and peer assessment in arts education. In E. W. Eisner & M. D. Day (Eds.), *Handbook of research and policy in art education* (pp. 667–687). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- The New London Group. (1996). A pedagogy of multiliteracies: Designing social futures. *Harvard Educational Review*, 66(1), 60–93.
- Vygotsky, L. (1962). *Thought and language* (E. Haufmann & G. Vankar, Eds. and Trans.). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Wilson, B. (2004). Child art after modernism: Visual culture and new narratives. In E. W. Eisner & M. D. Day (Eds.), *Handbook of research and policy in art education* (pp. 299–328). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Winner, E., & Hetland, L. (Eds.). (2000). The arts and academic achievement: What the evidence shows [Special issue]. *Journal of Aesthetic Education*, 34(3/4).
- Zenkov, K., & Sheridan, K. (2012). Artistically asking about school: Picturing city youth as writers, artists, and citizens. In K. Hutzler, F. Bastos, & K. Cosier (Eds.), *Urban education with a vision: Art, social justice, and the city as possibility*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Kimberly M. Sheridan George Mason University, Fairfax, VA, USA

Dr. Kimberly Sheridan is an associate professor of educational psychology and art education at George Mason University. She is coauthor of the book, *Studio Thinking: The Real Benefits of Visual Arts Education* and has authored articles on arts, cognition, and new technologies. Her current work is funded by the National Science Foundation and involves studying how people of all ages learn through making experiences in arts and engineering.

Chapter 12

“Uh Oh”: Multimodal Meaning Making During Viewing of YouTube Videos in Preschool

Christina Davidson, Susan J. Danby, and Karen Thorpe

Abstract With young children’s increased use of digital technologies, there is growing interest in their multimodal meaning making. Little is known of the ways that interactions between young children and adults produce multimodal meaning making as an aspect of digital literacies. This chapter explores children’s production of multimodal meaning making during their viewing of YouTube videos in a preschool. Video-recorded data are drawn from a large study of young children’s everyday practices with digital technology in preschools and in their homes. Conversation analysis is used to investigate the multimodal resources employed by the children and their teacher to accomplish individual and shared understandings of video events as humorous, out-of-the-ordinary, and even dangerous. Discussion establishes how social interaction informed viewing, made use of multimodal resources, and extended opportunities for children’s learning. The chapter contributes to thinking about practices necessary for educators to support children’s multimodal meaning making during their use of digital technologies.

Keywords Multimodal • Meaning making • Young children • Conversation analysis • Digital literacies • Preschool

Skills or Meaning Making?

Literacy researchers drawing on a sociocultural perspective have provided rich definitions of new literacies that move beyond the mastery of skills with digital technology to encompass meaning making (Burnett, 2010; Lankshear & Knobel, 2003, 2011) through embodied actions (Burnett, Merchant, Pahl, & Rowsell, 2014) and

C. Davidson (✉)
Charles Sturt University, Wagga Wagga, NSW, Australia
e-mail: cdavidson@csu.edu.au

S.J. Danby • K. Thorpe
Queensland University of Technology, Kelvin Grove, QLD, Australia

interaction (Burnett, 2013). Even so, there is a dearth of studies that examine technology as a medium for young children's meaning making in preschool and school settings (Burnett, 2010; Lankshear & Knobel, 2003, 2011). Many studies of digital technologies and literacy confirm a continued emphasis in the early years on print literacy and the skills of print literacy (Davidson 2012b; Levy, 2009). As Wohlwend (2009) argues, "young children in many early childhood classrooms are missing opportunities to explore contemporary literacy resources with rich potential for making meaning with visual, animated, and embodied literacies" (p. 118). Children bring rich experiences of digital technologies to preschool (Wohlwend, 2009), yet these experiences appear to remain largely unharnessed by preschool educators.

The relatively recent multimodal "turn" within literacies studies has resulted in increased attention to multimodality, particularly in relation to digital texts (Bazalgette & Buckingham, 2013). Yet research that examines young children's use of digital technologies largely maintains a focus on young children's language and literacy development understood as the development of alphabetical literacy, or the linguistic mode, rather than on aspects of multimodality. This emphasis again reflects the continued emphasis in early years learning in institutional contexts on the development of print-based skills (Levy, 2009) and on "transmitting narrow concepts of literacy that privilege the alphabetic principle" (Marsh, 2007, p. 267).

There is a pressing need for more studies of young children's multimodal meaning making in relation to digital literacies (Flewitt, 2008; Flewitt, Nind, & Payler, 2009), remembering that "literacy must be understood in the wider context of multimodal communicative practices" (Hackett, 2014, p. 8), rather than merely as a defining feature of digital texts. Wolfe and Flewitt (2010) argue that for young children in the home, "learning with both new and traditional literacy-related technologies is supported through collaborative multimodal dialogue" (p. 397). In their study, Wolfe and Flewitt found that use of multimodal resources varied across differing technologies. Studies such as this suggest both the importance of multimodal meaning making between young children and adults and the possibilities for practitioners in the early years, but particularly in preschool settings, to develop richer understandings of children's digital literacies.

In this chapter, we draw out the ways that multimodal resources were employed by children and their teacher during social interaction in a preschool. Multimodal resources were used to accomplish individual and shared understandings of aspects of YouTube videos as humorous, out-of-the-ordinary, and even dangerous. Our discussion of the displayed and shared meaning making considers: (1) how social interaction was integral to viewing the YouTube videos, (2) how multimodal resources were drawn on in social interaction, and (3) how the teacher interacted with individuals and with the collective of children to promote individual and joint meaning making and create opportunities for learning. The chapter contributes to thinking about practices necessary for educators to support children's multimodal meaning making during use of digital technologies. Specifically we argue for the potential of preschool educators' interactions with children to enhance young children's multimodal meaning making.

Perspectives for Examining Multimodal Meaning Making

The chapter is informed by the perspectives of ethnomethodology and conversation analysis (CA). Ethnomethodology (Garfinkel, 1984) is the study of “practical action and practical reasoning” (Hester & Francis, 1997, p. 97) in everyday life. Studies describe the methods that people use to accomplish their social activity (Davidson 2012a, 2012b). Ethnomethodology is very useful for making apparent what we take for granted when we go about our daily lives because it focuses on the small details that together constitute everyday things such as how individuals manage to coordinate doing something together, like having a meal or being a movie audience. CA is a form of ethnomethodology developed by Harvey Sacks (1995). It is particularly interested in how talk enables us to make individual actions through talk (such as questioning someone), reach agreement with others, and even agree to disagree. Conversation analysts hold the view that “how talk is produced, and how the meanings of talk are determined, are the practical, social and interactional accomplishments of members of a culture” (Hutchby & Wooffitt, 2008, p. 1). This is an important point because it emphasizes that we share ways or methods of producing meanings for others and these methods enable us to interact successfully. Hence, CA studies employ detailed analysis of sequences of talk (Schegloff, 2007) when people are interacting.

A number of concepts – and their particular definitions – inform the ethnomethodology/CA take on meaning making. Meaning in social interaction is heavily reliant on context, where context is taken to be what is made relevant in talk and found to be consequential for courses of interaction (Schegloff, 2007). Particular turns at talk are considered to accomplish social actions (such as asking questions), to respond to social actions in preferred ways (such as providing answers to questions), or to indicate when responses are dispreferred (such as pausing before declining to answer a question). Utterances display people’s understandings, and interactions exhibit orientations to the continuous updating of shared understandings, or the production of intersubjectivity (Schutz, 1967), even where what is shared understanding between people might be that they are disagreeing about something.

The CA approach seeks to describe and explicate “the inherently multimodal character of social interaction” (Stivers & Sidnell, 2005, p. 1). The analytic focus is not only an interest in words, their positions in utterances, and their prosodic features (such as pitch) but detailed attention to gesture, expressions, and bodily postures (Stivers & Sidnell, 2005). Because very young children often use gestures and gaze, examinations of children’s multimodal actions help in understanding their social interactions (Davidson, 2010). For example, studies of interactions between 12- and 30-month-old children and caregivers in day-care centers (Kidwell & Zimmerman, 2007; Lerner & Zimmerman, 2003; Lerner, Zimmerman, & Kidwell, 2011) show how gesture, gaze, and posture, together with “non-verbal and proto-verbal vocalizations” (Lerner et al., 2011, p. 44) of young children, are “resources for composing orderly and recognizable actions in interactions with others” (Lerner et al., 2011, p. 44). Although young children gradually incorporate linguistic resources, multimodality continues to remain an integral aspect of social interaction (Davidson, Danby, Given, & Thorpe, 2014; Lerner et al., 2011).

Our Study of YouTube Viewing in a Preschool

The data are drawn from a large Australian study of young children's use of digital technology in homes and preschools. Data collection included surveys and video recordings of children's digital activity in 9 preschools and in the homes of 18 focus children selected from preschools. The video recordings captured a range of activity with digital technologies. The data used in this chapter come from a single video recording of children and their teacher watching YouTube videos in a preschool. The first video was of the plumed basilisk lizard. The second video was one made by parents of a child in the preschool class. The video documented the family's adventures one weekend when their four-wheel drive car got stuck in the mud while they were bush driving.

Data were selected for analytic interest because of our initial noticings of the children's reactions to the video of the basilisk lizard. The children appeared to show shared responses to certain images. The recording was viewed numerous times in order to develop a word only transcript of the entire recording, select certain segments for more detailed transcription using Jefferson notation (Atkinson & Heritage, 1999), and then develop a detailed sequential analysis of those segments. Analysis was conducted in an iterative manner, employing further viewing of the recording and further development of the transcript excerpts. Our interest in multi-modal meaning making, together with the sheer numbers of participants present, meant that transcription presented a number of challenges. One of these was to transcribe responses such as laughter. Although conversation analysts have developed detailed ways of representing laughter (e.g., Jefferson, 1985), according to Hepburn and Varney (2013), analytic benefit needs to be taken into account when approaching transcription of audience laughter. In this case of a preschool setting, shared laughter was difficult to document given that there were 19 children present. Our transcription of laughter is simplified although still enables us to make analytic points about the course of laughter.

At this point, before beginning the analysis section, it is important to become familiar with the transcription conventions used. Transcription conventions (adapted from Atkinson & Heritage, 1999) include:

[[Utterances that begin at the same time
[Overlap in speakers' talk
=	Talk between speakers latches or follows without a break
()	Indicates length of silence e.g. (0.2)
:::	Indicates that a prior sound is prolonged, e.g., li::ke
-	Word is cut off, e.g., ta-
> <	Words enclosed within are said at a faster pace than surrounding talk
?	Rising inflection
¿	Rising inflection but weaker than?
.	Stopping fall in tone
,	Continuing intonation
!	Animated tone
↑	Marked rising intonation

↓	Marked falling intonation
<u>no</u>	Underline indicating greater emphasis
CA	Upper case indicates loudness
°	Softness e.g. It's a °secret°
.hhh	In-breath
hhh	Aspiration or strong out-breath
(it is)	Words within are uncertain
()	Indicates that some word/s could not be worked out
(())	Verbal descriptions e.g. ((sits down))

In addition, the following symbols have been used for transcribing laughter (Hepburn & Varney, 2013):

huh/hah/heh/hih/hoh	Voiced laughter
hh-hh-hh	Breathy hearable particles of laughter
HA HA	Elevated volume

The children have been given pseudonyms. When it was not possible to identify the child who was speaking, their talk has been identified using the symbols C1, C2, and so on. The letters Co are used to indicate computer “talk” in YouTube videos.

The next section provides the analysis of extracts from the recording. Extracts have been selected because they illustrate various facets of multimodal meaning making. The analysis addresses the overarching question: how is multimodal meaning making accomplished during viewing of YouTube videos?

YouTube Video 1: The Plumed Basilisk

It was whole group time. The children had asked the teacher if they could watch two videos. One child, Tina, was the designated helper. She and the teacher had moved to the front of the room, while children remained on the floor in front of a large screen that would be used to show the YouTube videos once they were located on the computer. The analysis begins after a search located the YouTube video. Tina and the teacher completed the search together (see Fig. 12.1).

Anticipating Danger for the Basilisk Lizard

The video was familiar to the children as they had watched it on a previous occasion. During this viewing, children produced very strong reactions to aspects of it. One was recognition of an imminent threat to the plumed basilisk lizard. Visually, the danger was produced in the video through screen shots that contrasted views of a snake and then the lizard who was seemingly unaware of the presence of the snake. The children produced their noticing of danger audibly through the use of



Fig. 12.1 Teacher and Tina begin the search in YouTube

“uh oh.” Previous research has identified “uh oh” as an alarm cry (Du Bois, Schuetze-Coburn, Cumming, & Paolino, 1993) used by people to show an emotional response to something unexpected (Keisanen, 2012, p. 207). Our analysis shows how the children used “uh oh” individually and collectively to acknowledge the danger presented on the screen.

Extract 1: Uh o::h

1 T: we'll try it I'll just tap it Tina okay
 2 ((video begins playing on the screen))
 3 T: here we go
 4 ((video running))
 5 ((T moves to sit down))
 6 (3.0)
 7 C1: we can't hear it
 8 T: no I know darling I'm not sure why
 9 ((T moves to computer and adjusts volume))
 10 ((sound begins))
 11 (7.0)
 12 C1: ooooh
 13 C2: uh
 14 C4: uh oh
 15 ((image of snake appears))
 16 C5: uh o:::h
 17 Cn: uh [O:::H
 18 Cn: [uh [O:::H
 19 Ti: [uh oh:::w ((looks at children))
 20 (0.4)
 21 Ti: uh oh:::w ((looks back at screen))
 22 ((image of basilisk appears))



Fig. 12.2 Tina joins in the chorus of “uh oh”

The first part of the transcript “captures” a problem that occurs when the video starts (1–9). There is no sound. A child announces this by calling out. The teacher responds, indicating that she doesn’t know what is causing the problem, and then she hops up to attempt to get the sound to work. During this time, the video continues to play showing the basilisk lizard. One child makes an appreciative sound (ooh). This is followed by very soft utterances from two other children, one of these is an “uh oh” (13–14). Then an image of a snake appears (15), and there is an immediate chorus of the same response and then another (16–17). Tina, who is standing out the front at the computer also joins in with “uh oh” (19), said first in the direction of the other children (see Fig. 12.2), and then as she is looking at the screen (21).

Understandably, it is challenging to represent all the children’s voices in the transcript when they respond. What the transcript does show though is that the first children who make the response appear to be anticipating what is to come because the image of the snake has yet to appear. When it does, most of the children respond with “uh oh” immediately. In this way, they collaboratively respond as the viewing audience, timing their responses to the danger that has become apparent on the screen. Through their out loud chorus of “uh oh,” the children accomplish their shared appreciation and understanding, as an audience, of what the appearance of the snake implies for the safety of the basilisk lizard.

Laughing Together as Shared Meaning Making

The sight of the basilisk running on water as he fled from the snake also produced an out loud chorus response from the children. The children’s response can best be described as a gradual combination of high-pitched squealing laughter. The transcript only provides an approximation of laughter because it is simply very challenging to transcribe the laughter of so many. The transcript does show how children’s

laughter developed and concluded at certain points in their viewing, with indications of duration of laughter and its pitch. The analysis establishes how laughter was finely tuned to indicate “laughable” actions (Glenn & Holt, 2013, p. 5) visible on-screen, how it escalated at certain points as children affiliated with others, and how the teacher used nonverbal resources to reduce laughter and quiet the children.

Extract 2: It Bicycles Its Hind Legs

1 ((image of snake moving through water))
 2 C5: jump!
 3 ((video shows basilisk jumping off stick))
 4 Ti: ↑↑haaa[aaaaaaaaaaaa .hhh heeeeeeeeeee huh
 5 ((lizard running on water))
 6 Cn: [↑↑heheeeeeEEEEE
 7 Ti: ↑↑aah .hhhh aaa.hhhh [aah .hhhhh
 8 Cn: [↑↑heheeeeeeeee
 9 ((T smiling at Ti as she sits))
 10 Cn: ↑↑ HEH [HEH HEHEHEHEHE
 11 Ti: [↑↑.hhh [huh huh huh huh huh
 12 ((T looks at children
 13 and makes a stop sign then puts a finger
 14 to her lips))
 15 Cn: ((talking quietly))
 16 Ti: °o:::::wh huh[huh°
 17 Co: [it's called the Jesus
 18 Christ [lizard because it can walk (0.2)
 19 Ti: [. hhh hhhhhhhhhhhh
 20 Co: well run on water
 21 ((T smiling))
 22 Co: it bicycles its hind legs and the tail
 23 becomes a counterweight
 24 [((image of lizard racing across water))
 25 Cn: [[↑↑ HEH[He:::::::::::
 26 Ti: [.hhh huh [huh .huh huh
 27 Cn: [↑↑HEH [HEH HEH HEH::
 28 Ti: [hhhhhhhh
 29 ((T frowning at children))
 30 Cn: ((talking))
 31 ((snake seen swimming away))

What is particularly interesting about laughter in this extract is the way that children coordinate it with the images they see on the screen and with the laughter of each other. Tina's initial laughter, a high-pitched squeal (3), closely follows the sight of the lizard jumping off a rock and so indicates that the jump is the laughable matter. The high-pitched laughter that follows from other children, and from Tina, makes the next laughable matter the sight of the lizard running on water. Laughter

occurs for nine seconds (represented approximately in lines 4–10) gradually increasing until it is very loud. The teacher's response changes from a smiling endorsement (9) to nonverbal actions (12–14) that indicate the children should stop or quiet down. Laughter quickly dies out to be replaced by talking. This illustrates that children are not only watching the video – they are watching the teacher.

The video has a sound track that provides information about the basilisk lizard, and this can be heard when the children stop their loud chorus of laughter (17–23). The lizard is once more seen to run across the screen, and this is again followed immediately by laughter which quickly becomes loud and high pitched. Again, the teacher responds to the increasing loudness with disapproval, indicated with a frown (29), and the children resume talking rather than laughing.

During the extract, both children and the teacher are seen to orient to their institutional roles whereby the teacher can constrain some behavior through actions which obligate children to respond in specific ways. In this case, ceasing to laugh indicates children's understanding that they are obliged to respond to the teacher's actions (Glenn, 2010; Glenn & Holt, 2013) that curtail their own. In a strong sense, the teacher interacts at times in ways that indicate when collective actions are inappropriate.

YouTube Video 2: Oliver's Car Got Stuck in the Mud

After watching the video of the basilisk lizard, talk moved on to what to watch next. Several children suggested another video that they have watched previously. It was a YouTube video produced by the parents of Oliver, one of the children in the class. [For an analysis of that earlier viewing, see Davidson et al. (2014).] The video recorded an out-of-the-ordinary event that the family had experienced on a drive in a forest – the family's four-wheel drive car got stuck as it crossed a part of the road on a bridge that had collapsed. The teacher agreed that the children could watch the video again.

Talk About Print

In order to view the YouTube video of the drive in the forest, the teacher and Tina had to locate it in YouTube (see Fig. 12.3). The analysis establishes how the task of keying in the necessary search information resulted in talk between Tina and the teacher about letters and where they were to be found on the keyboard. Naming and locating letters also involved pointing and gaze. The interactions show how shared digital activity can provide a genuine purpose for talking about print with young children.

Fig. 12.3 Tina and the teacher finely coordinate their actions to key in letters



Extract 3: Shall I

1 T: now we need Oliver's. ((looks at Ti))
 2 (1.0)
 3 T: [[do you want to type it in or shall I
 4 [[((T looks at Ti))
 5 (2.0)
 6 Ti: shall I::?
 7 (1.0)
 8 T: sh[a:ll I::
 9 [(T nods and smiles then looks at
 10 the screen)
 11 T: he he he he he he alright tee
 12 Ti: tee
 13 (1.0)
 14 Ti: ((looks at T))tee [starts with my=
 15 T: [(double-u)
 16 Ti: =name
 17 T: [tee does start with [your name
 18 [(T looks at Ti))
 19 [(T looks to screen))
 20 T: double-u
 21 ((T's finger hovers over a key))
 22 Ti: (owh) (0.6) that's double-u
 23 T: that's double-u (0.6)o ((points))
 24 (0.6)
 25 Ti: o ((moves finger to key))
 26 ((Ti presses key))
 27 T: whoa ((pointing)) look how many o::s you

28 put
29 Ti: a::h
30 T: too many o::s let's take some away
31 press this one ((pointing))
32 (2.0)
33 T: one (0.4) two (0.4) three (0.4) stop!
34 (0.4)
35 T: okay

The teacher initiates the search by offering Tina a choice (1–4) between two possible or “candidate” actions (Pomerantz, 1988). The first is that Tina could type in the information and the second is the teacher’s offer to do it (“shall I”). Tina selects the second option (6). The teacher repeats Tina’s words, laughs, and then names the first letter (8–11). In this way, the teacher indicates her understanding that Tina is going to “type” in the letters of the search term with her help.

What follows this negotiation between Tina and the teacher is a finely choreographed exchange of information with the teacher leading Tina through the process of keying in each individual letter. After the teacher begins by naming the first letter (11), Tina repeats the letter and then offers up the noticing that this letter “starts with” her name (12–16). The teacher has named the next letter already (15) but her talk overlapped Tina’s utterance so she agrees with Tina’s comment and then names the letter again (17–20). During this interchange about the letter and Tina’s name, both Tina and the teacher look at each other frequently. The exchange of glances happens very quickly, but it illustrates how important eye contact is during interaction.

Tina indicates the key, nonverbally and verbally, and the teacher confirms that it is the correct one (22–23). She also names the next letter and points to it (23). Tina repeats the name and presses the key (25). The teacher then directs Tina’s attention to the textbox and an error (“look how many o::s you put in”). Tina’s response is minimal (29) so the teacher provides the more precise assessment that there are too many letter ‘o’s. She follows with the solution that they need to take some away (30). Tina follows the teacher’s directions as she talks Tina through taking out the incorrect letters. Once done, the teacher’s use of “okay” (35) indicates the end of the correction actions.

Here it is important to note again that locating the video requires talk about print and use of other multimodal resources to indicate letters on the keyboard. Tina and the teacher negotiate the course of their activity adeptly and through turn-by-turn actions. They have needed to listen to each other, make actions (such as pointing to indicate understandings), and fix up problems when they occur. Not only are these rich examples of meaning making during interaction but they illustrate how use of digital technology can involve fine-grained talk about print and about other actions needed to navigate around the keyboard and screen.

Negotiating What Children Mean

Watching the videos was a whole group event. This meant that the teacher needed to interact with Tina to locate specific YouTube videos but also to interact with all the other children. This next extract shows how she and the children managed their interactions when there were misunderstandings and differences of opinion. The analysis illustrates how misunderstandings were repaired (Schegloff, Jefferson, & Sacks, 1977) and disagreements resolved during the course of the activity with digital technology. Importantly, the analysis establishes how children themselves display communicative competence (Danby, 2002; Danby & Davidson, 2007) by addressing problems in talk to clarify what others mean. The problems experienced produced lengthy talk, and so the transcript and analysis are organized into two sections.

Extract 4: You Mean That One?

1 T: ooh it's started
 2 (1.0)
 3 O: play that odder one
 4 (1.0)
 5 T: which one
 6 (1.0)
 7 Ti: w- which one
 8 T: hang on! ((points at screen))
 9 C6: that one
 10 T: that one?
 11 O: yep
 12 T: is that the one with the stuck in the
 13 mud we saw
 14 (1.0)
 15 O: ((standing up)) that was that was mine
 16 (0.4) mine car got=
 17 Ti: =you mean that one ((points with cursor))
 18 Cn: ((numerous children talking at once))
 19 J: ((pointing)) that's the one
 20 Cn: ()
 21 Ti: you mean this one ((points with cursor))
 22 Cn: ((continuing to talk at once))
 23 Ti: he means tha::t one ((points with finger))
 24 Cn: yeah

Once Tina keys in the search time, a list of YouTube videos begins to appear and the teacher announces that it has started (1). In this way, she seeks to gain the attention of all the children now that she and Tina have a list of results. At this point,

Oliver suggests that they watch a different video (“play that odder one”). Both Tina and the teacher seek clarification about which video he is referring to (5 and 7), since it is his family members who have placed the videos on YouTube including the one the teacher and Tina have been trying to locate. The talk is challenging because Oliver is some way from the computer and from the screen and from Tina and the teacher. When Oliver confirms that the video is “that one,” the teacher seeks further clarification by asking Oliver directly whether they have found the video that is of getting stuck in the mud (12–13). So she returns talk to the video that she is trying to locate and she attempts to repair their talk by giving more specific information about the video (rather than continuing to refer to it as “that one”). Oliver responds with talk about his car getting stuck (15–16), the subject of the video that the teacher is trying to locate.

Tina specifically asks Oliver which one he means (17), and thus appears to return to the matter of the “odder one” that Oliver had referred to earlier (3). Her question specifically employs the word “mean” and thus makes clear that there is still uncertainty around which video Oliver is actually talking about and so she provides him with another opportunity to address the confusion. The use of “you mean” is an example of what has been termed “other-initiated repair” (Benjamin, 2012; Schegloff et al., 1977) whereby someone attempts to aid a previous speaker to “fix up” a problem in previous talk. In this case, Tina gives the alternative answers of “this one” and “that one.” She also uses the cursor as a pointing device so that her reference to “that one” and “this one” is clear because the cursor hovers over the videos she is referring to in her talk. She then indicates to the teacher which video Oliver is referring to (23) by pointing to the computer screen itself. Thus, Tina coordinates her talk with her use of the cursor as a pointing device and by physically using her finger to point at the screen.

Tina uses her talk to intervene in the conversation between Oliver and the teacher. As such, her talk provides a third party “intervention” in the talk occurring between the teacher and Oliver. In directly addressing what Oliver means, Tina names the problem as one to do with meaning and she sorts out which video he was referring to earlier (21–23).

25 T: he does mean he does mean that one but
 26 tha- we haven't see that one before
 27 shall we watch the one that we've
 28 already seen first=
 29 Cn: =no:::::
 30 Ti: okay [yeah okay ((pointing))
 31 Cn: [ye::[:::s
 32 Cn: [NO:[::::::
 33 Cn: [YE:::S
 34 T: a::h hang on hang on a minute stop ((hands
 35 in air))stop stop now when we first
 36 turned it on (0.4) you said that you
 37 wanted to watch-

- 38 Cn: ((talking at once))
 39 ((T makes stop sign in the air))
 40 C?: () that one
 41 T: so we'll watch the one that we've
 42 already seen
 43 C?: ()
 44 T: maybe [later on we could watch the
 45 other one as well

Tina sorts out the confusion over Oliver's reference to a video; however, this is not the end of the trouble in the talk. The teacher confirms that she also understands what video Oliver is referring to, but indicates that they haven't seen this video before. She suggests that they watch the one that they have already seen (25–28) on another day. The children hear the teacher's talk as an invitation to comment and two differing responses follow. A number of children disagree with the teacher ("no:::":") and Tina and other children agree (30–33) with her suggestion. In effect, the children now produce two differing positions about what to do next and the volume of the talk has increased substantially. The teacher calls for silence using her hands to indicate a halt. She then points out that they had originally wanted to watch the video (35–37). Children begin to talk again and the teacher responds by making a stop sign with her hand. Children cease talking save for one child who continues to indicate another video (40 and 43). She tells the children what they will be doing – watching the video that they have seen previously (41–42). However, she leaves open the option of watching the other video later.

It is interesting to have talk by children, and their teacher, where what is *meant* is the topic for their talk. Of course, what is meant is always being negotiated when people talk, and it is when trouble occurs that what someone means becomes something to be talked about and resolved. As well, problems can occur in the whole group when many children talk out loud at once. This is not just a problem for the teacher but for everyone. Children must attend to the course of interaction in order to know how to get "back on track" so as to return to the main "event" – in this case watching a video.

Asking Questions to Provoke Thinking and Sharing

Questioning was an important part of interaction. The teacher used questioning to prompt children to explore their understandings of the video. Children also asked questions of others that enabled sharing of information and prompted talk about the video. The analysis will also show how questioning was used by the teacher to propose various courses of action and to manage participation by children.

Extract 5: How Did the Big Hole Get in the Road?

1 Ti: ((pointing)) that's Oliver's car?
 2 T: maybe Oliver knows how the big hole got
 3 in the road
 4 (1.0)
 5 Ti: Oliver ((looks to O)) how did the big
 6 hole got in the road
 7 (2.0)
 8 T: shall we ask him now or shall we wait
 9 until the picture's finished
 10 (2.0)
 11 Ti: tell him now
 12 T: well shall I pause it and we could ask him
 13 Ti: hmmh ((nodding))
 14 T: okay ((standing up))
 15 ((T moves toward the computer and
 16 presses key))
 17 (2.0)
 18 ((T sits down beside Tina))
 19 T: okay ((looking at O))Tina has a
 20 question for you Oliver
 21 E: ([)
 22 T: [Evan?
 23 (0.4)
 24 T: we've been watching this and Tina has
 25 asked ((pointing))me how that big hole
 26 got in the road ((looks at Ti))cos you
 27 know when I drive my car ((points
 28 at screen)) when I'm coming to
 29 Kindy ((looks at children))and when
 30 I'm going home (0.6) ((points at screen))
 31 I don't see big holes in the road like
 32 that
 33 (0.4)
 34 C7: ([)
 35 T: [so wait a minute ((points)) Oliver
 36 was here ((stops pointing and looks
 37 at children)) so maybe Oliver kno::ws
 38 (0.4) how the hole got there ((looks at Ti))
 39 Ti: ((looking over at O)) how did the hole got
 40 there

In the first part of the extract, the teacher's questions are used initially to offer choices to Tina. Tina had wondered earlier about the hole and so when she notices

and indicates Oliver's car on the screen (1), the teacher suggests that Oliver might know what caused the hole in the road (2–3). Tina acts on this suggestion and poses a question to Oliver (5–6) about the hole. Since the video is still playing, the teacher provides another choice for Tina using questioning – should they ask “now” or when the “picture” is finished (8–9)? Tina selects the former and so then the teacher uses questioning to propose a more specific course of action – should she pause the video and then they could ask Oliver (11–12). Tina agrees to this (13) and the teacher stops the video (15–15). Since Tina is the designated helper, the questions and answers that constitute talk here accomplish her as making decisions, or having a say, about what happens during the viewing of the video.

Once the teacher has stopped the video, she uses her talk to make it possible for Tina to ask her question again. That is, she informs Oliver, by directly naming him, that Tina has a question (18–19). The question seeks Oliver's attention so that he will listen to Tina when she speaks. One child talks instead, and so the teacher names the child and provides a formulation of where they are up to at this moment (20–25). So, she informs Evan that they've been watching the video and Tina has asked her about the hole in the road. She then provides information that situates asking a question about the hole as a logical thing to do – she draws on her own experience of driving and, in pointing out the absence of holes, highlights the big hole in the road as out of the ordinary and something to be explained (26–32). Another child speaks (although cannot be heard clearly on the recording), and so the teacher provides a justification for listening (35–40). She reminds that Oliver was there and so he might know. In this way, she acknowledges that Oliver's experience places him as possibly knowing what the rest of them don't know. With that, she looks to Tina, who in turn looks over to Oliver and again asks about the hole (39–40). The teacher has used questioning to provide a listening audience for Tina and to enable her to question Oliver.

Linking YouTube Viewing to Children's Other Activities

In this final extract we see the way in which the teacher seamlessly shifted from viewing and talking about the video, to talk about what the children might do in the future. Talk was used to further explore the question of how a hole got in the bridge and opportunities were created for children to express their own experiences that relate in some way to the problem and to suggest possibilities for exploring the problem further through their own activities.

Extract 6: If We Made a Bridge in Our Sandpit

- 1 T: okay so do they know why the bridge was
- 2 broken?
- 3 O: I taught I taught a twee bwoke it
- 4 T: they think a tree broke it

- 5 O: yes!
- 6 T: does anyone else know why what do you
7 think James?
- 8 Ja: um what u::m
9 (1.0)
- 10 Ja: and a car got stuck in the mud and another
11 car pulled a car out () the mud
- 12 T: well I ((making a circling motion))I think
13 that's coming up so we'll keep watching
14 (0.4)
- 15 T: if we made a bridge in our sandpit
16 again maybe we could try and do
17 something to the bridge to see if we
18 can make a hole like that
- 19 Jo: yeah
- 20 M: I can dig () really round
- 21 T: like what
- 22 Jo: ()
- 23 T: no I'm listening to Max
- 24 M: I can dig something really round like
25 a hole and () our () do a
26 wheelie and I
- 27 Jo: ()
- 28 T: a wheelie across the hole

The teacher engages in talk with Oliver who experienced getting “stuck in the mud” on the bridge because of the hole. Her question results in Oliver providing the information that the adults on the trip thought that a tree broke the bridge (1–3). When the teacher repeats the information, Oliver confirms her understanding (4–5).

The teacher then asks a question that could be answered by anyone; however, she names James to give his thoughts on the matter (8–9). His response is tentative and provides a description of what is to come on the screen, a car (Oliver’s family car) will be pulled out by another car (10–11). The teacher acknowledges that this part of the video is coming up next and so returns the children’s attention to the YouTube video (12–13). However, she then proposes that they could make a bridge in the sandpit, as they have done previously, however they could try to “do something” to make a hole (16–17). By not naming what that “something” might be, she creates the opportunity for the children to explore further the question of what made the hole in the bridge.

This talk requires the majority of children, who are seated on the floor, to follow what is being talked about and verbally “tune in” to the topic of talk being developed that includes a shift from talk about the bridge on-screen to possible bridges that the children might make in the sandpit. The responses from children show that they have heard and understood this shift. Two children respond (Max and Jo) but



Fig. 12.4 Planting a tree to see if it makes a hole in the bridge

the teacher endorses Max as the speaker (23). Max then proposes to dig a round hole and to use cars to “do a wheelie” on it. Again, Joseph speaks but the teacher maintains her interaction with Max by formulating what he is proposing to do (28). Later, children went on to make bridges in the sandpit and explore making holes in them, like the hole they saw in the YouTube video (see Fig. 12.4). Thus, the teacher extended children’s viewing of the video into activity in the sandpit.

Discussion and Conclusion

The teacher in this preschool used digital technology to access, view, and talk about particular YouTube videos as a whole class event. As one child, Joseph, spontaneously described it when the lights were turned off prior to beginning the viewing, “It’s like a real movie it’s like a show.” As the analysis established, however, there was more to it than merely watching or viewing something. The teacher used digital technology in ways that illustrate how meaning making can be promoted in rich ways. Here we consider (1) how interaction was integral to viewing the YouTube videos, (2) how multimodal resources constituted interaction, and (3) how the teacher interacted with individuals and with the collective of children to promote individual and joint meaning making and create opportunities for learning.

How Interaction Was Integral to Viewing the YouTube Video

The analysis illustrates the importance of interactions between young children and educators during use of digital technologies (Plowman, Stephen, & McPake, 2010). Interaction was pivotal to finding, viewing, and thinking about the videos. It was through interaction that understandings were made “visible” and “audible” such that children responded to the YouTube recordings, producing individual and shared

interpretations of what they were seeing. It was through interactions that these interpretations were endorsed, or not, by the teacher and by other children. It was through interaction that the teacher was able to draw out understandings of what was occurring on the screen and of the ways that digital technology was used or might be used. These ways included making videos of experiences, but also how children might extend on video viewing through their own everyday activity, such as building a bridge and exploring ways to make a hole on it like the one they had seen on the screen.

How Multimodal Resources Constituted Interaction

The analysis establishes how multimodal resources enabled interaction and produced meaning making (Davidson et al., 2014; Lerner et al., 2011). Throughout the recording, the utterances of children and their teacher were accompanied by gestures, gaze, and shifts in bodily positions. Although the transcript necessarily presented only certain uses of these, as relevant to analytic points, it was evident that interaction was accomplished through more than talk. In particular, children's responses to the YouTube video of the plumed basilisk lizard showed how meaning making could be constituted without uttering any words at all; producing laughter accomplished a shared and meaningful response, yet a response that had a beginning, a course, and an ending as a result of viewing events on-screen. Children's responses were finely tuned to the video and yet curtailed by their teacher through her nonverbal actions when laughter became very loud. Thus, children needed to respond to the video but also to the context of viewing it in the preschool setting.

How the Teacher Facilitated Meaning Making

The analysis makes apparent the complex work of the teacher throughout the activity with YouTube. This could be seen, for example, in the ways that she offered choices to Tina on a number of occasions, rather than directly telling her to make certain actions. So, the teacher's talk enabled decisions to be made by the child about actions she would take and how their joint activity should proceed at certain points. Throughout, the teacher shifted between talk that was addressed to the entire group and talk that was for individual children (notably Tina and Oliver). These interactions required of children that they attended to where her talk was being directed at any particular moment and that they attend to its content. This also required attending to her use of gesture, gaze, and bodily posture – both to ascertain where talk was being directed and, at times, what the talk was about. Similarly, if children were to contribute to the on-going activity, they needed to provide their responses in the appropriate places during interaction and in appropriate ways. If not, then their actions sometimes resulted in indications from the teacher that their

contribution was not acceptable or should cease (such as when she held her hand up to form a stop sign when laughter or talk became too loud).

It has been argued that more research studies of multimodality are required in order to have great insights into young children's digital literacies and learning, especially to "understand more fully the nature of the relationship between media types, modes of interaction and the affordances for learning offered" (Wolfe & Flewitt, 2010, p. 397). One way to think of the use and viewing of the YouTube videos is as a collaborative production that extended the possibilities for children's learning. Interactions made available information about the use of digital technologies for recording aspects of life (e.g., how the family's car got stuck in the mud on their weekend drive) and about YouTube itself (where there are many other movies including ones about extraordinary lizards). Interactions and viewing produced information about the lizard and about Oliver's experiences with his family. Talk with Tina provided focused exchanges about letters in words and on the keyboard but did so in a purposeful way. The teacher's talk provided opportunities for sharing of own experiences and for thinking about the experiences of others (why was it that the road she took to Kindy didn't have big holes in it like the one in the video?) or for puzzling over, thinking about, and creating (to see what would make a hole "like that"). Furthermore, the children were developing understandings of how to respond as a group and to share responses in ways that took account of the many children present and the ways in which the teacher interacted with the entire group or with individual children. Thus, they were experiencing and learning about the sociality of viewing YouTube recordings with others in the preschool setting.

Teachers in the early years have important roles to play in promoting and extending young children's use of digital technologies in ways that promote individual and shared meaning making. Further, meaning making needs to be understood as central to digital literacies (Lankshear & Knobel, 2003, 2011). Although current research suggests that many teachers do not feel confident using digital technologies in preschool (Thorpe et al., 2015), we argue for the potential of preschool educators' interactions with children during use of digital technologies to enhance young children's meaning making. This chapter has shown some of the ways that one preschool teacher interacted with children during viewing of YouTube videos, to promote meaning making. Interactions showed that multimodal resources were integral to meaning making (Keating & Sunakawa, 2011) during use of digital technology and that meaning making was displayed continuously throughout talk in interaction.

Acknowledgment We thank the Australian Research Council, who awarded funding to Susan Danby, Amanda Spink, Karen Thorpe, and Christina Davidson for the project *Interacting with Knowledge, Interacting with People: Web Searching in Early Childhood* (DP110104227). The project has ethical approval by Queensland University of Technology's University Human Research Ethics Committee (Reference No.: 1100001480) and Charles Sturt University's Research Ethics Office (Reference No.: 2012/40). We thank the teachers, children, and families of the Crèche and Kindergarten Association for their participation in this study. We thank Sandra Grant and Sandy Houen for video recording in the preschool.

References

- Atkinson, J. M., & Heritage, J. (1999). Jefferson's transcript notation. In A. Jaworski & N. Coupland (Eds.), *The discourse reader* (pp. 158–166). London: Routledge.
- Bazalgette, C., & Buckingham, D. (2013). Literacy, media and multimodality: A critical response. *Literacy*, 47(2), 95–102.
- Benjamin, T. (2012). When problems pass us by: Using “you mean” to help locate the source of trouble. *Research on Language and Social Interaction*, 45(1), 82–109.
- Burnett, C. (2010). Technology and literacy in early childhood educational settings: A review of research. *Journal of Early Childhood Literacy*, 10(3), 247–270.
- Burnett, C. (2013). Investigating pupils' interactions around digital texts: A spatial perspective on the “classroom-ness” of digital literacy practices in school. *Educational Review*, 66(2), 192–209.
- Burnett, C., Merchant, G., Pahl, K., & Rowsell, J. (2014). The (im)materiality of literacy: The significance of subjectivity to new literacies research. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, 35(1), 90–103. doi:10.1080/01596306.2012.739469.
- Danby, S. (2002). The communicative competence of young children. *Australian Journal of Early Childhood*, 27(3), 25–30.
- Danby, S., & Davidson, C. (2007). Young children using language to negotiate their social worlds. In L. Makin, C. Jones Diaz, & C. McLachlan (Eds.), *Literacies in childhood: Changing views, challenging practice* (2nd ed., pp. 118–132). Port Melbourne, Australia: Elsevier.
- Davidson, C. (2010). Transcription matters: Transcribing talk and interaction to facilitate conversation analysis of the taken-for-granted in young children's interaction. *Journal of Early Childhood Research*, 8(2), 115–131.
- Davidson, C. (2012a). Ethnomethodology and literacy research: A methodological “road less travelled”. *English Teaching: Practice and Critique*, 11(1), 26–42.
- Davidson, C. (2012b). Seeking the green basilisk lizard: Acquiring digital literacy practices in the home. *Journal of Early Childhood Literacy*, 12(1), 24–45.
- Davidson, C., Danby, S., Given, L., & Thorpe, K. (2014). Talk about a YouTube video in preschool: The mutual production of shared understanding for learning with digital technology. *Australasian Journal of Early Childhood*, 39(3), 76–83.
- Du Bois, J., Schuetze-Coburn, S., Cumming, S., & Paolino, D. (1993). An outline of discourse transcription. In J. A. Edwards & M. D. Lampert (Eds.), *Talking data: Transcription and coding in discourse research* (pp. 45–87). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Flewitt, R. (2008). Using video to investigate preschool classroom interaction: Education research assumptions and methodological practices. *Visual Communication*, 5(1), 25–20.
- Flewitt, R., Nind, M., & Payler, J. (2009). “If she's left with books she'll just eat them”: Considering inclusive multimodal literacy practices. *Journal of Early Childhood Literacy*, 9(2), 211–233.
- Garfinkel, H. (1984). *Studies in ethnomethodology*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.
- Glenn, P. (2010). Interview laughs: Shared laughter and asymmetries in employment interviews. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 42, 1485–1498.
- Glenn, P., & Holt, E. (2013). Introduction. In P. Glenn & E. Holt (Eds.), *Studies of laughter in interaction* (pp. 1–22). London/New York: Bloomsbury Academic.
- Hackett, A. (2014). Zigging and zooming all over the place: Young children's meaning making and movement in the museum. *Journal of Early Childhood Literacy*, 14(1), 5–27. doi:10.1177/1468798412453730.
- Hepburn, A., & Varney, S. (2013). Beyond ((laughter)): Some notes on transcription. In P. Glenn & E. Holt (Eds.), *Studies of laughter in interaction* (pp. 25–38). London/New York: Bloomsbury Academic.
- Hester, S., & Francis, D. (1997). Reality analysis in a classroom storytelling. *British Journal of Sociology*, 48(1), 96–112.
- Hutchby, I., & Wooffitt, R. (2008). *Conversation analysis* (2nd ed.). Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.

- Jefferson, G. (1985). An exercise in the transcription and analysis of laughter. In T. A. van Dijk (Ed.), *Handbook of discourse analysis* (Vol. 3, pp. 25–34). London: Academic.
- Keating, E., & Sunakawa, C. (2011). “A full inspiration tray”: Multimodality across real and computer-mediated spaces. In J. Streeck, C. Goodwin, & C. Le Baron (Eds.), *Embodied interaction: Language and body in the material world* (pp. 194–204). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Keisanen, T. (2012). “Uh-oh, we were going there”: Environmentally occasional noticings of trouble in in-car interaction. *Semiotica*, 191(1), 197–222. doi:10.1515/sem-2012-0061.
- Kidwell, M., & Zimmerman, D. H. (2007). Joint attention as action. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 39, 592–611.
- Lankshear, C., & Knobel, M. (2003). New technologies in early childhood literacy research: A review of research. *Journal of Early Childhood Literacy*, 3(1), 59–82.
- Lankshear, C., & Knobel, M. (2011). *New literacies: Everyday practices and social learning*. Maidenhead, UK: Open University Press.
- Lerner, G. H., & Zimmerman, D. (2003). Action and the appearance of action in the conduct of very young children. In P. Glenn, C. LeBaron, & J. Mandelbaum (Eds.), *Studies in language and social interaction* (pp. 441–457). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Lerner, G. H., Zimmerman, D., & Kidwell, M. (2011). Formal structures of practical tasks: A resource for action in the social life of very young children. In J. Streeck, C. Goodwin, & C. LeBaron (Eds.), *Embodied interaction: Language and body in the material world* (pp. 44–56). Cambridge, UK/New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Levy, R. (2009). ‘You have to understand words ... but not read them’: Young children becoming readers in a digital age. *Journal of Research in Reading*, 32(10), 75–91.
- Marsh, J. (2007). New literacies and old pedagogies: Recontextualizing rules and practices. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 11(3), 267–281.
- Plowman, L., Stephen, C., & McPake, L. (2010). *Growing up with technology: Young children learning in a digital world*. Milton Park, OX/New York: Routledge.
- Pomerantz, A. (1988). Offering a candidate answer: An information seeking strategy. *Communication Monographs*, 55, 360–373.
- Sacks, H. (1995). *Lectures on conversation: Volumes 1 & 2*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Schegloff, E. (2007). *Sequence organization in interaction: A primer in conversation analysis* (Vol. 1). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Schegloff, E. A., Jefferson, G., & Sacks, H. (1977). The preference for self-correction in the organization of repair in conversation. *Language*, 53(1), 361–383.
- Schutz, A. (1967). *The phenomenology of the social world* (G. Walsh, & F. Lehnert, Trans.). London: Heinemann.
- Stivers, T., & Sidnell, J. (2005). Introduction: Multimodal interaction. *Semiotica*, 156(1/4), 1–20.
- Thorpe, K., Hansen, J., Danby, S., Zake, F. M., Grant, S., Houen, S., et al. (2015). Teachers, teaching and digital technology: Reports from the early childhood classroom. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.ecresq.2015.04.0>.
- Wohlwend, K. E. (2009). Early adopters: Playing literacies and presenting new technologies in print-centric classrooms. *Journal of Early Childhood Literacy*, 9(2), 117–140.
- Wolfe, S., & Flewitt, R. (2010). New technologies, new multimodal literacy practices and young children’s metacognitive development. *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 40(4), 387–399.

Christina Davidson Charles Sturt University, Wagga Wagga, NSW, Australia

Dr. Christina Davidson is a senior lecturer in the School of Education, Charles Sturt University. Her research researches young children’s activities at home, preschool, and in the early years of schooling.

Susan J. Danby Queensland University of Technology, Kelvin Grove, QLD, Australia

Dr. Susan Danby is Professor in the School of Early Childhood and in the Children and Youth Research Centre at Queensland University of Technology. She publishes in qualitative research, helpline interaction, and classroom interaction.

Karen Thorpe Queensland University of Technology, Kelvin Grove, QLD, Australia

Dr. Karen Thorpe is Professor in the School of Psychology, Queensland University of Technology. She researches the effects of early experiences, in home and education settings, on child learning through large-scale longitudinal studies and observational designs.

Chapter 13

Empowering Preservice Teachers to Design a Classroom Environment That Serves as a Third Teacher

Katherina Danko-McGhee and Ruslan Slutsky

Abstract Creating a multimodal nurturing environment that promotes learning is one of the most important considerations for teachers when planning a curriculum. This chapter focuses on ways to empower preservice teachers to design a quality learning environment for young children. Carefully prepared environments nurture critical thinking skills. They are designed in a provocative kind of way to encourage a child to learn and can entice a child to look and ponder and become engaged in discovery, problem solving, and creative thinking. Two approaches of preparing preservice teachers to think about the learning environment as the *third teacher* are shared with implications for teacher preparation programs. One approach was to provide a theoretical foundation along with a hands-on experience where students had the opportunity to design an environment as a *third teacher*. The second approach involved students in discussions to form a theoretical foundation, similar to the first approach, but they did not have an opportunity to design an environment.

Keywords Classroom environment • Aesthetics • Third teacher • Reggio Emilia

Introduction

With each passing year, more and more children are spending time in group care outside the home. Children who are entering preschools and childcare centers are there because their parents work. The amount of time parents spend at work limits the amount of time they have to interact with their children on a daily basis.

K. Danko-McGhee (✉)
First Encounters, LLC, Toledo, OH, USA
e-mail: firstencounters4babies@gmail.com

R. Slutsky
University of Toledo, Toledo, OH, USA
e-mail: ruslan.slutsky@utoledo.edu

Subsequently, this leads to children spending more time with adults and caregivers who are not related to them.

In 2011, 32.7 million children in the United States were in some form of child-care (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015). These findings are not limited to the United States but are true internationally as well. For example, according to UNICEF data, 50 % of the world's children are enrolled in some form of pre-primary care (UNICEF, 2015). With so many children enrolled in preschools and childcare centers, the question of quality in these settings becomes vital. Childcare quality is not only important to parents but to educators and policy makers because research has found that a high-quality experience has a more positive impact on children's overall development (Barnett, 1995; Brooks-Gunn et al., 1994; Burchinal, Campbell, Bryant, Wasik, & Ramey, 1997; Feagans & Appelbaum, 1995; Lamb, 1998; Ramey & Ramey, 1998; Roberts, Rabinowitch, Bryant, & Burchinal, 1989).

Research on childcare quality has often focused on teachers as the cornerstone of the quality debate; suggesting that high-quality teachers, those with an educational background in early childhood or a related field, have classrooms that rate higher with respect to overall classroom quality (Phillipsen, Burchinal, Howes, & Cryer, 1997). Teacher knowledge of early childhood education and development, without question, is an important factor in determining the overall quality of a classroom and the impact that it has on learning and development. High-quality and developmentally appropriate early childhood classrooms expose children to nurturing relationships and appropriate early learning experiences. Children who are exposed to a poor quality childcare environment are less likely to be prepared for school and more likely to have a negative impact on their socio-emotional development (Committee on Early Childhood, Adoption and Dependent Care, 2005). In addition, infants and toddlers who are at risk often receive poor quality childcare that may stifle their development and learning potential therefore resulting in poor cognitive, social, and emotional development (Cohen & Ewen, 2008).

In this chapter, we want to take a look at quality experiences for young children based on the type of environment that teachers create. These quality environments become the cornerstone in which actual learning and social experiences take place. The more teachers understand early childhood development and practice, the more likely they are to engage children in an environment that is stimulating, challenging, and allows children to take on the role as constructors of knowledge. An environment that allows for these types of experiences itself becomes a teacher. In this chapter we will refer to this concept of the environment as third teacher (Cadwell, 1997).

Understanding the Meaning of the Environment as Third Teacher

How to create a nurturing environment that promotes learning is one of the most important considerations for teachers when planning a curriculum. Such an environment, as viewed in the Reggio Emilia approach, is where physical space nurtures

concentration, creativity, meaning making, and motivation to independently learn and explore (McKellar, 1957). According to Rinaldi (1995), children are considered to be naturally curious and resourceful:

...children can best create meaning and make sense of their world through living in complex, rich environments which support complex, varied, sustained, and changing relationships between people, the world of experience, ideas and the many ways of expressing ideas. (Cadwell, 1997, p. 93)

In Reggio Emilia schools, “it is understood that the environment should support the work and interest of the children without constant adult guidance and intervention” (Wurm, 2005, p. 40). Learning can be enhanced when teachers make choices about how to design learning environments. This enables teachers to support children’s independent explorations and creative problem solving that enhances opportunities for engagement in rich meaning making experiences.

Classrooms as third teachers are set up to invite conversation, exploration, and collaboration. There is attention to design and placement of objects to provide a visual and meaningful context. The objects within the space are not simplified, cartoon-like images that are assumed to appeal to children, but are “beautiful” objects in their own right (Tarr, 2001). Natural and manufactured materials are aesthetically displayed in transparent containers, many of which are set upon mirrors to provide multiple vantage points in order to engage children. The work of children, both in visual images and in text format, is highly regarded and is on display throughout the school for all to view. Children can revisit their work to reflect upon previous learning that has taken place. An environment set up as a third teacher fosters revisiting experiences and sets the stage for continuous learning that the teacher does not need to regulate. By designing environments this way, we provide children with experiences that allow them to explore multiple perspectives and to reconstruct knowledge based on continuous exploration.

Carefully prepared environments nurture critical thinking skills. They are designed in a provocative kind of way to encourage a child to learn and can entice a child to look and ponder and become engaged in discovery, problem solving, and creative thinking. The teacher’s charge is to provide these materials to invoke thought that will set the stage for constructive thinking. The child then uses these materials as a language to communicate a thought or idea.

The environment as the third teacher is grounded in the educational philosophy of John Dewey and the constructivist learning theory of Lev Vygotsky (Malaguzzi, 1998).

Constructivists believe that learning is accomplished through exploring, experimenting, and manipulating objects or materials. This theory directly relates to the development of creative thinking and the necessity for active participation in the process. Using the constructivist theory as a basis for environmental design, the classroom should contain a variety of materials that can be explored and combined in many different ways. (Isbell & Raines, 2003, pp. 15–16)

The Reggio Emilia environment, as previously described, does just as Isbell and Raines (2003) suggest. However, it is important to bear in mind that how the environment is prepared is driven by the teacher’s image of the child and his/her

knowledge of early childhood education and development. In Reggio, the child is highly regarded, respected, and is viewed as: intelligent, curious, interested in engaging in social interactions, capable of constructing his/her own learning, and eager to interact with everything that the environment has to offer (Gandini, 1998). If a teacher does not operate within this framework, then the environment can be designed to be stifling and condescending in as much as it:

...isolates particular aspects of a culture which simplifies visual forms, and protects children from the outside world. 'It's visual aesthetic reflects mass marketing and craft store culture. It does not challenge children aesthetically to respond deeply to the natural world, their cultural heritage, or to their inner worlds. (Tarr, 2001)

In our observations of early childhood classrooms in the USA and around the world, we have found them to be more teacher directed. Materials for the environment tend to be mass-produced. For example, teachers purchase posters, images of mass media icons, and letters of the alphabet, rather than empowering children to create or be inspired to design their own environment. A paradigm shift in thinking must take place in order to understand and be able to design suitable environments for young children. What better place for this to occur than in methods classes for early childhood education preservice teachers.

Creativity, Aesthetics, and the Environment as a Third Teacher?

Young children seem to be naturally inclined to be creative (Isbell & Raines, 2003; Torrance, 1969; Williams, 1982). They have a zest for exploring new materials and are not afraid to use them in innovative and unique ways. This, of course, is provided that their environment supports these explorations. Jalongo and Stamp (1997) suggest that to nurture creative responses from young children, they must have a supportive environment that allows for investigation where they can freely pursue their own answers. Therefore, it is essential that teachers provide open-ended explorations for young children. However, in reality, this is not always the case. Children are often in learning environments that are not aesthetically pleasing and do not nurture creative thought (Tarr, 2001).

Kerka (1999) suggests that stimulating environments that nurture creativity provide the necessary resources and time for investigative play and experimentation. A nurturing environment is one in which children are free and motivated to make choices and to explore for answers without feeling threatened or intimidated. Duffy (2002) adds that:

The way in which we organize and use the available space inside and out is crucial in creating opportunities for children to express their creativity...the range of resources and organization we provide will determine what and how the children can create and how creative they can be. (p. 105)

However, we should also remember that a stimulating and creative environment is aesthetic as well. Schirmacher (2006) notes that it is a basic human instinct to

have aesthetic experiences and to appreciate the world. In this chapter, we are defining aesthetics as a sensory response to something that is liked. An aesthetic response is a sense of pleasure that is triggered by viewing a pleasing image or object. According to the marketing research of Tinmannsvik and Bjelland (2009), “for the child to take aesthetic interest in an object...it is important that it offers some kind of appealing sensory stimuli” (pp. 376). Broudy (1988) further adds that everyone engages in aesthetic experiences. An aesthetic moment “...is not limited to things in galleries and museums” (Eisner, 1992, p. 5). Therefore, if the environment is made conducive to allow for such experiences, aesthetic moments can occur in common everyday places, such as classrooms.

Duffy (2002) believes that creativity and imagination are often linked with aesthetics. Taking this point a step further, Eisner (1972) refers to “aesthetic organizing” which

...is characterized by the presence in objects of a high degree of coherence and harmony... the overriding concern is in the aesthetic organization of qualitative components. Decisions about the placements of objects are made through what may be called a qualitative creativity. (p. 220)

The aesthetic way materials are presented to children will determine how creatively they can use them in their given environment. The more aesthetically and creatively materials are displayed in the classroom, the more intrigued children may be to use and explore them. McKellar (1957) reinforces this point by noting that the way a space is aesthetically organized can assist in concentration and can increase one’s motivation to work in creative ways. These types of settings can also further the opportunity for children to construct knowledge and revisit previous learning experiences.

Eyestone-Finnegan (2001) also sees the importance of a creative and aesthetic environment and suggests that it should be considered as a third teacher, where images and objects are displayed that relate to the interests of young children. Gandini (1998, 2002) echoes those thoughts and adds that environments and the way they are set up by teachers should become invitations for exploration and construction of knowledge. As a promoter of the Reggio Emilia philosophy, she too sees the environment as a third teacher, where the environment itself supports the learning process because the teacher may not be available to support or scaffold learning at a particular time.

Designing an Environment That Can Serve as a Third Teacher

In order for children to be creative, teachers must model creative behavior (Schirrmacher, 2006). One way to model creative behavior is through the design of the teaching/learning environment. If a teacher bears in mind the importance of the environment as the third teacher, this will help with the selection of materials and how they are arranged. Remember that the environment as third teacher must provoke children to want to learn and explore. Therefore, just making materials available for children is not enough. The teacher must take the time to speculate how the

children may react to certain materials and then display them accordingly. For many teachers, this requires a paradigm shift in thinking. Instilling this new way of thinking should begin with preservice teachers. This was done during one academic year with two separate courses at a university.

We wanted to look at two approaches with regard to the environment as third teacher and what type of experience would impact the preservice teachers the most. One approach was to provide a theoretical foundation along with a hands-on experience where students had the opportunity to design an environment as a third teacher. The second approach involved students in discussions to form a theoretical foundation, similar to the first approach, but they did not have an opportunity to design an environment. As a result of our literature review, our driving criteria for this project included construction of knowledge, nurturing creativity, open-ended exploration, and the aesthetic preferences of children.

First Approach

Kathy Danko-McGhee, as the professor of an art methods class for early childhood education majors, uses her expertise in art and early childhood education to educate students about the important role that art experiences play in the lives of young children. Before the students arrived for the new semester when this project began, the classroom environment was thoughtfully prepared. Because the classroom is housed in a museum setting and also serves as a learning environment for young children, care was taken to prepare the environment for both children and preservice teachers. There was a concerted effort to design learning experiences that related to the museum collection. Learning areas were set up around the room. Each one focused on a different work of art. Materials were displayed to provoke children to use them in creative ways while making their own connections to the art reproductions displayed. The puppet theater (Fig. 13.1) is one example of this.

A large painting reproduction from the museum collection, *The Architect's Dream* by Thomas Cole, served as the background scenery. Postcards of people and animals portrayed in other paintings in the museum were made into puppets. These cutout characters were attached to the end of wooden dowel rods. Children could then stand on a small bench behind the theater. From above, the rod puppets could be placed on the stage in front of the art reproduction. Using the background scenery as a guide, children were free to create their own story with the puppet characters. For a more detailed account of this prepared environment, see Danko-McGhee (2009).

When early childhood undergraduate students arrived in the fall to a class that met for 3 h once a week for a total of 16 weeks, they were given a pretest questionnaire to determine what they knew about the learning environment and how it can serve as a third teacher (see Tables 13.1, 13.2, and 13.3).

The Pretest Questionnaire included the following questions:

1. Is the learning environment important for young children? (Yes, No)
2. The early childhood classroom environment should be inviting. (Yes, No)



Fig. 13.1 Puppet theater at Family Center

Table 13.1 Student responses to pretest survey regarding the learning environment for young children $n=20$

Criteria for a quality learning environment	Student responses in percentages
Learning environment is important for young children	100 % (20) ^a
Environment should be inviting	10 % (2)
Environment should be bright and colorful	70 % (14)
Children’s artwork and other art work should be displayed	5 % (1)
Environment should be creative	5 % (1)
Environment should provide multisensory experiences	10 % (2)

^a() indicates the number of students

Table 13.2 Student awareness of the environment as third teacher $n=20$

Student awareness of:	Unfamiliar	Somewhat familiar	Familiar
The environment as third teacher	85 % (17) ^a	15 % (3)	0 %
Reggio Emilia approach	65 % (13) ^a	1 % (1)	34 % (6)

^a() indicates the number of students

Table 13.3 Student self conception $n=20$

Students felt they had:	Yes	Some	Very little	None
Artistic ability	0%	5% (1) ^a	95% (19)	0%
Creative skills	0%	5%(1)	95% (19)	0%
The ability to create a Reggio-inspired environment	0%	0%	10% (2)	90%(18)

^a() indicates the number of students

3. The classroom environment should be bright and colorful. (Yes, No)
4. Children's artwork and other art work should be displayed in the classroom. (Yes, No)
5. The early childhood classroom environment should be creative. (Yes, No)
6. The early childhood classroom environment should provide multisensory experiences. (Yes, No)
7. The early childhood classroom environment should serve as the "Third Teacher." (Unfamiliar, Somewhat Familiar, Familiar)
8. I am aware of the Reggio Emilia approach. (Unfamiliar, Somewhat Familiar, Familiar)
9. Do you feel that you have artistic abilities? (Yes, Some, Very Little, None)
10. Do you have creative skills? (Yes, Some, Very Little, None)
11. Do you have the ability to create a Reggio-inspired environment? (Yes, Some, Very Little, None)

Their responses indicated that while they thought that the learning environment was important for young children, they were unfamiliar with the concept of environment as third teacher and did not feel confident that they could design an appropriate environment for young children.

As the semester continued, students were asked to explain how their classroom environment challenged them to think and then to conjecture about how young children might react to this space. There were many discussions about Reggio Emilia and the environment as third teacher. Students were required to read *In the Spirit of the Studio* (Gandini, Hill, Cadwell, Schwall, & Vecchi, 2005). This further helped with students understanding of the environment and the aesthetic arrangement of materials. A DVD from the North American Reggio Emilia (2005) entitled *North American Reggio-inspired Environments*, was shown to the class for further inspiration. This DVD showcases Reggio-inspired environments across the United States and provides many good examples of the environment as third teacher. Students were also shown slides of environments from the Reggio Emilia schools in Italy.

Much time was spent discussing children's graphic and aesthetic development and ways to meet their needs in developmentally appropriate ways, which included safety concerns and issues of sequential skill development, such as hand-eye coordination, fine and gross motor, visual discrimination, social, and sequencing skills. Brain research supports the principles of developmentally appropriate practices that include meaningful experiences matching the child's level of development. "The best learning for young children is active, hands-on, meaningful, integrative, and

responsive” (Isbell & Raines, 2003, p. 19). Additional discussions included explorations of various art media and how to use them in creative ways that facilitate meaning making with young children. A concerted effort was made to educate preservice teachers about the dangers of restrictive or stifling art experiences. The goal was always to promote how students think about ways they could engage children in meaning making experiences. As Szekely (1991) points out, “...learning the right technique, following the correct procedure, can be self defeating” (p.13). Schirmacher (2006) follows this line of thought by adding that, “...an emphasis on conformity and convergent thinking can kill the creative spirit” (p.13). Numerous examples of creative versus uncreative art experiences were demonstrated and discussed with the students. An example of a creative experience would be a free-hand drawing as opposed to an uncreative experience of coloring in a coloring book page. Creative experiences enhance children’s meaning making because they encourage observation, critical thinking and problem solving, and construction of knowledge.

After being provided with the necessary theoretical underpinnings, university students were challenged to make some changes and additions to our classroom learning environment. Using the classroom designed by the professor as a launch pad, they had to come up with their own ideas on how to extend upon the design in order to improve the classroom environment. Students divided themselves into work groups of four and decided on an area of the classroom environment that they wanted to change or enhance. Students were instructed to come up with a plan that included their ideas and the means by which they would implement them. The professor offered continuous feedback. In the true spirit of creativity, students had to be original, fluent, and flexible (Torrance, 1969) as they reworked their ideas into viable solutions. As Jalongo and Stamp (1997) note, “Truly creative teachers know how to establish the conditions and provide the opportunities for their students to be creative” (p. 128). These preservice teachers also had to bear in mind that with regard to creativity,

...the more experiences a child has with people, places, or materials, the more possibilities will exist for use in creative activities. Young children’s worlds should be filled with interesting experiences that build on their level of development. These should include many opportunities to experiment and combine a variety of materials and objects in different ways and should allow them to make choices. (Isbell & Raines, 2003, p. 24)

With this in mind, students had to make sure that the environment they designed met the following criteria: it had to be aesthetically appealing, and the experiences they were providing would provoke critical thinking in young children, would be open-ended, would promote multimodal meaning making, and would nurture creativity. Experiences also had to focus on artworks housed in the museum, because the classroom is in a museum setting and had to reflect that. Students were encouraged to use works already selected by children in the museum as their favorites in a study done prior to this project (see Danko-McGhee, 2006). Starting with the interest of the child was important. Once plans were finalized, students were ready to actually become environmental designers. Two of their designed environments will be discussed.

Project One: Literacy Area

In order to appeal to children's aesthetic preferences, students from the class made the existing literacy area more comfortable by adding assorted large blue pillows for little children to sit upon while reading. These pillows were made with a variety of aesthetically appealing fabrics that were carefully chosen to enhance this learning space using the blue color scheme. Small journals with blank pages were made using wall-paper scraps for the covers. Sumptuous papers were selected to enhance the aesthetic appeal. The preservice teachers believed that placing these attractive journals in this area would serve as a provocation for children to write in them. The journals were placed in a basket along with writing tools. A small note invited children to write.

To provide children with open-ended experiences, a mailbox was placed on one of the bookshelves in this area to encourage children to write letters to the people in the painting that was hanging in this space. The students left an example of a letter in the mailbox that children could use as a reference. As a result, the children were able to construct a written letter in any way that they desired, which tapped into their creativity to experience literacy on their own terms through rich, open-ended explorations. The painting was a reproduction of *Two on the Aisle* by Edward Hopper (1927). In this painting, three people, a man and two women, are guests at the theater. One woman, beside the man, is getting ready to sit down in her chair. The other woman is seated in her chair and is reading the theatrical program, which she holds in her hands (Fig. 13.2).

Fig. 13.2 Portion of literacy area that invited children to write letters to people in the painting



Empty picture frames were placed on the blackboard to encourage children to utilize their creativity by drawing pictures within the frame and then to tell their story. Through our observations, children already had demonstrated that they enjoy drawing on the chalkboard and talking about their drawing with others. So, this activity capitalizes on that interest by helping the child to focus more on a work of art that was displayed nearby. They also could respond to it in various ways. One example is that they could draw images on the blackboard within the picture frame provided.

Project Two: Monet's Water Lilies

Another area displayed a reproduction of Monet's (1919) *Water Lilies*. The students who were working on this project had a very difficult time. They were trying to create an aesthetically pleasing environment for the children by using colors from the Monet painting. Their vision was to cover the wall with paper that was cut out as a large pond of water lilies. They then wanted to paint the pond using the colors of Monet by "smudging" the paint onto the paper to create an "impressionistic" look. They really struggled with this until a technique was demonstrated to them so that they were successful in achieving the effect that they desired. The final product served as an aesthetically pleasing backdrop (Fig. 13.3).

They then created puzzles by cutting up small reproductions of Monet's *Water Lilies*. These puzzle pieces were placed on a magnet board hanging on the wall. Children were to put the puzzles together and could view the reproductions of *Water Lilies* displayed in this area as a guide to correctly assemble the puzzle. In order to help facilitate the children's construction of knowledge, the puzzles were partially

Fig. 13.3 Portion of pre-service teachers' *Water Lilies* learning center



pieced together and served as a prompt for children to complete. Children's books about Monet were included in this area, along with painting supplies for children to create their own lily ponds on paper.

Reflections About the Learning Experiences

These are two examples (literacy and water lilies) of how these preservice teachers began to think in terms of setting up an environment as the third teacher by providing materials that would provoke thought, exploration, and creativity in young children. While the water lilies' environment was the most aesthetically pleasing, it fell short of meeting the other assigned criteria in that it did not provide open-ended experiences or foster critical thought like the literacy area did.

For example, there is less critical thought involved when children are asked to correctly replicate the painting by putting together a puzzle. However, another experience in this area provided children with materials to paint their own version of a lily pond, a more open-ended experience. Nevertheless, students could have challenged themselves by designing more creative and open-ended experiences for young children.

At the conclusion of this course, preservice teachers were given a posttest questionnaire to determine how their thoughts on the environment had changed.

They were asked the following questions on the posttest questionnaire:

1. Experiences provided for children should be open-ended? (Yes, No)
2. The learning environment should be aesthetically pleasing? (Yes, No)
3. The learning experience helped you to be more thoughtful? (Yes, No)
4. I felt challenged when designing the environment? (Yes, No)

After their experience of designing their own learning environment, students felt that the environment should inspire and sustain innovative thinking and should be aesthetically pleasing. While they felt that the opportunity was very challenging, it was useful in preparing them for designing their future classrooms (see Table 13.4).

Table 13.4 Students' impressions about designing an environment – post test survey $n=20$

Criteria for a learning environment	Percentage of responses
Experiences should be open-ended	75 % (15) ^a
Aesthetically pleasing	70 % (14)
Learning from the experience	Percentage of Responses
Helped them to be more thoughtful	65 % (13) ^a
Felt challenged when designing the environment	100 % (20)

^a() number of students responding

Most of the students believed that the experiences that young children engage in should be open-ended and provided in an environment that is aesthetically pleasing. As a result of the course, most of the students felt that learning by doing helped them to become more thoughtful about how they would arrange their own classroom environments. All of the students felt that creating an environment during the course was challenging but rewarding because it provided them with an authentic experience in which to practice and create learning opportunities that enhance meaning making for children.

Second Approach

Through a mutual passion for the Reggio Emilia approach, we (Ruslan and Kathy) thought about how we could collaborate to teach a class together. We worked to create a new course on the Reggio Emilia approach, where Ruslan, with his expertise in early childhood, organized activities for the first week of class. These activities focused on the history of Reggio Emilia, the image of the child, the environment as third teacher, etc. Kathy, with a background in art education, formulated the hands-on experiences for the second week of class that merged the Reggio Emilia theory into practice. This class met every day (Monday thru Saturday) for 3 h during a 2-week period.

The second approach was conducted with 26 students who enrolled in a 2-week summer course that we both created on the Reggio Emilia approach. Students were asked to complete a pretest to determine what they knew about the learning environment during the first day of class. All 26 students completed the pretest. Their responses indicated that while they thought that the learning environment was important, they were unable to articulate the important role that a quality environment plays in the learning process. A few themes arose as students discussed their initial thoughts on environment: (1) importance of materials, (2) organization of space, (3) providing learning opportunities, and (4) centers. Of the four themes, the first, importance of materials, was the one that students believed was the most important one to implement. Some of the student responses for all four themes are listed below:

Theme 1: Importance of Materials

The environment plays a vital part in sustaining children's creative, innovative thinking and learning; children are predominantly visual learners; children learn by exploring their environment and touching, using, and looking at everything. Around them, children need plenty of materials in the environment as well.

Provide them with a lot of different materials to use and lots of opportunities to use them. Leave the material use open-ended and not give the children specific instructions.

Theme 2: Organization of Space

Having an organized classroom also plays a major role in the learning experiences of children. Allowing the children to have an abundance of materials and space to work gives them a variety of options that will allow them to express themselves in different ways.

It is important to keep the classroom as organized as possible. All materials should be labeled and there should be a spot for everything in the room. When a room is organized children can better express themselves.

Theme 3: Providing Learning Opportunities

Provide experiences and materials the child would not encounter in his/her home or neighborhood.

Offer opportunities for choice, risk-taking, collaboration with peers and mentors in a challenging environment.

Theme 4: Centers

The teachers can create an open, flexible, fun and creative environment that promotes learning by setting up different learning stations such as dramatic play, sand/water table, reading area...also, have developmentally appropriate toys easily accessible for the children.

The classroom can be inviting and warm, with many areas to look at and have students work to help them along. But if it is plain and unchanging all year, then it can be hard on the child, and definitely uninspiring.

New Theme: Environment as Third Teacher

Throughout the first week of the 2-week course, students were provided with many examples of how the environment can serve as a third teacher. It was stressed that a quality environment should be able to teach a child even when the teacher is not readily available. Through interaction with the environment, the children could engage in an authentic and meaningful learning experience, whether alone or with peers. Along with our class discussions, students in this second approach, as in the first approach, were required to read *In the Spirit of the Studio* by Gandini et al. (2005), watch a DVD from the North American Reggio Emilia (2005) entitled, *North American Reggio-inspired Environments*, and were shown slides on Reggio Emilia school environments on the first day of class (after the pretest). The second week of class included the same type of experiences found in the first approach with the only exception being that students did not have an opportunity to create an environment.

During the last day of class, a posttest was given to all 26 students to see if their perceptions of the environment had changed. All 26 students completed the posttest. After reviewing the posttest, a new theme emerged, environment as third teacher, as well as some returning ones: importance of organization of the environment and materials. Student comments about the environment at the conclusion of the 2-week course demonstrate these themes.

Environment as Third Teacher

A classroom environment is the third teacher and should be created by the children. Hands-on activities and projects will inspire critical thinking, as well as, creative and innovative thought process.

The environment can play a huge role in a child's learning ...in fact, it is the third teacher! A beautiful environment lets a child feel valued. Supplies, layouts, etc. serve as protagonists for learning, sparking interest & curiosity.

The classroom environment would inspire creative and innovative thinking because it can be filled with so many open-ended experiences. The classroom can serve as the third teacher. It can open up so many experiences for the children to explore and learn from. When children are given time to explore and learn on their own they will be able to use their critical thinking skills.

Organization of Space

A classroom can inspire interest by having the environment revolve around them, children need to feel a sense of ownership and feel they belong to class, they will then be more interested in being there, thus artwork and projects put up by students around the room will motivate children to want to be at school and learn that the environment is a teacher.

A classroom environment that allows children to explore themselves creates better time management because the teacher does not always have to get supplies.

If the classroom is set up with interesting materials and children have time and support to explore and interact with materials, peers, and teachers, quality learning experiences can happen.

The classroom environment plays a major role in the learning process for young children. In our schools today, many classroom environments are full of secular materials that were bought at a store. There is absolutely no creativity or independent thought. In order for our classrooms to inspire children, I believe we must allow the children to control the environment. The work of the children, and their creative ideas should decorate the classroom. If we give the children this freedom, they will sustain innovative thinking and independent thought.

Importance of Materials

Display work that the children have done around the room. Include materials for the children to use around the room. Rather than having coloring books and commercially made decorations, include blank materials to inspire the students' interest.

When children have multiple languages to work with that are laid out for them to use, they have the freedom to explore. When they have the freedom to explore different materials freely, children use their critical thinking skills. When teachers give children the materials to use to solve problems, it stifles their creativity and their critical thinking. Children need to be able to choose their own materials so they can utilize their critical thinking skills, which they NEED in Early Education!! Lots of materials and open space is what they need to flourish!

Lots of materials, anything that you find: paint, clay, glass, recyclables, hair gel, demonstrates the idea of the 100 languages. Children have many tools at their disposal to express how they feel or what they want to get across. Without different materials or supplies, children are limited and their learning experience will not be rich.

In the pretest questionnaire, students focused on the very basic elements in the environment, such as materials and space, without any true regard for setup, aesthetics, or quality. In the posttest questionnaire, students, after the 2 week course, became astute to the aesthetic appeal that materials can have on the environment itself and how they can promote quality learning engagement. Additionally, students began thinking of the environment and describing it as a third teacher. Even when students described the environment as an organization of space in the posttest questionnaire, their perspectives of that space shifted from a more teacher-directed to a child-directed space. Additionally, the importance of materials was reconceptualized in the posttest questionnaire remarks as well, with students paying more attention to the quality of materials that should be present that best address children's interests. The paradigm shift that students experienced in this 2-week course suggests their new understanding that the environment as a third teacher goes well beyond just the set up. It is how children are allowed to interact with the environment and the materials in it that is the key.

Conclusions

We found that both approaches, talking about the environment versus actually designing one, can be used to provide meaningful experiences for preservice teachers interested in exploring the complexity of the learning environment and its impact on children. However, we feel that providing preservice teachers with the opportunity to design an environment is a much more powerful approach. This adds a hands-on opportunity that assigned readings and class discussions lack. By actually allowing preservice teachers to manipulate the environment, they are engaging in critical thought processes that allow them to make decisions and changes to a real environment rather than a hypothetical one. Anytime teacher educators can implement a hands-on model for preservice teachers to interact with authentic experiences (such as environmental design), it offers them a better transition and scaffold when they actually have to implement this type of experience in their own classrooms.

Teachers who understand the importance of letting children explore and construct knowledge, while serving as a facilitator in the learning process, are critical to the establishment of a quality learning environment. A teacher who chooses to set up the classroom environment as a third teacher allows children to have open-ended explorations of materials with time to test their ideas. Teachers must also be willing to be co-learners in the learning process and the construction of knowledge. For teachers who need guidance in providing art experiences for children, art works displayed in the classroom can serve as launch pads for learning. Posters of art reproductions can be purchased at many art museum gift shops online. It is recommended that children's aesthetic preferences be kept in mind when selecting images for them, such as bright; bold; colorful; shiny; animals, etc. (Danko-McGhee, 2006).

Although we no longer teach the 2-week Reggio course together, Ruslan is currently teaching an online course on the Reggio Emilia approach. In that course, he

has modified how students are approaching and understanding the meaning of environment as a third teacher. They are no longer designing their own classroom environment, but rather are asked to visit an existing environment and think about ways to transform the space so that it aligns more with Reggio's construction of what an environment should look like for young learners. The product of their work is presented in a paper format.

References

- Barnett, W. S. (1995). Long term effects of early childhood programs on cognitive and school outcomes. *The Future of Children*, 5(3), 25–50.
- Brooks-Gunn, J., McCarton, C. M., Casey, P. H., McCormick, M. C., Bauer, C. R., Bernbaum, J. C., et al. (1994). Early intervention in low-birth-weight premature infants: Results through age 5 from the Infant Health and Development Program. *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 272(16), 1257–1262.
- Broudy, H. (1988). Aesthetics and the curriculum. In W. Pinar (Ed.), *Contemporary curriculum discourses* (pp. 332–342). Scottsdale, AZ: Gorsuch Scarisbrick.
- Burchinal, M. R., Campbell, F. A., Bryant, D. M., Wasik, B. H., & Ramey, C. T. (1997). Early intervention and mediating process in cognitive performance of children of low-income African American families. *Child Development*, 68(5), 935–954.
- Cadwell, L. (1997). *Bringing Reggio Emilia home: An innovative approach to early childhood education*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Cohen, J., & Ewen, D. (2008). Infants and toddlers in childcare. *Zero to three policy brief*. Retrieved 28 Aug 2015 from www.main.zerotothree.org/site/DocServer/Infants_Toddlers_In_Child_Care_Brief.pdf?docID=6561.
- Committee on Early Childhood, Adoption and Dependent Care. (2005). Quality early education and childcare from birth to kindergarten. *Pediatrics*, 115(1), 187–191.
- Danko-McGhee, K. (2006). Favorite artworks chosen by young children in a museum setting. *International Journal of Education Through Art*, 3(1), 223–235.
- Danko-McGhee, K. (2009). The environment as third teacher: Pre-service teacher's aesthetic transformation of an art learning environment for young children in a museum setting. *International Art in Early Childhood Journal, Research Journal*, 1, 1–17.
- Duffy, B. (2002). *Supporting creativity and imagination in the early years*. Buckingham, UK: Open University Press.
- Eisner, E. (1972). *Educating artistic vision*. New York: Macmillan Company.
- Eisner, E. (1992). Arts can counter school reforms standardizing aims. *ASCD Update*, 34(5), 5.
- Eyestone-Finnegan, J. (2001). Looking at art with toddlers. *Art Education*, 54(3), 40–45.
- Feagans, L., & Appelbaum, M. (1995). Validation of language types in learning disabled children. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 78, 358–364.
- Gandini, L. (1998). Educational and caring spaces. In C. Edwards, L. Gandini, & G. Forman (Eds.), *The hundred languages of children: The Reggio Emilia approach – advanced reflections* (pp. 161–178). Greenwich, CT: Ablex.
- Gandini, L. (2002). The story and foundations of the Reggio Emilia approach. In V. Fu, A. J. Stremmel, & L. T. Hill (Eds.), *Teaching and learning: Collaborative explorations of the Reggio Emilia approach* (pp. 13–22). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Merrill Prentice Hall.
- Gandini, L., Hill, L., Cadwell, L., Schwall, C., & Vecchi, V. (2005). *In the spirit of the studio*. New York: Teacher's College Press.
- Isbell, R., & Raines, S. (2003). *Creativity and the arts with young children*. New York: Thompson Delmar Learning.

- Jalongo, M., & Stamp, L. (1997). *The arts in children's lives: Aesthetic education in early childhood*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
- Kerka, S. (1999). *Creativity in adulthood*. Washington, DC: Office of Educational Research and Improvement. ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED429 186.
- Lamb, M. E. (1998). Nonparental child care: Context, quality, correlates. In W. Damon, I. E. Sigel, & K. A. Ranninger (Eds.), *Handbook of child psychology* (Child Psychology in Practice, Vol. 4, pp. 73–133). New York: Wiley.
- Malaguzzi, L. (1998). History, ideas and basic philosophy: An interview with Lella Gandini. In C. Edwards, L. Gandini, & G. Forman (Eds.), *The hundred languages of children: The Reggio Emilia approach – advanced reflections* (2nd ed., pp. 49–98). Greenwich, CT: Ablex.
- McKellar, P. (1957). *Imagination and thinking: A psychological analysis*. London: Cohen and West.
- North American Reggio Emilia Alliance. (2005). North American Reggio-inspired Environments. NAREA.
- Phillipsen, L. C., Burchinal, M. R., Howes, C., & Cryer, D. (1997). The prediction of process quality from structural features of child-care. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 12(3), 281–303.
- Ramey, C. T., & Ramey, S. L. (1998). Early intervention and early experience. *American Psychologist*, 53(2), 109–120.
- Rinaldi, C. (1995). Projected curriculum constructed through documentation – Progettazione. In C. Edwards, L. Gandini, & G. Forman (Eds.), *The hundred languages of children*. Greenwich, CT: Ablex.
- Roberts, J. E., Rabinowitch, S., Bryant, D. M., & Burchinal, M. R. (1989). Language skills of children with different preschool experiences. *Journal of Speech and Hearing Research*, 32(4), 773–786.
- Schirmacher, R. (2006). *Art and creative development for young children*. Clifton Park, NY: Delmar Learning.
- Szekely, G. (1991). *From play to art*. Portsmouth, NH: Heineman.
- Tarr, P. (2001). Aesthetic codes in early childhood classrooms: What art educators can learn from Reggio Emilia. *Art Education*, 54(3), 33–39.
- Tinmannsvik, L., & Bjelland, H. V. (2009). Children and aesthetics: Exploring toddlers' aesthetic experiences of everyday products. *International Journal of Product Development*, 9(4), 370–388.
- Torrance, P. (1969). *Creativity*. Belmont, CA: Fearon Press.
- U.S. Census Bureau. (2015). *Child care an important part of American life*. Retrieved 28 Aug 2015 from www.census.gov/how/pdf/child_care.pdf
- UNICEF. (2015). *The state of the world's children in numbers*. Retrieved 28 Aug 2015 from www.unicef.org/Sowc2014/numbers/document/english/EN-FINAL%20Table%205.pdf
- Williams, F. E. (1982). Developing children's creativity at home and school. *G/C/T Gifted, Creative, and Talented*, 24(1), 2–6.
- Wurm, J. (2005). *Working in the Reggio way: A beginner's guide for American teachers*. St. Paul, MN: Redleaf Press.

Katherina Danko-McGhee First Encounters, LLC, Toledo, OH, USA

Dr. Katherina Danko-McGhee is currently the early childhood art education consultant at First Encounters. Previously she served as the Director of Education at the Toledo Museum of Art and as a Full Professor and Early Childhood Art Education Coordinator at the University of Toledo. Published nationally and internationally, Dr. Danko-McGhee's main focus in research has included young children's aesthetic preferences, art and literacy, as well as aesthetic learning environments.

Ruslan Slutsky University of Toledo, Toledo, OH, USA

Dr. Ruslan Slutsky is a professor of Early Childhood Education at the University of Toledo, Judith Herb College of Education. Dr. Slutsky has published both internationally and nationally on such topics as art and literacy, the arts and standardization, and critical thinking through the arts. He is co-author of the book, *The Impact of Early Art Experiences on Literacy Development*.

Chapter 14

Stretching Toward Multimodality: The Evolution and Development of a Teacher Educator

Kelli Jo Kerry-Moran

Abstract Changes in classrooms begin with changes in teachers. Infusing multimodal conceptions of literacy into the early childhood classroom depends upon developing teachers who understand, value, and can nurture multimodal ways of making meaning in young children, but teacher development is the purview of teacher education. This chapter explores the role teacher educators play in preparing preservice teachers to create classrooms that support multimodal literacy development. It describes the decade-long evolution of a teacher educator striving to promote multimodal literacy in preservice and in-service teachers, including barriers teacher educators face and approaches to overcoming these challenges.

Keywords Teacher education • Multimodal • Multiliteracies • Meaning making • Reflection • Preservice teachers • In-service teachers • Arts integration

My first school memory is sitting in the kindergarten classroom staring at an extra large sheet of manila-colored construction paper on which I was to write the numbers 1 through 100 in order. The paper is filled to about number 75 with a gaping empty space between this number and the 100 written in the bottom right hand corner. My stomach aches because I am afraid I will make a mistake and the teacher will know yet again that I am not as smart as my classmates. My next memory is also from kindergarten, but we have a substitute teacher on this day and get to color an Easter bunny so big that he has to be printed on two sheets of paper, which we cut and paste at his waist to make a large rabbit. I love to draw and add extra details such as yellow and purple stripes on his plain trousers and coat with spring flowers at his bunny feet. The substitute teacher praises my rabbit so generously that the memory engraves into my young mind as the only time I have been good at something that matters to a teacher.

K.J. Kerry-Moran (✉)
Indiana University of Pennsylvania, Indiana, PA, USA
e-mail: kjkmoran@iup.edu

Teachers set the tone for student's learning experiences at school. These recollections are my only memories from kindergarten, and while they have implications for appropriate assessment in early childhood, teacher disposition, and other factors, they also speak to the role teachers play in nurturing and acknowledging young children's meaning making. My earliest years in public school were difficult. I was among the youngest in my class and struggled with much of the academic work, feeling insecure and worthless as I compared myself to my higher-achieving peers. The arts were the only place I excelled and became an early refuge. Fortunately, I had wise parents who recognized my needs, valued artistic expression, and provided me with out-of-school experiences that helped me to develop skills in the arts and confidence that eventually led to success, even in things that mattered at school. It is my goal, as a teacher educator, to prepare teachers who also recognize the multiliteracy needs of young children, value artistic learning, and expand what counts as meaning making in school and the world.

This chapter explores the teacher educator's role in preparing preservice teachers to create classrooms that support multimodal literacy development and meaning making for young children. The discussion is framed through my reflections over a more than decade-long evolution as a teacher educator striving to promote multimodal literacy in preservice and in-service teachers. I describe this journey, including my questions, struggles, and the understandings I have developed along the way as I attempted to infuse multimodality into the teacher education classroom. This chapter uses a chronological structure to explore my voyage of infusing multimodality into my practice as a teacher educator. I begin with a brief explanation of why multimodal literacy should be included in teacher education and describe my path to teacher educator. Next, I elaborate on five phases of my development as a teacher educator striving to include multiliteracies in the teacher education classroom. While this chapter outlines my development as a teacher educator, I am an unfinished work. Indeed, the fields constituting multiliteracies are varied and complex so that a life of learning and growing does not result in completion so much as it is an endless journey.

Why Multimodal Literacy in Teacher Education?

Teachers play a crucial role in helping children to develop the skills of making and sharing meaning. Despite trends to bridge school and society, children do not necessarily connect their out-of-school lives with what happens in school. While educators lament this disconnect when it comes to themes such as inspiring children to complete homework or valuing the mastery of math facts, educators can be just as guilty as children in not considering the connection between the world outside school and learning priorities in the school setting. In short, the divide between school and culture may be built by teachers as well as children.

How meaning is created and communicated is rapidly changing with the expansion of technology and the figurative shrinking of the world. However, the world has always been multimodal, and adults and children alike are confronted with multi-

modal texts (Serafini, 2014; Siegel, 2012). From medieval cathedrals with their stained glass windows, holy music, sermons, and religious rituals to ancient traditions with storytellers, dancers, masks, and costumes, children have been challenged to find and make meaning beyond the literal interpretation of texts, events, and rituals surrounding them. While some members of contemporary society may believe that the multimodal texts of the past are ancient relics, the necessity of multimodal understanding is increasing. Children live in a world in which the ways that people make and share meaning are expanding exponentially. Popular and social media such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter facilitate blending modes to broadly share multimodal understandings in ways that earlier generations could not fathom. Serafini argues that children “encounter visual images accompanied by written language and design elements throughout their daily lives. To be successful, they need to expand their repertoire of strategies for making sense of these complex, multimodal ensembles” (p. 2). Schools ought to be places where children learn sense-making and meaning-making strategies. Children need teachers to prepare them to make meaning of the world and its complexity, and teachers need teacher educators who can groom them to meet these challenges.

My Path to Teacher Education

The choices we make in life are a consequence of our previous experiences. My decision to become a theater artist and then a teacher educator is no exception. I fell in love with theater in my elementary school cafeteria. My rural elementary school was one of the stops for a traveling children’s theater company that came once a year to put on a performance for the entire school. The children gathered into the cafeteria and sat cross-legged in classroom groups on the cold linoleum floor for each play. I still remember the magic of those performances with colored lights and brightly costumed actors making the cinder block walls of the cafeteria fade into a fairy tale forest. While I do not remember the plot of the stories they told or the substance of the plays, their performances engaged every aspect of my mind and body so that I became part of the drama.

My excitement over theater continued such that my parents enrolled me in a community children’s theater program. My family lived a long distance from town, but my mother drove me to theater practice each week where I learned basic drama skills and performed in plays with other children. The theater program gave me confidence and was one of the reasons I eventually caught up in my studies and excelled in school. I continued classes at the children’s theater and participated there through high school. As a young adult, I earned two university degrees in theater and worked in the field, eventually directing a children’s theater company in another state that, like the performers that inspired my childhood, toured to local schools. Theater played a crucial role in my becoming a confident and accomplished adult rather than the melancholy child that pervades my kindergarten memories. Although it sounds dramatic, I believe I owe most of the accomplishments of my adult life at least in part to the confidence and skills I developed through participating in the arts.

After completing university training, I worked in children's theaters and community arts organizations teaching young children art and performance skills. My interest in teaching grew as I began teaching preschool and I wanted to be involved in school settings. As I transitioned into early childhood education, theater and the arts remained central to my goals and identity. In fact, I came to teacher education specifically because I wanted to contribute to keeping the arts in schools. I believed then, as I do now, that the demise of arts in education places society and individuals at risk. The arts help us to understand circumstances beyond our personal experience. They can nurture a sense of caring for ourselves and others, and for young children, like my kindergarten self, the arts are a way of making meaning and belonging in the world (Haggerty, 2010). I thought that becoming a teacher educator would allow me to work toward stemming the tide of the arts' demise from public school.

Eventually I enrolled in a doctoral program in teacher education. My mind was flooded with new learning in philosophy, pedagogy, research methods, and clinical approaches; however, the arts were not part of my experience. I found ways to incorporate artistic approaches into my studies, but despite the many connections I saw within education, learning, and the arts, the doctoral curriculum and the expectations of work and study in my program pushed artistic ways of thinking and learning aside. The arts remained important to me personally so I often pushed back, but the extent to which I used art as a way to understand the world diminished.

Teacher Educator Stage One: Barely Surviving

I started work as a teacher educator in the early 2000s and immersed myself in understanding my new role in teacher training and working toward tenure. I included the arts in most of my classes, but often their inclusion was hurried in my attempt to address a large body of content. The first year went by with my remembering that I wanted to encourage arts in education but not knowing how to go about doing it better. The stresses of being new university faculty got in the way as well: committee work, teaching new courses, long commutes to reach off-campus teaching assignments, adapting to a new campus culture, and the endless grading constantly demanded my time and pulled my focus. I lost sight of why I'd come into teacher education as I was overwhelmed by both professional responsibilities and the needs of supporting and nurturing my young family. Working toward tenure, finding affordable quality day care, and trying to publish were paramount concerns so that meaningful integration of the arts into my courses felt like an unreachable luxury.

A turning point for me came when I supervised student teachers in a district that was undergoing severe budget cuts, including eliminating all visual arts teachers from its elementary schools. Classroom teachers were expected to provide visual arts instruction once a week to meet state education guidelines, but most fulfilled this responsibility poorly or not at all, using the allotted time for additional instruction in reading, writing, or mathematics. Preparing preservice teachers to include

the arts in the classroom was the only way I knew to address this problem so I resolved to improve my teaching of visual arts skills in one of my courses. Mindful that many classroom teachers eliminated the arts when tasked with teaching them, I determined to model ways to integrate the arts into the curriculum that would address both art standards and standards in other content areas.

One of the challenges I faced was teaching a single course that was designed to address the entire spectrum of visual and performing arts with young children. Certification guidelines in my state required very little arts instruction for classroom teachers, and I was responsible to teach visual art, music, drama, and dance, as well as appreciation of aesthetic experiences: all in one three-credit course. The task seemed impossible. I divided the course into units focusing on each art form and tried to integrate art forms as much as possible: for example, having students draw a picture or create a mental image of how a piece of music made them feel. In retrospect, the beginnings of multimodal teaching are apparent in these early approaches, but my focus was mostly limited to the arts simply as a way to express emotions rather than a way to make meaning. Of course, expressing emotions is part of meaning making, but the activities in my class did not expound or expand upon multimodality; they were limited to brief expressions of feelings. After completing each emotive art activity, I moved on to something else.

Teacher Educator Stage Two: Introduction to Multimodality

Up to this point in my teaching, I had included the visual and performing arts in my instruction; however, I doubted the effectiveness of my teaching of visual art, dance, and music. My approach was to complete short art activities appropriate for the early childhood classroom as well as reading about and including some lecture on elements and principles of visual art. While my students were engaging in art processes through short in-class art activities, they were not applying what they learned about elements and principles of visual art to their art making or to the art making of their future students. My approach did not constitute teaching art. Likewise, as a theater artist, I knew the frustration I felt when a person untrained in my field unwittingly assumed that teaching creative drama to preservice teachers and young children did not require knowledge and skills but could be done by any person willing to implement a few theater exercises into the classroom. I began to feel hypocritical, even fraudulent, in teaching something I did not believe I clearly understood.

I struggled with knowing how to proceed. The first task seemed to be gaining expertise in every art's area, which for me meant studying visual art, music, and dance. Yet learning more about each art form invariably led me to understand that I knew even less than I thought. I felt hopeless to achieve consequential learning gains in all these content areas and despaired that if I worked really hard, I might feel proficient by the time I retired. Multimodality is based upon the premise that humans make meaning of the world in many different mediums or modes. A mode is a method of creating or expressing meaning (Serafini, 2014) and includes a myr-

riad of forms within and across cultures such as film, dance, or writing. Kress (2000) contends that each mode works in different ways and holds diverse communicative potential. Consequently, education should encourage development in many modes to give children and adults as many tools as possible to explore, experience, and share ideas. Although I was unaware of multiliteracies at this time, I recognized that meaningful teaching of content in any art form required knowledge of the skills, processes, and thinking inherent in that art form. Applied to my own life and professional development, this meant that I needed to develop skills in modes for which I lacked proficiency. I did everything I possibly could to increase my skills including attending workshops on integrating visual arts and dance into classrooms, securing a small grant to purchase music composition software suitable for young children, and singing in my church choir, but these efforts seemed miniscule in light of the enormity of the mission.

At times I was tempted to give up. Looking back, I can see that I had not begun to attempt good arts integration, let alone multimodal approaches; however, the task of increasing my expertise in the various art forms while also fulfilling my many other responsibilities overwhelmed me. I struggled to hold the long view that the only way to fail was to quit. If I could keep moving forward, even my small efforts would eventually grow to make big differences in my teaching and my students' learning. I remembered my earliest memories of schooling and how my participation in the arts gave me purpose and provided me with tools to express myself and even to learn. I drew resolve from these memories that other children needed the arts as much as I did. Like a conservationist would feel compelled to protect an endangered plant or animal, I felt compelled to preserve the arts in young children's educational experiences. This conviction moved me forward when the many demands on my time and the hopelessness that sometimes ensued conspired to hold me back. Butler (2007) describes how the poet, William Blake, evoked biblical imagery in naming the discouraging voice inside him as the "accuser." I struggled with my own inner accuser in the form of self-doubt that I wasn't talented enough to teach my students to make meaning through the various art forms. Like my kindergarten self, staring in anguish at my incomplete test paper, I feared failure and the resulting exposure to myself and others that I was not good enough to meet the task.

It was during this period of questioning my professional practice that I learned about multimodal literacy. The New London Group had met for the first time in 1996 (The New London Group, 1996) and coined the term multiliteracies. In the decade that followed, many researchers and educators were intrigued by the concept of multimodality and interest in this approach to understand and nurture literacy grew. However, little changed in how literacy was approached in school settings (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009). It is easy to develop confusion about an approach that is newly formed, and I erroneously equated multimodality with arts integration, seeing it as another strategy for infusing the arts into the curriculum. Arts integration, arts education, arts-based learning, and other arts-focused initiatives are not the same as multimodal literacy, but the overlap between multimodality and the arts can seem so great that teacher educators may easily confuse and conflate the two.

Teacher Educator Stage Three: Early Attempts at Multiliteracies

My first large-scale attempt at multimodal literacy was a project addressing both history and art standards through a study of cave paintings. Paper replicas of cave paintings from around the world were created with the help of a student art major, and I created a scenario that placed my students into research teams composed of anthropologists and art historians who were tasked with analyzing four newly discovered cave paintings from different parts of the world. The student groups used their “expertise” as anthropologists to examine the painting for clues it provided about the life and culture of the people who made it. Visual arts “experts” guided an analysis of the use of elements and principles of visual art that had been presented in class. Anthropologist/artist teams noted similarities and differences in the cave paintings across cultures and then made connections between themselves and these ancient people by creating cave paintings recording phenomena important in their lives.

Throughout the activity we discussed how it could be adapted for use with young children and how an integrated curriculum is strongest when children engage in deep and sustained learning that focuses equally on all included content areas. My goal was curriculum integration, but I wanted my preservice teachers to experience how visual art can be used by children and adults both to interpret the world around them and to communicate ideas to others. Meaning making was not a term I used with my students at that time, but they were making meaning out of replicas of cave paintings and using their knowledge of world history and the elements and principles of visual art to create images designed to communicate their understandings.

First Attempt Successes and Failures

The learning outcomes were hopeful but mixed. Students did seem to understand what an integrated curriculum was and how it could result in children learning equally in both art and another content area. They also understood the way the perspectives of artist and anthropologist informed one another. These perceptions were evident in the preservice teachers’ discussion of the replicas of the cave paintings and what the paintings indicated about the lives of the people who had created them. The future teachers used art terms in talking about the paintings, noting the use of lines and colors, but they did not apply these principles by using them in designing their own paintings. Furthermore, they were limited in how they could express themselves through paint because they did not know how to use the medium. I felt helpless in this regard because I could not imagine where or how I could find the time to learn to paint. The project was a step in the right direction as far as showing how art could be integrated with other subjects and how images can be used for interpretation, but my students and I were limited by our lack of skills to manipulate

paint in conveying ideas. Resources were also an issue as I had no funds to purchase supplies and relied upon items I could get for free or with my own money.

I repeated this unit three times in subsequent semesters and tried several adaptations including using different sizes and types of brushes, having student groups use crayons rather than paint, and requiring students to devote more time to making their modern cave paintings within small groups. These adaptations did help the learning experience to run more smoothly. Providing more time for the groups to create their own paintings did encourage more focus on meaning making through art; however, students still struggled to apply principles of visual art to their own art making.

Beginning Approaches to Visual Literacy

I began incorporating visual literacy into other teacher education courses that did not have an arts focus. For example, students in my child development class looked through magazines designed for adolescents to discern the messages about body image, gender roles, and sexuality communicated through both the images and the words. Similarly, these preservice teachers were assigned to go to a toy store and evaluate toys in terms of their promotion of aggression and sexuality. Tasks related to visual literacy included how masculine, feminine, and androgynous toys are differentiated from each other, how color is used to segregate toys, and speculating as to why certain toys are placed at the ends of aisles or more prominently displayed in the store. While these activities did require preservice teachers to consider how meaning is communicated through visual images as well as the written word, my teaching did not include any instruction in how to read or respond through images. Rather, my teaching helped preservice teachers to notice images that had previously been taken for granted, but it did not teach skills beyond simply taking care to notice what is easily dismissed in daily living. The skill of noticing the obscure is worthwhile. Eisner (2002), Dewey (1934/1980), and Greene (1995) have written extensively about art's ability to help us notice what is often unseen and see differently what is taken for granted. However, my goal was to help preservice teachers make meaning by reading images and manipulating or creating images, a goal that was only partially fulfilled.

Teacher Educator Stage Four: Getting to Know Multimodality

At about the time I was puzzling over how to help my students both read and write with visual images, I came to realize that I unwittingly ignored the importance of visual learning and visual literacy in much of my own teaching. A typical classroom approach for me was mostly verbal and project based, rarely including visual images except in a superficial way. Pictures, diagrams, charts, graphs, or other visual

elements were largely absent unless the content of my lessons clearly suggested them. I co-taught a course with a colleague who, despite having no arts background, always included visual images. At first I thought her extensive use of visuals only satisfied her personal preferences, but I watched students' reactions to her teaching and noticed that preservice teachers often talked more about the pictures and images she used than other parts of the lesson. Moreover, my colleague not only used images to supplement text but often used images as text. Nearly 10 years later, I vividly remember some of the pictures she employed to convey concepts and ideas. Within a few months of teaching with her, I began to suspect that my exclusion of imagery not only neglected an important teaching tool, it devalued visual forms of learning. This suspicion was confirmed when I repeatedly witnessed the images she used in her teaching helping preservice and in-service teachers to make meaning. Clearly, I was missing out on a powerful tool.

Incorporating pictures, diagrams, and other images into my teaching became a goal. My initial attempts were both exciting and frustrating because I had to think about pictures and images as part of a social semiotic system including everything that makes meaning (Adami & Kress, 2014). It would usually take me a long time to find the right photograph or visual image to convey a concept, and I often fell short in preparing for classes. However, I did not give up. My circumstances were not ideal. Teaching loads at my university were heavy, and I had no opportunity of support for professional development. I focused on what I could do, and that was to make small changes, a little at a time. My teaching in all courses gradually grew to include at least some visual imagery as part of my meaning-making system. I adjusted my thinking so that I thought about each course as a long-term commitment, something I would teach year after year, even if I had no guarantee that I would teach the course again. Consequently, my goal was to make at least one major improvement to arts instruction each semester with the aim of eventually completely upgrading my skills as I revamped courses.

Teaching Visual Literacy Approaches

This change in attitude gave me hope that I could someday have the skills needed to help preservice and in-service teachers make meaning through the many modes of human learning and understanding. Hope became confidence to more explicitly teach visual literacy strategies in one of my courses. This first attempt was an exercise adapted from Molly Bang's (2000) *Picture This: How Pictures Work*, a book about how images are used in picture books to communicate meaning. Bang, picture book author and illustrator, discusses how visual images communicate ideas and elicit feelings in viewers. I adapted an example Bang uses throughout the book of creating illustrations for the familiar tale of Red Riding Hood. The activity was divided into two parts with the first part writing a poem and the second illustrating the poem through cutouts. The preservice teachers were divided into small groups, and each group was given a copy of the text from Little Red Riding Hood based on

a version by Charles Perrault (2009). Students were asked to write a short poem describing what they viewed as the essence of the Little Red Riding Hood story. They read their poems aloud to the group and then the group discussed the best liked parts of the poems and used these findings to write a group poem.

The next part had students illustrating the beginning, middle, and ending of their poem. Each illustration was to clearly communicate the emotive content of that section. I had previously taught elements and principles of composition by adapting examples from Bang's (2000) book and the way these elements work together to communicate feelings and ideas in visual images. While I had introduced students to elements and principles of visual composition in the cave painting experience, I had only told my students what these principles were, not how they worked to communicate meaning. The Red Riding Hood activity was my first attempt at teaching my students how visual images really worked. Groups worked within the parameters of using geometric or organic shapes and only three colors in addition to the background color. Each group was directed to follow a sequence that included experimentation, reflection, and revision before finalizing an image.

While students' illustrations indicated understanding of how images are used to elicit intellectual and emotional responses in viewers, students struggled with using geometric shapes, often failing to learn from the experience of critiquing and revising their illustrations because they spent so much time trying to create the perfect cutout of Red Riding Hood. Consequently, many groups did not complete all three illustrations and did not experience the contrast in how different compositional choices influence the feelings created by images. The desire to make a realistic Red Riding Hood hindered the group's ability to experiment with using lines, colors, and angles to elicit an emotional response and suggest meaning. Nevertheless, gains had been made, and it was the closest I had come to being satisfied with my teaching of visual literacy.

Making Meaning Through Tableau

I built on this success by developing an exercise using tableau, a theater method, to explore similarities and differences in themes of cross-cultural folk tales. Tableau uses frozen images created by small groups of people to communicate a single idea, moment, or action from an event or story (Kelin, 2005). This technique is not exclusive to creative drama but has its roots in Europe and the various performing and visual arts including painting, dance, photography, and theater so it is well suited for a multiliteracies approach. Preservice teachers were divided into groups and given a picture book based on a particular culture's version of a common folktale such as Cinderella. After providing instruction in tableau and various ways to communicate meaning through this medium, each group read its story and created a tableau to represent the beginning of the story, another for the middle, and a final tableau for the ending.

This activity required the preservice teachers to make interpretations based on their prior knowledge, cultural understanding, and analysis skills. They considered what values and experiences were reflected in the text as well as the values and experiences they held that facilitated particular interpretations of that text (Crumpler, 2006). Creating a tableau helped students explore key parts of the story and was a method to push their comprehension of the story to more sophisticated levels. These learning gains were due in part to tableau's requiring students to embody their understandings and think symbolically through building a tableau. Performing the tableaux inspired discussion on how various cultural groups had interpreted stories similarly and differently since each group had a version of the same story but from a different culture. Students declared afterward that they were amazed at how creating and analyzing the stories through tableau had pushed them to deeper understandings of the folk tales and the cultural values inherent in them.

Mistakes and Missed Opportunities

While this period of my teaching carried more success in including multimodality in the teacher education classroom, I still made many mistakes. First, while I had started using visual images extensively in my teaching, I rarely incorporated visual literacy into courses that did not include an arts focus. My understanding of multimodality in general and visual literacy in particular was growing, but I seemed to almost instinctively equate multimodality, particularly visual literacy, with art.

Additionally, missed opportunities resulted when I failed to see other ways that preservice teachers could and should make meaning in the classroom. For example, following a week-long study of infant development in my child development course, students worked in pairs to develop two pamphlets for new parents, one focusing on prenatal development and the other on infancy, outlining ways prospective parents can encourage optimal development in their child. In retrospect, I see this as a prime exercise for making meaning through both words and images. But I focused only on words and did not provide resources or encouragement to include visual information despite the many charts, graphs, and images I had used to teach these concepts to my students. Shifting away from bringing the arts into the classroom to bringing arts into multimodal literacy was a change in both my thinking and my practice.

Similarly, I had the opportunity to work with a professional artist as part of an artist residency with a co-teacher from another department. After years of struggling to develop my own visual arts skills, it felt like a blessing to have an artist in the classroom who could address visual art from a position of experience. The 10-week residency in abstract painting incorporated several arts projects, and preservice teachers learned a great deal about abstract art. Student reflections indicated improved attitudes toward art and painting in general and increased confidence incorporating visual art into the early childhood classroom. However, the residency did not emphasize visual literacy, and much of the meaning making the preservice teachers did through their art was not discussed through a multiliteracies lens.

I enjoyed working with the artist and learned much from her, but in looking back over the experience, I realize that a professional artist is an expert in his or her particular art form but not necessarily in multimodal literacy or in meaning making with young children. I depended too much on the expertise of the artist, again, equating multimodality with artistry, to help my preservice teachers develop multiliteracies.

Teacher Educator Stage Five: Developing Confidence

By 2015, I felt confident enough to include multimodal literacy as one of the major components in a graduate literacy course. The class included a mixed group of educators with backgrounds in basic and higher education. A text focused entirely on visual literacy (Serafini, 2014) was used. One of the major assignments in the course was to compose a philosophy of literacy in the form of a comic strip or short graphic novel. Students studied the Serafini text on reading the visual in preparation for this assignment with the main focus to fully use both graphic images and words to communicate the philosophy. The assignment was evaluated on the extent to which visuals were at least as important as text and the effectiveness with which students used design and visual composition elements and principles. This assignment was a stretch for me as a teacher educator and a huge leap for the students enrolled in the class. With only one exception, students spent a great deal of time on the assignment. Two individuals created intricate and original illustrations with pencil and ink drawings, several other students used web-based services to create cartoons using symbols and characters important to their philosophical approach, and one student created a short graphic novel.

I took great care in the course to engage students in discussion of how modes interact together to convey meaning. Scholars contend that discussion is essential to making multimodal concepts explicit and to learning deeply (Albers, Holbrook, & Harste, 2010; Andersen, Boeriis, Maagerø, & Tønnessen, 2015; Cazden & Beck, 2003; Siegel, 2012), and I had not included enough discussion in my previous attempts to infuse multimodality into my teaching. As we pored over the literacy philosophy assignment, students remarked on how difficult it had been to communicate through both words and images. Several students admitted that when they were first given the assignment, they thought it would be incredibly easy, almost a throwaway; however, in actuality, the task had been challenging, requiring several hours planning how to use visual images to convey concepts and ideas the students were used to portraying through words. Furthermore, the assignment was not simply an exercise in saying the same thing with a visual image that could be said with words; it was an exercise in thinking visually.

As we discussed each literacy philosophy, it was clear that using images resulted in some concepts being portrayed differently, and perhaps more strongly, than they would have been through words alone. Language is only one part of a social semiotic system through which we communicate (Jewitt, 2011) so there are many modes, or ways, to make meaning, and overlap exists between modes. Some things can be

“said” with one mode and not another, while other things are communicated through the synergy of modes working together (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009). Areas of overlap and dichotomy among modes were apparent in the students’ philosophy representations. The images evoked intense emotional responses such as a lone child standing in a trash-strewn hovel or suggested an intriguing nuance as in a student portraying himself as a superhero.

While the literacy philosophy helped students develop skills in creating a multimodal ensemble using both image and text, other aspects of multimodality were explored as well. In particular, we watched and analyzed the short documentary film, *Powerful Medicine: Simply Magic* (Spencer, Chacha, & Chacha, 2014). This film was selected for its high quality as evidenced by the many awards it had received and because its recent release made it unlikely that any of the students had already seen it. I introduced the film by describing it as a documentary and prompting the students to first focus on what was going on in the film and to try to avoid leaping directly to deep interpretation. After this initial viewing, we discussed the film and our impressions, moving into an exploration of specifically those things we had heard and seen in the film to give us those impressions. The questions I used were derived from Visual Thinking Strategies developed in conjunction with New York’s Museum of Modern Art (Yenawine, 2013) and introduced to me in an arts integration workshop I had attended years earlier through Gateway to the Arts, an organization that has since merged with the Pittsburgh Cultural Trust in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA.

Visual Thinking Strategies is a method for developing critical thought through observing, discussing, and analyzing art works (Yenawine, 2013). Originally developed for use with visual art, this approach can be adapted for other artworks including film. The method includes using three questions: “What is going on in this [film]? What do you [see/hear] that makes you say that? What else can you find?” (Visual Thinking Strategies, n.d.). Students are asked to closely observe the artwork and to support their comments with things they saw or heard in the film. The teacher or facilitator remains neutral during the discussion and rephrases student’s responses to demonstrate that each person is heard and understood (Visual Thinking Strategies, n.d.)

I challenged the students to deliberate the different modalities used in the film and how those modalities worked together to create a powerful text. We considered the use of sound, music, and image, first listening to part of the film without the visual images and next watching the film without the sound. Visual imagery was complex in this film with some portions in black and white and others in color. I began to think multimodally rather than as someone teaching visual art or even visual literacy and drew upon my background in theater and film. We discussed framing and placement of the subject within the frame and the influence of culture and Western writing conventions in our tendency to feel more settled when images move from left to right or are grounded in the frame. Throughout all the analysis activities, it was clear that the film was not merely a visual art form, an aural art form, or a performance art form but a multimodal text. While the students were aware that film is multimodal, most had not considered how the sum of the modali-

ties in film is more than its parts. These exercises in deconstructing the film and considering the various modalities in isolation from one another enriched the group's understanding of how those modalities work together to create and even manipulate meaning making.

The course concluded with literature circles in which two out of three groups focused on multimodal literacy. One circle centered on comics and graphic novels and read McCloud's (1993) book describing the visual design conventions of comics. Another group explored meaning making in the early childhood setting through Narey's (2009) book on multimodality. At the end of the course, when students revisited the definition of literacy they had prepared before our first class meeting, their views of what counts as literacy had expanded to include modes of meaning making beyond traditional reading and writing. In particular, they viewed images as an integral component of contemporary literacy.

I was pleased with the progress made in the course while recognizing areas for improvement. Modalities such as music and movement did need better exploration, but I had focused on meaning making beyond visual literacy and used my background in theater and film to make connections across disciplinary boundaries. Teacher educators can build upon their strengths in areas such as literature, writing, mathematics, or virtually any field to do the same.

Conclusion

Changes in classrooms begin with changes in teachers. One of the great challenges to establishing arts-based learning and multimodal conceptions of literacy in the early childhood classroom is preparing teachers with the skills, knowledge, and commitment needed to infuse high-quality arts instruction and experiences into classroom settings. This is a long road to travel. Ironically, my struggle to incorporate multimodality into the teacher education classroom is documented in this chapter through the conventional literacy approach of writing. Furthermore, this book's appeal to teachers, policy makers, and other stakeholders to embrace multimodal literacies as meaning-making approaches for young children is made through the written word. Conventional literacy approaches dominate teacher education, yet I do not suggest that these approaches should be replaced. The call for multiliteracies is an entreaty for a more inclusive conception of literacy, one that recognizes the many ways human beings make meaning in the world. This chapter is not a call to diminish reading and writing and change which literacies and people are left out of the mainstream. These traditional literacies have served me well. I am not alone.

Most teacher educators have been successful in a world, and specifically in a profession, that privileges the written word over other forms of communication. While this privileging does not mean teacher educators are hostile toward multimodality, it does suggest that a multimodal conception of literacy, one that welcomes images, sound, and gesture under the literacy umbrella, includes modes that teacher educators might not be comfortable using, modes that many of us have forgotten as

they have laid dormant since our childhoods, and modes that we have little developed. It is not a stretch for most early childhood educators to acknowledge that participation in the arts is developmentally appropriate and valuable for young children, but bringing multimodal conceptions of literacy into teacher education requires the bold leap of conceding that skills in visual, audio, tactile, gestural, and spatial representation are as essential to preservice teachers' meaning making as written and oral language.

The final goal described in my last stage of development as a teacher educator is the drive to "do more in the future." This goal highlights the extent to which my journey to incorporate multimodality into the teacher education classroom continues. As a new teacher educator, struggling to keep my head above water, my aim was to integrate the arts into the curriculum in a way that supported state standards. Later I focused on preserving the arts in young children's educational experiences and helping preservice teachers to understand how art can be used by adults and young children as a meaning-making activity. A friend recently pointed out that these goals demonstrate an underlying tension between the practical concerns of "how" and "what" with the more theoretical concern of "why." How to incorporate multimodality into the classroom and which aspects of multimodality to include often dominated my thinking, but running through it all was a constant pull to understand and articulate why multiliteracies matter. "Why" is the crux of the issue. My primary goal as a teacher educator is not to teach art or even to teach multimodality; it is to teach future teachers to develop the capacities of young children to make meaning. The disciplines and ideas of art and approaches of multimodality are essential to this purpose, but they are ultimately tools for making meaning.

The timid kindergarten child who started this chapter yearned for acknowledgment that her artistic ways of exploring and expressing her world held value. I see this yearning in children of the present and future who need access to the full range of human possibilities for knowing and shaping the world. My kindergarten self, the little girl who could not perform the tasks that school valued, started her school journey as a struggling learner. Like the children Narey (2016) describes, she cultivated different ways for making meaning in the world. Decades later, I identify as well with the struggling teacher who is challenged to understand and implement multimodal literacy into the teacher education classroom. Perhaps the better choice for myself and other teacher educators is to embrace how I am both a struggling learner and a struggling teacher and take up the quest toward making meaning in every possible way.

References

- Adami, E., & Kress, G. (2014). Introduction: Multimodality, meaning making and the issue of "text". *Text & Talk, 34*(3), 231–237. doi:[10.1515/text-2014-0007](https://doi.org/10.1515/text-2014-0007).
- Albers, P., Holbrook, T., & Harste, J. (2010). Talking trade: Literacy researchers as practicing artists. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy, 54*(3), 164–171. doi:[10.1598/JAAL.54.3.1](https://doi.org/10.1598/JAAL.54.3.1).

- Andersen, T. H., Boeriis, M., Maagerø, E., & Tønnessen, E. S. (2015). *Social semiotics: Key figures, new directions*. New York: Routledge.
- Bang, M. (2000). *Picture this: How pictures work*. New York: SeaStar Books.
- Butler, T. (2007). *Getting unstuck: How dead ends become new paths*. Boston: Harvard Business School.
- Cazden, C., & Beck, S. (2003). Classroom discourse. In A. C. Graesser, M. A. Gernsbacher, & S. R. Goldman (Eds.), *Handbook of discourse processes* (pp. 165–197). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Cope, B., & Kalantzis, M. (2009). ‘Multiliteracies’: New literacies, new learning. *Pedagogies: An International Journal*, 4(3), 164–195. doi:10.1080/15544800903076044.
- Crumpler, T. P. (2006). Educational drama as response to literature: Possibilities for young learners. In J. J. Schneider, T. P. Crumpler, & T. Rogers (Eds.), *Process drama and multiple literacies: Addressing social, cultural, and ethical issues* (pp. 1–14). Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Dewey, J. (1934/1980). *Art as experience*. New York: Perigee.
- Eisner, E. W. (2002). *The arts and creation of mind*. New Haven, CT: Yale University.
- Greene, M. (1995). *Releasing the imagination*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Haggerty, M. (2010). Exploring curriculum implications of multimodal literacy in a New Zealand early childhood setting. *European Early Childhood Education Journal*, 18(3), 177–189. doi:10.1080/1350293X.2010.500073.
- Jewitt, C. (2011). An introduction to multimodality. In C. Jewitt (Ed.), *The Routledge handbook of multimodal analysis* (pp. 14–27). New York: Routledge (Original work published 2009).
- Kelin, D. A., II. (2005). *To feel as our ancestors did*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Kress, G. (2000). Design and transformation: New theories of meaning. In B. Cope & M. Kalantzis (Eds.), *Multiliteracies: Literacy learning and the design of social futures* (pp. 153–61). London: Routledge.
- McCloud, S. (1993). *Understanding comics: The invisible art*. New York: Harper Collins.
- Narey, M. J. (2009). *Making meaning: Constructing multimodal perspectives of language, literacy, and learning through arts-based early childhood education*. New York: Springer.
- Narey, M. J. (April, 2016). “Struggling learner”...or “struggling teacher”—implications of teacher education’s failure to prepare multi-literate practitioners. Paper presented at the meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Washington, DC.
- Perrault, C. (2009). *The fairy tales of Charles Perrault* (R. Samber, & J. E. Mansion, Trans.). Retrieved from <http://gutenberg.org/files/29021/29021-h/29021-h.htm> (Original work published 1922).
- Serafini, F. (2014). *Reading the visual: An introduction to teaching multimodal literacy*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Siegel, M. (2012). New times for multimodality? Confronting the accountability culture. *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*, 55(8), 671–680. doi:10.1002/JAAL.00082.
- Spencer, K., Chacha, M. (Producers), Chacha, M. (Director). (2014). *Powerful medicine: Simply magic*. Lynchburg, VA: Spencer Productions, Inc. and Hocus Focus, Inc.
- The New London Group. (1996). A pedagogy of multiliteracies: Designing social futures. *Harvard Educational Review*, 66(1), 60–92.
- Visual Thinking Strategies. (n.d.). *Method & curriculum*. Retrieved from <http://www.vtshome.org/what-is-vts/method-curriculum--2>
- Yenawine, P. (2013). *Visual thinking strategies: Using art to deepen learning across school disciplines*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press.

Kelli Jo Kerry-Moran Indiana University of Pennsylvania, Indiana, PA, USA

Dr. Kerry-Moran is an Associate Professor in Professional Studies in Education at Indiana University of Pennsylvania, USA, where she coordinates the doctoral program in Curriculum and Instruction and teaches courses in arts integration, research methodology, and curriculum. She is a former preschool teacher and has taught drama and other arts in various educational and cultural arts organizations.

Chapter 15

“Struggling Learner”...or Struggling Teacher?: Questions Surrounding Teacher Development for Multimodal Language, Literacy, and Learning

Marilyn J. Narey

Abstract When a child falls short of teachers’ perceptions of achievement, the label “struggling” is often applied and solutions are sought to address the young learner’s “deficiencies.” In this chapter, attention is focused upon teachers’ perceptions of the learner and the factors that contribute to these assessments. Viewing these concerns through selected critical lenses: twenty-first-century learning, social justice concerns, and pedagogical content knowledge, I argue that teachers’ negative perceptions of children’s achievement may be attributed, in part, to teacher education’s failure to prepare teachers who are literate in multiple modalities. As drawing, painting, and other visual arts experiences are common to most early childhood classrooms and as visual texts are critical to twenty-first-century learning, I focus my critique on early childhood teacher preparation and development in visual arts practice and pedagogy. Specifically, common “theories-in-use” regarding children’s visual texts (“art”) are examined, and the question is posed: *does teacher education adequately prepare early childhood professionals with the substantive arts learning needed to support young children in multimodal language, literacy, and learning?* Inverting the problem frame to position the adult as “struggling,” rather than the child, I suggest structures for critical review of early childhood teacher education programs and practices.

Keywords “Struggling learner” • Teacher education • Assessment • Deficit labeling • Social justice • Twenty-first-century learning • Multimodal • Espoused theories • Theories-in-use • Making meaning • Children’s art • Arts pedagogy

M.J. Narey (✉)
Narey Educational Consulting, LLC, Pittsburgh, PA, USA
e-mail: makemeaning@nareyed.com

Revisiting the Metaphor of “Seeing Hats”

“Is it a hill?” “Maybe... a snail?” “...melting ice cream?” “A hat?” Like the grown-ups who Antoine de Saint Exupéry (1943/1971) describes at the start of his classic tale, *The Little Prince*, my students (early childhood and elementary education majors) fail to decipher the image that I have scanned from the book and projected on the screen. I shake my head, feigning a hint of professorial concern at their inability to understand the child’s drawing, “Oh, my! It appears that we have some work ahead of us!” (Narey, 2009, p. 230)

In the 2009 edition of *Making Meaning*, I described my use of a metaphor drawn from de Saint-Exupéry’s popular tale: adults often see assumptions (hats) instead of children’s actual capacities and achievements (such as a child’s visual inquiries of how boa constrictors digest elephants). My ongoing use of the activity, wherein I ask my adult learners to identify the child’s illustration in de Saint-Exupéry’s (1943/1971) *Little Prince*, has been a provocative way to introduce the construct of making meaning. The activity challenges my adult learners’ notions of children’s “art” as we deconstruct the events: the child narrator’s encounter with the “magnificent picture in a book... of a boa constrictor swallowing an animal” (p. 3); followed by the child’s deep pondering of the text that leads him to wonder how a boa constrictor might digest a *really* huge creature; next, his drawing to figure out how this might look and desire to share the awesomeness of the phenomenon he has depicted with the grown-ups, asking if “the drawing frightened them” (p. 4); and, finally, the grown-ups’ responses to the child’s image (e.g., why should they be frightened by a hat?). During this activity, I explicitly draw out a crucial insight: the adults in [de Saint-Exupéry’s](#) story fail to recognize the child’s drawing as the visual traces of his critical thinking and meaning making, and they dismiss his drawing as irrelevant to “more serious” studies.

In essence, this story is a metaphor for the problem that we face in early childhood teacher education: a large majority of our early childhood education community maintains assumptions about art, language, literacy, and learning, and these unexamined beliefs greatly influence decisions they make about, and for, children. As I pose the question, “struggling learner”...or “struggling teacher?” I revisit the metaphor to ask all adults who work with young children, and particularly those who are responsible for teacher education, to consider whether their perspectives embrace children’s visual inquiries into such phenomena as “boa constrictors digesting elephants,” or are they indicative of a culture wherein adults only see hats?

Rush to Deficit Labeling

Within our monomodally focused educational culture, there are teachers, teacher educators, administrators, researchers, and other adults who rarely take the time to look past their uninformed perceptions of children’s visual productions and interpretations. Rather, these adults make judgments and label young children’s abilities based upon narrow verbal paradigms that dismiss other forms of knowing. Too frequently, children who do not meet these adults’ expectations are labeled “struggling

learners.” The adults then rush to correct the child’s proclaimed deficit, rather than take the time to look beyond the perceived deficiency to discover the children’s multimodal capacities and strengths – abilities that might surpass adults’ expectations for twenty-first-century knowledge and skills, but remain unrecognized because they do not conform to narrow perspectives for achievement within the favored modality. As Osterman and Kottkamp (2004) point out in their broader discussion of teacher reflection:

...we make assumptions about what we observed, often without further discussion with others and with no attempt to confirm our interpretations. From these observations, we draw conclusions that affirm our assumptions. The actions we finally take, the decisions we make, reflect these conclusions. In brief, we see the world as we want to see it and act accordingly...As a result, the assumptions that we draw may not be accurate, and the decisions that we make may be flawed. (p. 30)

“Struggling” Teacher, Administrator, and Teacher Educator?

In this chapter, I seek to address this label, “struggling learner,” which is often applied to children who do not appear to meet verbocentric standards of achievement by drawing attention to the adults who use this designation and to the assumptions or “common-theories-in-use” (Narey, 2009) that promote adults’ (mis)labeling of learners. Challenging the supposition that it is children who “struggle,” I flip the problem frame to suggest that it may be the adults: teachers, administrators, teacher educators, and others, who are “struggling” due to their lack of substantive pedagogical and practical preparation for multimodal learning. Specifically, within the focus of this volume, I concentrate on production and interpretation of visual textual forms. Citing the critical role of teacher education to twenty-first-century learning, and acknowledging adults’ long embedded assumptions about teaching derived from their 12 years in traditional classrooms (Dede, 2010), I purposely situate my critique in the context of teacher education to ask: *does teacher education adequately prepare early childhood professionals with the substantive arts learning needed to support young children in multimodal language, literacy, and learning?*

The Questionable Practice of Labeling Learners as “Struggling”

Every teacher must...by regarding every imperfection in the pupil’s comprehension, not as a defect of the pupil, but as a defect of his own instruction, and endeavor to develop in himself the ability of discovering new method...” (Tolstoy, 1967, p. 58)

As Tolstoy argues, if a child is not meeting expectations, we must look at the teaching and not assume that there is a “defect” in the learner. Yet, within the literature and, for some of us, within our own professional or personal experiences, we discover numerous accounts of children being labeled as deficient within teaching frameworks that privilege verbal modalities.

The concern for deficit labeling of children based upon monomodally derived assessment criteria is not new. Over 20 years ago, Janet Olson (1992) found that many students who are assigned to special education as “learning disabled” are visual learners who “do not respond to the traditional verbal approach to learning” (p. 114). Olson further noted the prevalence of boys and students of color among those labeled as “struggling.” Millard and Marsh (2001) cite similar findings, reporting that their research shows that boys experience more difficulty with a verbocentric curriculum than their female peers. They argue that the way to improve performance is to understand and respond to differences in modes of learning. Other researchers concur (Bearne, 2006; Fletcher, 2006), and some (Burke & Dunn, 2002; Gay, 2000) argue that instruction that is congruent with the multimodal backgrounds of students of color results in significant learning gains. All children benefit from a broader perspective (Hanafin, Shevlin, & Flynn, 2002; Johnson, 2003) and when schools adopt curricula and assessment practices that include attention to children’s nonverbal strengths, “those youth who experience substantial success are the very ones who’ve been labeled ‘struggling reader’ or ‘learning disabled’” (Siegel, 2006, p. 73). It is important to underscore here that these labeled children did not suddenly change, but rather, the adults’ perspectives of language and literacy changed, and thus, so did the adults’ perceptions of the children’s achievement.

When adults make efforts to understand children’s multimodal capacities, the focus is on learning, rather than remediation, on a child, rather than a deficit. Yet, despite more recent calls for broader perspectives of literacy by numerous scholars (see Harste, 2014; Janks, 2013; Siegel, 2012), and classic writings by educational theorists like Dewey and Eisner, teacher education programs typically perpetuate a verbocentric perspective that positions the child as “struggling,” when in reality, it may be that it is the teacher, administrator, or ultimately, as I posit in this chapter, the teacher educator, who “struggles” with literacy in visual, or other modes.

Defining a Problem Frame

Eisner (1994) points out that those of us who enter the field of education “have had years to internalize a set of expectations regarding what teachers do and what schools are like” (p. 6); therefore, “the most difficult task for educators may very well be relinquishing the yellow school bus mentality that conceives of both the purposes and the forms of schooling in terms conditioned by familiar and comfortable traditions” (p. 69). Dan Lortie (1975) refers to this phenomenon as “the apprenticeship of observation” (p. 61). Seemingly, it can also be a phenomenon applied to teacher education, wherein teacher educators also teach the way they were taught within their postgraduate contexts of university courses. Further, externally driven demands for accountability in pre-K through higher education have become entangled within the grids of all educators’ personal belief systems and, along with multiple other individual and societal factors, serve to complicate a definition of a specific problem frame for dealing with the deficit labeling of children who do not meet some adults’ verbocentric notions of achievement.

Without denying the complexities or importance of the numerous individual and societal influences on teaching, I propose that the problem of addressing verbocentric measures of achievement can be defined within teacher education. The context of preservice and in-service teacher development is a logical and accessible locus for reflection upon the pedagogy and practices that inevitably lead to the educational decisions made for young children in early learning settings across the globe. By focusing the problem within the pedagogy and practices of teacher education, we can begin to examine how to interrupt the culture of deficit labeling of children that has emerged from monomodally based assessment criteria, by setting up structures for critical review of teacher education program goals, juxtaposed against the reality of teacher education practices. As preservice and in-service teacher development programs engage in these reflective reviews, most likely they will uncover evidence of the “yellow school bus mentality” operating within their programs. As teacher educators, we need to attempt to “make sense,” to make meaning, of the texts of our interactions with preservice and practicing teachers, just as we ask these adult learners to make sense of their interactions with children (Narey, 2009). In the next section, I detail some contradictions that are commonly revealed in reflections on teacher education practices.

Goals, Commonly Espoused Beliefs, and Theories-in-Use

Most teacher education program goals are fashioned in response to accreditation standards put forth by professional and/or governmental regulatory bodies. For instance, as pointed out in a National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) (2009) position statement, a “large majority of programs at all degree levels (72–77 %) relied heavily on NAEYC standards to guide program quality and improvement work” (p. 9). As teacher educators, we must integrate established program goals with our own professional beliefs and values. Notwithstanding the infinite variables this takes into account as each of us develops our practice within the diverse contexts in which we work, when we engage in critical reflection, we must not only be aware of contradictions between these program goals and our own personal beliefs and values but also develop a consciousness of potential differences between our espoused beliefs and our theories-in-use (Narey, 2008, 2009). As Argyris and Schön contend:

When someone is asked how he would behave under certain circumstances, the answer he usually gives is his espoused theory of action for that situation. This is the theory of action to which he gives allegiance, and which, upon request, he communicates to others. However, the theory that actually governs his actions is this theory-in-use. (Argyris & Schön, 1974, pp. 6–7)

What we say we believe can sometimes be quite different than what we actually do in practice. Therefore, a first step in reflection for teacher educators may be to question whether there is alignment among goals, espoused beliefs, and theories-in-use (Fig. 15.1). This new consciousness can facilitate needed changes to advance the quality of our practice as we engage in the work of critical reflection (see Osterman

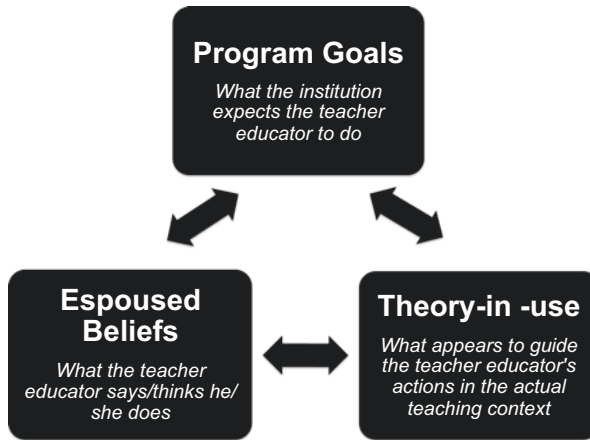


Fig. 15.1 Proposed first step for teacher educator reflection: critically analyze alignment of goals, espoused beliefs, and theories-in-use

& Kottkamp, 2004; Savaya & Gardner, 2012; Schon, 1983, 1987; van Manen, 1977) to observe contradictions among program goals, our espoused beliefs (theories of action), and our theories-in-use.

A Proposed Structure for Reflection

In the next two sections, I highlight commonly observed contradictions among goals, espoused beliefs, and theories-in-use that emerge across teacher education contexts. These illustrations extend my previous discussions of common theories-in-use regarding “art” (Narey, 2009) as I draw attention to frequently held misperceptions of children’s visual text production (art-making). For the purpose of framing my argument within key areas of early childhood teacher education, I have selected two overarching problem frames to organize and critique frequently encountered misperceptions. The first is focused on misperceptions that imply a perceived hierarchy of learning modes and the second frame is centered on misperceptions that exacerbate problematic uses of assessment.

Following the initial step of looking at the three broad areas for alignment (goals, espoused beliefs, and theories-in-use) within these selected frames, we can then select, and apply, additional critical lenses to further inform our analysis of our teaching. From within the current educational discourse, numerous issues emerge as important spheres in which to situate this further reflection. Teacher educators may choose from among these multiple concerns for critiquing multimodality in their pedagogies. For this chapter, I focus on several critical concerns that I believe are particularly relevant to this discussion of teacher education’s preparation of multi-

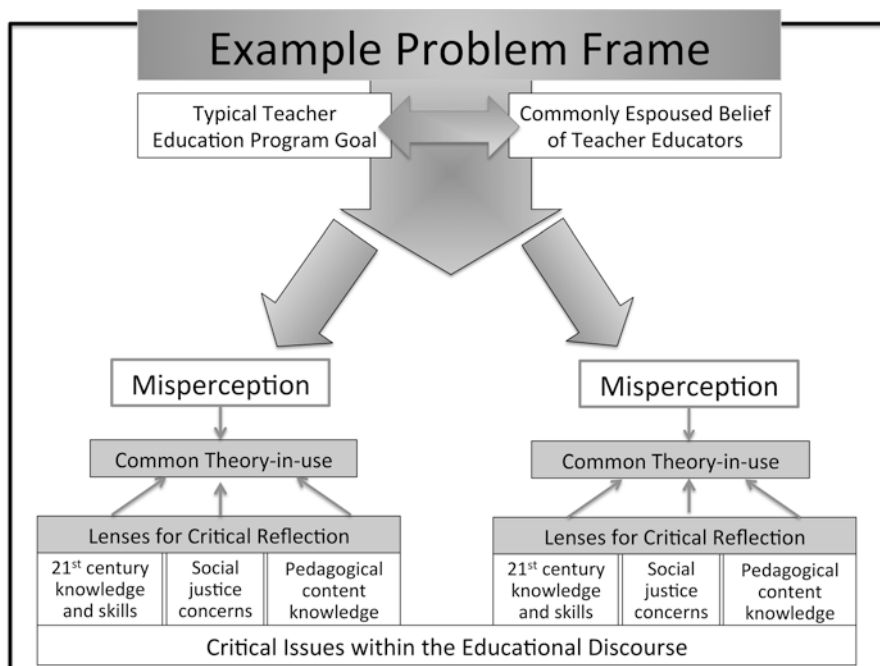


Fig. 15.2 Structure for section examples showing the next step for teacher educator critical reflection

literate practitioners for visual modes: twenty-first-century knowledge and skills, social justice concerns, and pedagogical content knowledge.

The next sections will focus on the two selected overarching problem frames: (1) hierarchy of learning modes and (2) problematic uses of assessment. Within each of these, I list typical program goals and typical espoused theories. Then, I reveal how educators’ common misperceptions contradict broadly accepted concerns in the current discourse: twenty-first-century learning, social justice, and pedagogical content knowledge. Through this analytic structure for further reflection (graphically explained in Fig. 15.2), I model examples of how teacher educators can critically view their practices and begin to answer the question: *does my course/program adequately prepare early childhood teachers with the substantive arts learning needed to support young children in multimodal language, literacy, and learning?*

Problem Frame: A Perceived Hierarchy of Learning Modes

Typical Teacher Education Program Goal: *Promote understanding of theory, research, and practice in child development for learning across domains and content areas.*

Commonly Espoused Belief of the Teacher Educator: “It is important to provide early childhood practitioners with a foundation in the interrelated areas of children’s development in physical, cognitive, social, emotional, language, and aesthetic domains, so that they can prepare appropriate experiences across the trajectory of developmental levels.”

As suggested with this example of a typical teacher education program goal, most early childhood programs put forth targeted outcomes that underscore the importance of teaching child development for learning. Teacher educators, if asked to explain their beliefs in this area, will usually restate their institutions’ program goals. As proposed in this sample of a commonly espoused belief, most will espouse the importance of providing a foundation in development across all domains. Yet, from a reflective multimodal standpoint, we often observe that the teacher educator’s “theories-in-use” do not include this substantive attention to all domains, but rather, as demonstrated in the following discussions, seem to convey a perceived hierarchy of learning modes. Within this first overarching problem frame, three common misperceptions about development in visual learning modes might be revealed when analyzed in a critical review of teacher education practices. These misperceptions are *art-making is about feeling, not thinking*; *drawing is a precursor of writing*; and *children should be left alone to create*.

Misperception: “Art-Making” Is About Feeling, Not Thinking

Despite espousing the conviction that early childhood teachers need a strong foundation in current theory and research across all domains of child development in each subject area, critical reflection upon actual teacher education practices can reveal a theory-in-use that seems to ignore art as an important development area.

Common Theory-in-Use

Verbal forms of literacy are highly valued within the context of early childhood teacher education programs, with more course time devoted to reading-oriented subject matter than is provided to visual literacy. Children’s development in visual modes of learning seems to be valued primarily as physical, emotional, or aesthetic development: teacher educators typically do not convey that learning in visual modes is also equally critical to children’s development in cognitive, language, or social domains. Further, cognitive, language, and social development appear to be afforded “higher status” than other domains. Thus, rather than enacting the typically espoused belief (i.e., *it is important to provide a foundation in the interrelated areas of children’s development*), the teacher educator’s common theory-in-use seems to be that art requires little thought, and, as such, it is promoted merely as an occasional opportunity for children’s expression of feelings.

Theorist, John Dewey’s (1934/1980) position on art and intelligence counters this common assumption that art is merely expression of emotion without thought:

Any idea that ignores the necessary role of intelligence in production of works of art is based upon identification of thinking with use of one special kind of material, verbal signs and words. To think effectively in terms of relations of qualities is as severe a demand upon thought as to think in terms of symbols, verbal and mathematical. Indeed, since words are easily manipulated in mechanical ways, the production of a work of genuine art probably demands more intelligence than does most of the so-called thinking that goes on among those who pride themselves on being “intellectuals.” (p. 46)

Yet, theoretical perspectives like Dewey’s appear to be absent from many teacher educators’ theories-in-use. Even though many teacher educators praise Reggio Emilia, few seem to recognize Dewey’s constructivist ideas of *art as cognition* within the world-renowned Reggio approach to early childhood education (e.g., Lindsay, 2015). Further, the volumes of current research that underscore the critical thinking, problem solving, and decision-making that is brought about through children’s visual text production have not yet broken through old assumptions about art. As we move forward to reflect more deeply on this common theory-in-use, we discover further concerns by viewing it through the lenses of twenty-first-century learning, social justice, and pedagogical content knowledge.

Lens for Reflection: Twenty-First-Century Knowledge and Skills

Recent educational discourse continues to be rife with calls for twenty-first-century learning that prepares students for an uncertain, ever-changing future. “Education is now about the preparation of students for new ways of thinking: ways that involve creativity, critical analysis, problem solving and decision-making” (Griffin & Care, 2015, p. vii.). In line with these new ways of thinking, Eisner (1994) posits, “Intellectual life is characterized by the absence of certainty, by the inclination to see things from more than one angle, by the thrill of the search more than the closure of the find” (p. 71). Emphasizing that these are qualities inherent to work in the arts, Eisner contends that schools actually lead students away from the intellectual life by ignoring the arts. Rudolf Arnheim (1969/1997) explains further, “Thinking requires more than the formation and assignment of concepts. It calls for the unraveling of relations, for the disclosure of elusive structure. Image-making serves to make sense of the world” (p. 257). Karen Gallas (1994) extends the views of these theorists with her observations of art as metacognition, “... arts become a way of thinking about thinking...this way is very natural and accessible to children. The process and dynamics of the art experience best capture the way children make their world sensible from very early years on” (p. 116).

Although the push for twenty-first-century learning in the current educational discourse often translates superficially into a press for digital tools and technology, what children actually need is this creativity, critical analysis, problem solving, and decision-making promoted by multimodal literacy and visual language development. Children’s development across all domains of development is critical and teacher educators who privilege some forms of development over others or fail to acknowledge visual modes of learning as important means of cognitive as well as affective development are failing to prepare teachers for twenty-first-century classrooms.

Lens for Reflection: Social Justice Concerns

When teacher educators acknowledge that visual text production and interpretation are critical cognitive capacities that require development, the time afforded to arts education manifests as a significant social justice concern. Contrasted with Finland, a country that has an education system “widely acknowledged as one of the best in the world” (National Center on Education and the Economy (NCEE), 2015), the United States demonstrates a rather poor showing in arts education.

As Bamford (2009) notes, in Finland, “arts education account for 80 % of the teaching time” (p. 60), with all subjects being taught through the arts, as well as visual arts taught, individually, as a specific discipline (Ketovuori, 2011). Yet, in the United States, minimal, if any, time is allotted to art, particularly in schools serving children in minority groups or from low-income families. As reported by the US Government Accountability Office (US GAO) (2009), “schools identified as needing improvement and those with higher percentages of minority students were more likely to report a reduction in time spent on the arts.”

Zahira Torres and Ryan Menezes (2015) comment on the massive reduction of public school arts programs all over the United States and blame the narrow focus on subjects that are measured on standardized tests as a major factor. Even in California, which is among the states with the strongest policies promoting arts education, Torres and Menezes report that there has been a significant decline. Citing a *Los Angeles Times* analysis of L.A. Unified School District’s data, they point out that poorer neighborhoods in Los Angeles have experienced the greatest loss in arts programming despite the district’s long-standing efforts to close gaps between affluent and economically disadvantaged groups.

Teacher educators concerned with social justice must consider the significance of policies that work to diminish development in visual modes of learning. Teacher educators, who recognize the wrongness of such theories-in-use and who come to acknowledge that art *is* about thinking, will understand that children who are denied opportunities to learn in visual modes are not just being deprived of a “fun activity,” or “break from rigorous subjects,” but rather, these children are being prevented access to the critical cognitive development that arts learning affords.

In a similar vein, children assumed to be low achieving are sometimes purposely given “arts”-type activities because it is assumed that these are “easier” than activities planned for higher-achieving students. This practice is equally unjust, not only for the “low-achieving learner” who may or may not have developed arts-related abilities but also for children who are perceived to be “high achievers.” Both of these groups, indeed, *all* children must be provided with equitable instruction that develops cognitive capacities through visual learning modes.

Lens for Reflection: Pedagogical Content Knowledge

Generally, early childhood teacher educators lack substantive training in art pedagogy. Thus, when they address children’s development in visual modes, many perpetuate mindless arts experiences like “directed production” of class projects (e.g., in the United States, orange construction paper jack-o-lanterns or tissue and pipe

cleaner butterflies). Within the teacher educator’s theory-in-use, the primary value of such “art” activities is that they are exercises in following directions or practicing fine motor skills. In other instances, teacher educators often endorse “art” activities focused on feelings and encourage future teachers to allow children to express emotions in finger paint or clay. Rarely is art promoted as a means of thinking. Yet, as this chapter’s opening story suggests, children’s critical thinking and making sense of the world often come about through visual modes.

Examples of coursework for teacher preparation for primary grade instruction (ages 5–9 years) are offered in the first edition of *Making Meaning* (Narey, 2009). Explanation of how adults can promote development of very young (ages 2–4 years) children is detailed in Chap. 1 (Narey, this volume). Here, I discuss another example to highlight the kinds of the thinking involved in children’s drawings. In this image (Fig. 15.3), Daniel intentionally mixes plane and elevation: drawing the top view of the table and the cake so that viewers would know that the cake was on the table. However, he draws the candles from a frontal view to show that there were four: one for each year. Knowing that tables are surfaces supported by legs attached to corners, he illustrates this understanding. He also wants to show two important activities that he expects to occur due to our conversations about our small family celebration: following family custom, as the person celebrating the birthday, he would be cutting the first piece of his cake, and, after this, he would receive presents. Daniel draws the cake knife in his right hand and he makes a present in the other. Like his other drawings of persons during this stage of development, he notes distinct parts on his figure: a portion above what appears to be a waist and a shape below and heavy marks depicting shoulders, hands, and feet. He then copies letters from a poster and adds some watercolor paint to important items. Like most other children during this stage of development, Daniel is unconcerned about adult concepts of linear perspective to produce a “representational artistic image.” Rather, Daniel draws his cognitive understandings of his world and himself.

Throughout the chapters in this volume, and in the first edition, authors demonstrate this kind of children’s thinking along with descriptions of how adults promote

Fig. 15.3 Daniel’s drawing of anticipated events for his birthday celebration (age 4 years)



and support such development. Unfortunately, this understanding of children's "art" as cognition often is not the early childhood pedagogical knowledge that teacher educators address despite their espousing a belief that endorses a children's development across all domains of learning.

Misperception: Drawing Is a Precursor to Writing

Notwithstanding some early childhood educators' recognition of emergent literacy (i.e., reading and writing behaviors that precede formal literacy training), most have not reenvisioned their notions of literacy as multimodal (Siegel, 2006). Thus, not only is visual language and literacy development diminished or distorted by the previously discussed misperception regarding art and thinking, development in visual modes is also misrepresented to be merely an early phase of verbal literacy.

Common Theory-in-Use

Many teacher educators present drawing as an early stage on a verbal literacy continuum. Thus, while these teacher educators appear to value children's drawings as important, it is only as a means to a preferred verbal end. Implying a nonexistent hierarchy of development, they make the assertion: "Drawing is a precursor to writing." Frequently cited statements from Vygotsky's (1978) final chapter of *Mind in Society* have likely contributed to this common theory-in-use, yet a close reading of Vygotsky's work challenges interpretations that frame drawing as a phase through which children pass and then abandon on their way to becoming writers. In his criticism of school practices, it is clear that Vygotsky is concerned with meaning making, as he establishes the contextual frame for his subsequent statements regarding drawing and writing:

The teaching of writing has been conceived in narrowly practical terms. Children are taught to trace out letters and make words out of them, but they are not taught written language. The mechanics of reading what is written are so emphasized that they overshadow written language as such. (p. 105)

Thus, when he discusses "drawing as a preliminary stage in the development of written language" (p. 112), he is referring to the child's developmental progression that includes the discovery that his/her marks signify something (as I described in my account of Daniel's pirate ship drawing in Chap. 1 of this volume). Further reading of Vygotsky's chapter ensures that he does not see drawing as a "lesser" capacity. Although one statement might appear to connote a hierarchical view: "We are fully justified in seeing the first precursor of future writing in this mnemotechnic stage" (p. 115), closer reading reveals that while keywords, "precursor," and "writing" are noted in this quote, the "mnemotechnic stage" is a trajectory that is parallel to, but distinct from, drawing. This mnemotechnic stage reference actually emerges from Vygotsky's description of a 1930s study conducted by Luria in which children were told to remember a number of phrases that exceeded their anticipated memory

and encouraged to make marks to assist their recall. Therefore, it is not drawing, but rather, these mnemotechnic symbols, which Vygotsky proposes to be the “precursor to writing.”

Lens for Reflection: Twenty-First-Century Knowledge and Skills

In general, texts in the twenty-first century are highly visual: meaning is carried as much through images as it is through words. Therefore, teachers’ perspectives of language and literacy development must take into account the images found in both print (e.g., newspapers, magazines, advertisements) and nonprint textual forms (e.g., film, video, and Internet websites). “As educators we need to determine the specific features of reading that occur and that are needed for the synchronous functioning of the modes of print, image, movement, colour, gesture, 3D objects, music and sound on a digital screen” (Walsh, 2006, p. 36). Broad communication abilities are important to twenty-first-century learning (Scott, 2015) and visual modes should not be abandoned in the early years.

Lens for Reflection: Social Justice Concerns

Children’s production and interpretation of visual texts are essential literacy practices complete in their own right. When teacher educators perpetuate the notion of children’s drawing as a precursor to writing, they devalue visual textual forms as vital modes of communication (Coates & Coates, 2006), both individually and within the larger context of society. This is significant to discussions of social justice in terms of:

- Children’s access to development in, and use of, all modes of communication
- Issues of bias in terms of assessment of children’s achievement and deficit labeling (discussed previously in this chapter)
- Children’s preparation for informed participation in a democratic society through development of critical literacy

Falchi, Axelrod, and Genishi (2014) reveal how this misperception, *drawing is a precursor to writing*, plays out in a discussion of their 5-year ethnographic research investigation of multilingual children in early childhood classrooms. They describe the tight regulation of early learning in many schools in low-income neighborhoods across the United States as:

constrained in terms of their multilingual and multimodal literacy practices. Where a dominant discourse (spoken or written English and particular academic literacies) is the only acceptable one, children and teachers are heavily monitored for their adherence to these curricular approaches... Students who are seen as being “at risk” are then marginalized through intervention services that separate them from their classroom communities and target particular skills, ignoring other areas of development. (p. 346)

The authors point out that, although children’s drawings and other visual texts are included in the curriculum, “they are not typically valued, discussed or privileged.

Children are not able to spend too much time on them, and they are not what really ‘counts’ as literate practices” (p. 361).

A further social justice concern for education is the need to prepare children for full participation in our democratic societies; thus, critical literacy becomes an important issue. Within our construct of twenty-first-century literacy, the scope of critical literacy must include visual textual forms. Terry Barrett (2003) points out that even though kindergarten children are typically unable to read the verbal text on cereal box samples, they are highly capable of attending to the connotations of the visual features in the design, and understand that manufacturers attempt to persuade them to want the cereal. Noting that even 3- and 4-year-olds have this capacity when teachers provide appropriate learning opportunities, Barrett underscores the importance of developing critical literacy:

Learners of all ages can successfully decipher the many messages circulating in the images and objects of visual culture if given the opportunities and some strategies... Images and objects present opinions as if they were truth, reinforce attitudes, and confirm or deny beliefs and values. If the messages carried by visual culture are not interpreted, we will be unwittingly buying, wearing, promoting, and otherwise consuming opinions with which we may or may not agree. (p. 12)

Lens for Reflection: Pedagogical Content Knowledge

Notwithstanding that Marie Clay’s (1966) important research in emergent literacy expanded the literacy lens for early childhood; teacher education has distorted the value of children’s visual production with this erroneous notion that drawing is merely a precursor to writing. Anning (1999) offers a glimpse of how this misperception looks in a preschool classroom as she describes how a child’s teacher wrote the words, “A bumble bee,” for him to copy alongside his drawing:

The message to the child is clear. The expressive nature of his drawing of a bee does not count for much. The adult knows better. She demonstrates her superiority by showing him the symbolic form of the words for a bumble bee. It would be an unusual act for an adult to respond to a child’s drawing by drawing an image themselves. Thus ‘dialogues’ on paper between the adults and the children, even in the relatively informal setting of a pre-school, demonstrates that drawing is not to be taken seriously by the adult as a communicative act. (p. 166)

When teacher educators hold to the misperception that drawing is a precursor to writing, they appear to dismiss any responsibility for developing pedagogical content knowledge in visual art. They abandon understanding of visual textual production by the wayside and go on to focus numerous teacher education courses on developing children’s verbal skills. This results in leaving early childhood practitioners with no understanding of how to plan appropriate arts experiences.

Misperception: Children Should Be Left Alone to Create

Often the arts are promoted as “self-expression,” which many teacher educators mistakenly translate as allowing children free time in the art center—assuming (incorrectly) that the children’s artistic modalities will advance on their own.

Common Theory-in-Use

Holding to the image of an artist in a lonely garret, many teacher educators think of art as a solitary endeavor. This belief is reinforced by textbooks that admonish teachers to not interfere in the child’s art-making, but merely provide an abundance of materials and leave the child alone to create (Kindler, 1996). This hands-off position even extends to sheltering children from adult artwork for fear of frustrating children unable to create at the adult level (Beetlestone, 1998). Further, some even prevent children from assisting each other (Kindler, 1996).

Lens for Reflection: Twenty-First-Century Knowledge and Skills

As the New London Group (1996) projected, literacy in the twenty-first century:

must account for the burgeoning variety of text forms associated with information and multimedia technologies. This includes understanding the competent control of representational forms that are becoming increasingly significant in the overall communications environment.... (p. 61)

Beyond this need to develop children’s competencies in visual forms of communication, twenty-first-century learning also requires visual competencies for problem-solving capacities that are enhanced when learners engage in creative collaboration (Brooks, this volume; Scott, 2015). Yet, “teachers rarely model drawing as a tool for problem solving, so children are unaware of its potential for helping them to learn” (Anning, 1999, p. 171). If a teacher educator’s theory-in-use perpetuates a “hands-off” position toward art that discourages early childhood professionals from seeing children’s work in visual modes as problem-solving and collaboration, ironically, they are missing an opportunity to support the twenty-first-century skills they purport to endorse.

Lens for Reflection: Social Justice Concerns

Abdicating responsibility to teach children by leaving them to develop visual arts competencies on their own has long-term effects on their social futures. As the New London Group (1996) contends, “... literacy pedagogy has to change if it is to be relevant to the new demands of working life, if it is to provide all students with access to fulfilling employment” (p. 66). Multimodal communication, critical

thinking, problem solving, and collaboration are more frequently observed in well-designed art learning than in a typical reading or math lesson, yet early childhood teachers are generally not given the tools to prepare children in these twenty-first-century skills through visual modes. Thus, essentially, children who do not have opportunities to develop these skills outside of their classrooms will significantly be left behind. Art is not just for those whose families can afford to pay for privately run classes: art learning is the right of all children, just like reading or math. We need teachers, and teacher educators, to provide that learning. We can no longer accept that it is permissible to leave children to figure it out on their own.

Lens for Reflection: Pedagogical Content Knowledge

Rather than advocating a hands-off approach to children's art learning, many scholars and researchers insist that teacher interaction, guidance, and instruction are essential (Frisch, 2006; McArdle, 2012; Thompson, 1997). As the wealth of examples from children attending the schools of Reggio Emilia (Edwards, Gandini, & Forman, 1998) and other multimodal learning spaces demonstrates, when teachers interact with children and respond to their interests and ideas with thoughtful planning and support, children are capable of sustained and exceptionally complex artistic work. In these art-based learning spaces, children work in collaboration with teachers and peers to generate, critique, and build upon ideas (see, for example, Rolling, this volume). Unlike the mindless-messing-with-materials stereotype of free expression embraced by many classroom teachers, the many examples in this volume show how very young children may achieve sophisticated levels of meaning making and underscore the need for teachers to take an active role in children's art learning.

Problem Frame: Problematic Uses of Assessment

Typical Teacher Education Program Goal: Ensure that early childhood teachers understand the goals, benefits, and uses of assessment.

Commonly Espoused Theory of the Teacher Educator: "I believe that early childhood teachers must have understanding of thoughtful, appreciative, systematic observation and documentation of each child's unique qualities, strengths, and needs, and the ability to interpret assessment results, with the goal of obtaining valid, useful information to inform practice and decision-making."

This chapter is grounded in the argument that teacher education does not provide early childhood educators with an adequate understanding of arts pedagogy, and much has already been discussed regarding the negative results of labeling children based upon monomodally based verbal assessments. In this section, I now focus on assessment of children's art to refute the misperception: *process is more important than product as there are no right answers in art.*

Misperception: Process Is More Important Than Product, Whatever Children Do in Art Is OK: There Is No Right Way

In a culture that is predicated on knowing the correct answers, art seems to be the one area that many teacher educators believe has no right answer. While this may be valid to the extent that there is no *one right way*, there are frequently many answers in art that are decidedly *better* than others. This becomes clear when art is viewed as problem solving: there are many possible responses to a problem, and some responses will be more effective than others based upon the desired purpose and the variables involved. However, as has been pointed out in the previous section, teacher educators do not acknowledge art as problem solving; thus, they frequently convey the unfounded notion that in children’s art, *process is more important than product because there are no right answers in art*.

Yet, adults do make assessments of children’s art products. For instance, when I show examples from a kindergarten (Fig. 15.4) in my professional development courses, many adults (teacher educators and teachers) typically attribute the detailed drawing on the left to a more “advanced” child artist. As they apply adult standards of artistic production to the drawings, they view the one on the right with “stick figure” forms and scribbled background as completed by a child who was less skilled. Most agree that the work on the left is more likely to be selected to be hung in school hallways for visitors to view. My adult learners are usually quite surprised to learn that both drawings were actually created by the same child, who drew the



Fig. 15.4 Two drawings completed in a kindergarten classroom

detailed work on the left at the beginning of the school year and the stick figures at the end of the year. Some even wonder what might have caused a perceived “regression” in the child’s artistic skill.

The two drawings are additional samples from Daniel’s portfolio that was introduced in Chap. 1 (Narey, this volume). I bring these images into the discussion here to underscore that product *and* process are important to assessment of visual production and interpretation. Visual products (drawings, paintings, dioramas) are permanent data that can be revisited and viewed in the context of development of bodies of work over time. Products serve as tangible evidence of the creator’s thought process as well as his/her physical process in developing the work that can serve as a basis for the dialogue necessary for assessment.

In Daniel’s case, the two drawings were created in school, so I was not engaged in his physical process of making; however, through our dialogue, I learned much about his thinking. The first drawing of a boy is his response to his teacher’s assignment to draw a portrait of his table partner. Daniel described the various details of hair color and clothing that he had observed and carefully recorded in his drawing. The second drawing, created at the end of the school year, is his “favorite thing he did in kindergarten.” He explained that he liked going to the gymnasium to play “Duck, Duck, Goose.” In the picture, he drew his class sitting in a circle on the varnished wood gym floor, legs extended and heads down with one child walking around the outside deciding who to tap on the back as they played the game.

As with assessments in all areas of performance, it is important to understand development over time and, in context, but also, to be aware of the purpose and thinking behind the product. Rather than base assessment of these drawings on criteria of realistic (adult) representation, we must rather look at the child’s equally successful communication of his intended purpose in both drawings.

Common Theory-in-Use

In early childhood methods courses, teacher educators often extol the value of “process over product” when discussing children’s art. Yet, typically, they do not teach the future early childhood teachers how to assess either the child’s process *or* the product, and when viewing children’s drawings, they often appear to maintain adult standards with an underlying assessment of “artistic talent.” Thus, when the child who is struggling to make a drawing “look right” initiates a request for help, a common response from the early childhood teacher is the same as learned in their teacher education classes: “just do your best, you can’t really make a mistake in art,” and those children who are successful at figuring it out on their own are designated “class artist,” with the success attributed to the child’s innate talent.

Lens for Reflection: Twenty-First-Century Knowledge and Skills

Process and product are both important, but only to the extent each contributes to achieving the intended purpose of the work. When children are taught to review their art products to examine, assess, and reflect upon purpose in relation to the

process and product, they gain important critical thinking skills. Scott (2015) notes that critical thinking is fundamental to twenty-first-century learning with the emphasis on developing children’s “ability to examine, analyse, interpret and evaluate evidence” (p. 4) as learners grow to become adults in a complex, rapidly changing world. “Today’s citizens need to be able to compare evidence, evaluate competing proposals and make responsible decisions” (p. 4). The common mind-set of a “right answer” (in numerous school subject areas), versus “no right answer” (as attributed to art), is not only a misperception; it is antithetical to intellectual life in general, and twenty-first-century learning, specifically. In all subject areas, students need to learn to seek, select from, and know how to invent best answers to problems based upon understanding of purpose and variables involved.

Lens for Reflection: Social Justice Issues

Children’s work in art, as in any other subject area, requires diagnostic and formative assessment in order to appropriately determine the teaching strategies that the child needs for further development. Critique is not about criticizing or prescribing but about facilitating dialogue regarding the artist’s intent and the viewers’ interpretations (Barrett, 1997). Essentially, this type of critique, in dialogue with the learner, is at the heart of teaching children the critical literacy skills that they will need throughout their lives, not only to achieve high quality in their own work but also to discern and critically respond to images and media. To analytically respond to the child’s work with worthwhile formative feedback is not a devaluation of the work, or the child, but rather is the teacher’s responsibility as much as analyzing (along with the learner) the child’s reasoning to determine his/her difficulty in solving a math problem, understanding a scientific concept, or deconstructing an article to discern a point of view.

Lens for Reflection: Pedagogical Content Knowledge

Children are capable of thoughtful critique and gain valuable understandings from self and peer assessments. Teacher educators must model these assessments for their adult learners. In the first edition of *Making Meaning*, I described an “Art to Inform” unit that focused upon observational drawing and that modeled self and peer critique strategies (Narey, 2009, pp. 240–245) and incorporated “conversational pedagogy” (Eckhoff, 2013, p. 366). One of my preservice teachers, Ashley, applied this to her work in a second-grade classroom. I documented this work on a slide (Fig. 15.5) for follow-up university class discussion. On the left, we see the drawing produced by Tyler, after a lesson Ashley taught on observational drawing strategies that had utilized photographs of animals as references. As a next step of the lesson, Ashley taught the students how to peer critique using the work sheet and strategies I had modeled in our university course. Tyler’s classmate, Ryan,

The slide contains three main components:

- Photograph:** A black and white photograph of a real rabbit sitting in a field of grass and brush.
- Student Drawing:** A pencil drawing of a rabbit by Tyler, Grade 2. The drawing shows the rabbit's head, ears, nose, and body. The caption below it reads "By Tyler, Grade 2".
- Critique Sheet:** A handwritten form titled "Ryan's Critique of Tyler's Drawing".

Ryan's Critique of Tyler's Drawing	
Your name: <u>Ryan</u> Illustrator's name: <u>Tyler</u>	
Directions: Look over your partner's scientific illustration. Make notes in the boxes about each of the parts of the illustration. Make sure to write about things that were done well and things that could be fixed.	
Eyes The shape of the eyes is good. The eyes could be unslanted.	Ears The ears are in the right shape. The ear could be behind each other more.
Nose The nose could be colored in. The nose is good.	Head The ^{top} of the head is good. The head should be more pointy.
Tail	Feet The bunny doesn't have toes. The shape is good.
Detail (fur, whiskers, etc.) The fur is going in the right angle.	Body The body should be more skinny. It is in the right.

Fig. 15.5 Author's PowerPoint slide showing artifacts from Ms. Patete's practicum teaching lesson in a second-grade classroom on observational drawing and peer assessment

completed the work sheet critique to assist Tyler in assessing his drawing by carefully examining and evaluating how closely the drawing matched the photograph.

As evidenced by Ryan's comments, he is able to demonstrate thoughtful analysis as he assists his classmate with valuable feedback on the drawing. For instance, Ryan compares Tyler's drawing of the rabbit's eye to the photograph, suggesting that in the drawing the eye should be drawn at less of a slant (i.e., "The eyes could be unslanted."). He also notes that in the photograph, one ear partially overlaps the other and suggests, "The ear could be behind the other more."

As this example demonstrates, teacher educators can provide early childhood professionals with understandings of meaningful assessment that result in valuable learning, rather than perpetuate the common misperception that there are "no right answers in art." Although this example illustrates assessment of a child's representational work, assessments can be designed for nonrepresentational work as well, as teachers and children learn to focus on how process and product relate to purpose (see Narey, 2009).

Adequate Practical and Pedagogical Preparation?

Reflecting upon her early research in multimodality, respected literacy scholar, Marjorie Siegel (2012), comes to a critical realization:

aside from inviting each student to talk about their sketch, I do nothing to draw out Lisa’s understanding of multimodal design or engage her and the rest of the group in reflective talk about her sign making. Instead, I make what is a common response to multimodal designs, that is, to look past the multimodal choices to the meanings represented. (p. 677)

As I pointed out in the introductory chapter to this volume, even advocates of multimodality may engage in practices that do not demonstrate the full potential of multimodal language, literacy, and learning. Siegel draws attention to the need for teachers to engage learners in reflective talk about the multimodal decision-making underlying their meaning making. She notes that, while this aspect was missing from her early interactions with learners, many literacy researchers who are practicing artists (see, e.g., Jerome Harste, 2014) do engage in this multimodal reflective talk.

Multimodal meaning making is not just about having children draw, read, talk, write, or use other modes to communicate an idea. Rather, the creative exploration of that idea must be part of the meaning making: who is producing and who is interpreting, and for what purpose? What choices (e.g., textual form, medium, style) are available to communicate the idea, and what alternative ways might these be interpreted? In order to engage children in this reflective multimodal meaning making work, teachers, themselves, must be able to “read” and “write” across many modes. Line, color, compositional layout, and numerous other elements of visual texts contribute to the meaning intended by the producer and interpreted by the audience of the work. As underscored in this volume, visual modes figure prominently in early childhood and twenty-first-century learning. Therefore, teacher education must adequately prepare early childhood teachers to support and promote multimodal language, literacy, and learning by offering substantive visual arts pedagogy needed for this visual production and interpretation.

Unfortunately, although we see outstanding examples in Finland and a few other nations, generally, there seems to be a lack of substantive visual arts pedagogy in teacher education programs across the globe. Further, in a transnational study of preservice early childhood teachers, Russell-Bowie (2010) found that most sampled students entered university teacher education programs with minimal background in the arts. It should not be surprising, then, that a large portion of early childhood teachers, who usually have taken only one art methods course in their teacher education program, feel inadequate when they are confronted with the expectation to include art in their curriculum (Thompson, 1997).

“Without knowing about the past and the future (the precursors to children’s current development and learning and the trajectory they will follow in later years), teachers cannot design effective learning opportunities within their specific professional assignment” (NAEYC, 2009, p. 4). As this chapter’s review of commonly observed teacher education practices suggests, we must reconsider how we are preparing early childhood professionals (or not) in visual modes. In our efforts to

prepare teachers for educating all children in our twenty-first-century world, we must provide the necessary background in visual arts learning that will support the teacher's ability to look beyond verbocentric standards of achievement in order to see and acknowledge children's multimodal capacities: we must work to create a culture wherein adults no longer "struggle" to see boa constrictors digesting elephants instead of hats.

References

- Anning, A. (1999). Learning to draw and drawing to learn. *Journal of Art and Design Education*, 18(2), 163–172.
- Argyris, C., & Schön, D. (1974). *Theory in practice: Increasing professional effectiveness*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Arnheim, R. (1969/1997). *Visual thinking*. Berkely, CA: University of California Press.
- Bamford, A. (2009). *The wow factor: Global research compendium on the impact of the arts in education*. New York: Waxmann.
- Barrett, T. (1997). *Talking about student art*. Worcester, MA: Davis Publications.
- Barrett, T. (2003). Interpreting visual culture. *Art Education*, 56(2), 6–12.
- Bearne, E. (2006). *Making progress in writing*. Abingdon, England: Routledge Falmer.
- Beetlestone, F. (1998). *Creative children, imaginative teaching*. Buckingham, UK: Open University Press.
- Burke, K., & Dunn, R. (2002). Learning style-based teaching to raise minority student test scores. *Clearing House*, 76(2), 103–106.
- Clay, M. (1966). *Emergent reading behavior*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Auckland, NZ.
- Coates, E., & Coates, A. (2006). Young children talking and drawing. *International Journal of Early Years Education*, 14(3), 221–241.
- de Saint Exupéry, A. (1943/1971). *The little prince*. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc.
- Dede, C. (2010). Comparing frameworks for 21st century skills. *21st century skills: Rethinking how students learn*. Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree Press, 20. 51–76.
- Dewey, J. (1934/1980). *Art as experience*. New York: Perigee.
- Eckhoff, A. (2013). Conversational pedagogy. *Early Childhood Education*, 41, 365–372.
- Edwards, C. P., Gandini, L., & Forman, G. E. (Eds.). (1998). *The hundred languages of children: The Reggio Emilia approach – advanced reflections* (2nd ed.). Greenwich, CT: Ablex.
- Eisner, E. W. (1994). *Cognition and curriculum reconsidered* (2nd ed.). New York: Teachers College Press.
- Falchi, L. T., Axelrod, Y., & Genishi, C. (2014). "Miguel es un artista"—and Luisa is an excellent student: Seeking time and space for children's multimodal practices. *Journal of Early Childhood Literacy*, 14(3), 345–366.
- Fletcher, R. (2006). *Boy Writers: Reclaiming their voices*. Markham, Ontario: Pembroke Publishers.
- Frisch, N. S. (2006). Drawing in preschools: A didactic experience. *International Journal of Art and Design Education*, 25(1), 74–85.
- Gallas, K. (1994). *The languages of learning: How children talk, write, dance, and sing their understanding of the world*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Gay, G. (2000). *Culturally responsive teaching: Theory, research, and practice*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Griffin, P., & Care, E. (2015). Preface. In P. Griffin & E. Care (Eds.), *Assessment and teaching of 21st century skills: Methods and approach* (pp. v–ix). Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Springer.

- Hanafin, J., Shevlin, M., & Flynn, M. (2002). Responding to student diversity: Lessons from the margin. *Pedagogy, Culture and Society*, 10(3), 409–423.
- Harste, J. (2014). The art of being critically literate. *Language Arts*, 92(2), 90–102.
- Janks, H. (2013). *Rethinking the literacy curriculum*. New York: Routledge.
- Johnson, D. (2003). Activity, theory, mediated action and literacy: Assessing how children make meaning in multiple modes. *Assessment in Education*, 10(1), 103–129.
- Ketovuori, M. M. (2011). Canadian art partnership program in Finland. *Journal for Learning Through the Arts*, 7(1), 1–12.
- Kindler, A. M. (1996). Myths, habits, research, and policy: The four pillars of early childhood art education. *Arts Education Policy Review*, 97(4), 24–30.
- Lindsay, G. (2015). Reflections in the mirror of Reggio Emilia’s soul: John Dewey’s foundational influence on pedagogy in the Italian educational project. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 43, 447–457.
- Lortie, D. C. (1975). *Schoolteacher: A sociological study*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- McArdle, F. (2012). The visual arts: Ways of seeing. In S. Wright (Ed.), *Children, meaning-making and the arts* (pp. 30–56). Frenchs Forest, NSW: Pearson Australia.
- Millard, E., & Marsh, J. (2001). Words with pictures: The role of visual literacy in writing and its implication for schooling. *Reading*, 35(2), 54–61.
- Narey, M. J. (2008). *Social and psychological theories of creativity and reflective practice: A conceptual analysis*. Paper presented at the 2008 annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association. (<http://www.aera.net/repository>).
- Narey, M. J. (Ed.). (2009). *Making meaning: Constructing multimodal perspectives of language, literacy, and learning through arts-based early childhood education*. New York: Springer.
- National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). (2009). *NAEYC standards for early childhood professional preparation. A position statement of the National Association for the Education of Young Children*. Washington, DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). Retrieved from <http://www.naeyc.org>.
- National Center on Education and the Economy (NCEE). (2015). *Top performing countries*. Washington, DC: National Center on Education and the Economy (NCEE). Retrieved from <http://www.ncee.org/programs-affiliates/center-on-international-education-benchmarking/top-performing-countries/>.
- New London Group. (1996). A pedagogy of multiliteracies: Designing social futures. *Harvard Educational Review*, 66(1), 60–92.
- Olson, J. L. (1992). *Envisioning writing: Toward an integration of drawing and writing*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Osterman, K. F., & Kottkamp, R. B. (2004). *Reflective practice for educators: Professional development to improve student learning* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Russell-Bowie, D. (2010). Cross-national comparisons of background and confidence in visual arts and music education of pre-service primary teachers. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 35(4), 65–78.
- Savaya, R., & Gardner, F. (2012). Critical reflection to identify gaps between espoused theory and theory-in-use. *Social Work*, 57(2), 145–154.
- Schon, D. (1983). *The reflective practitioner: How professionals think in action*. New York: Basic Books.
- Schon, D. (1987). *Educating the reflective practitioner*. New York: Basic Books.
- Scott, C. L. (2015). *The futures of learning 2: What kind of learning for the 21st century?* UNESCO Education Research and Foresight, Paris. [ERF Working Papers Series, No. 14].
- Siegel, M. (2006). Rereading the signs: Multimodal transformations in the field of literacy education. *Language Arts*, 84(1), 65–76.
- Siegel, M. (2012). New times for multimodality? Confronting the accountability culture. *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*, 55(8), 671–680.
- Thompson, C. M. (1997). Teaching art in elementary schools: Shared responsibilities and distinctive roles. *Arts Education Policy Review*, 99(2), 15–21.

- Tolstoy, L. N. (1967). On teaching and the rudiments. In L. Weiner (Ed.), *Tolstoy on education*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Torres, Z., & Menezes, R. (2015, November). Only 35 L.A. public schools get an A in supporting the arts. *Los Angeles Times*.
- U. S. Government Accountability Office. (2009). *Access to arts education*. GAO Publication No. 09-286. Retrieved from <http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d09286.pdf>.
- van Manen, M. (1977). Linking ways of knowing with ways of being practical. *Curriculum Inquiry*, 6, 205–208.
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Walsh, M. (2006). The ‘textual shift’: Examining the reading process with print, visual and multi-modal texts. *Australian Journal of Language and Literacy*, 29(1), 24–37.

Marilyn J. Narey Narey Educational Consulting, LLC, Pittsburgh, PA, USA

Dr. Marilyn J. Narey is a scholar, researcher, and teacher/teacher educator specializing in multimodal literacy, creativity, and transdisciplinary curriculum. As founder of Narey Educational Consulting, LLC, she currently leads professional development, curricular design services, and research initiatives for diverse educational institutions and community groups. Dr. Narey’s background as a tenured Associate Professor of Education at East Stroudsburg University of Pennsylvania, as teacher with 20 years of experience in K-12 public schools, and as a recipient of numerous awards for her design of innovative curricular, community-based projects and partnerships, serves to inform her ongoing engagement in a variety of educational initiatives.

Part IV

Conclusion

Chapter 16

Multimodal Visions: Bringing “Sense” to Our Twenty-First Century Texts

Marilyn J. Narey

Abstract In this concluding chapter, I attempt to integrate the volume authors’ diverse accounts into a synthesis of ideas that inspire further development of individual and collective multimodal visions. To this end, I discuss a multimodal view of teaching and learning as a creative, transformative process of making sense of experience. Next, I make my own “sensemaking” explicit as I tease out the multimodal actions and interactions of the children and adults described within the experiences and make connections across the varied chapter texts.

Keywords Meaning-making • Twenty-first century futures • Multimodal visions

Children’s Art in the Context of Multimodal Meaning-Making

Children’s visual textual forms (“art”) figure prominently in this volume, yet this book is not about children’s “art-making” as an end in itself. Rather, in these chapters, the intent is to situate children’s production and interpretation of visual texts within the broader context of making sense of self, and of the world, through the multiple modes available. Concentrating the chapters on experiences with visual textual forms provides an opportunity for close, focused examination of variables surrounding visual modes. Subsequently, the insights discovered can contribute to understanding other modes (e.g., sound, movement) and, thus, facilitate development of further capacities for multimodal meaning-making.

In this concluding chapter, I attempt to integrate the volume authors’ diverse accounts into a synthesis of ideas that inspire further development of individual and collective multimodal visions. To this end, I discuss a multimodal view of teaching and learning as a creative, transformative process of making sense of experience. I, then, make my own “sensemaking” of these works explicit as I tease out the multimodal actions and interactions of the children and adults described within the experiences and make connections across the varied chapter texts.

M.J. Narey (✉)

Narey Educational Consulting, LLC, Pittsburgh, PA, USA

e-mail: makemeaning@nareyed.com

© Springer International Publishing AG 2017

M.J. Narey (ed.), *Multimodal Perspectives of Language, Literacy, and Learning in Early Childhood*, Educating the Young Child 12,

DOI 10.1007/978-3-319-44297-6_16

317

Aims and Available Designs: Permeable Spaces for Reflection

Some turn the crisp paper pages; others slide fingers across a screen. Many reach this place in the volume having read all of the preceding chapters; others have skipped back and forth, scanning illustrations, and skimming headings. Graduate students take notes on assigned sections; early childhood professionals seek new understandings; teacher educators contemplate ideas for their courses; and still others ponder processes and practices in reflection with colleagues. Within the physical and temporal spaces of this volume, each of us pushes through the permeable boundaries of the “parts” and “chapters” to make sense of these words and images through our individual lenses of experience.

Regardless of how we work our way across the chapters in this volume, we most likely will agree it is not art-making, or even multimodality, that is the most valued goal of the authors of these works. For, if this book only functions as a tome on children’s art or a text on developing multiliteracies in the classroom, it would be, as I described in Chap. 1 when extending Goodman’s (1996) appraisal, “starting in the wrong place.” With reading, art, multimodality, or anything in education, for that matter, we must be cautious of conflating the “parts” with the “whole,” for in allowing the parts to become the goal, we may lose sight of the whole of our actual vision. Therefore, while the varied experiences are comprehensively presented so that we can broaden understandings of arts pedagogy and multimodality, these are not the ultimate goals. Rather, it is the general aim of the authors in this volume to share how visual texts work as conduits to develop and enable the multimodal perspectives that encourage sensemaking.

My own immersion in this sensemaking of the authors’ works results in a mental image of glowing dynamic layers, amorphous webs connecting ideas, and actions pulsing and pressing endlessly across time and space. This mental image may seem to contrast starkly with the narrow goal-oriented mindset of our standards-based teaching and learning environments. Yet if we can step back from checking off itemized standards boxes to focus instead upon our general aims for young children’s learning, then, we can maintain a meaningful direction for our work. Dewey’s (1916) instruction on this is useful:

A truly general aim broadens the outlook; it stimulates one to take more consequences (connections) into account. This means a wider and more flexible observation of means... usually -- at least in complicated situations -- acting upon it brings to light conditions which had been overlooked. This calls for revision of the original aim; it has to be added to and subtracted from. An aim must, then, be flexible; it must be capable of alteration to meet circumstances. (p. 129)

Making meaning: making sense of self and the world is the general aim of early childhood education. Over the past several decades, however, it seems as if we have become preoccupied with standards and goals, and rather than serving as flexible guides or aims, these have become like dicta, blindly followed, obscuring real aims of learning. This book prompts a shift in thinking and encourages transformation: if standards and goals get in the way and distract us from providing environments for

Dimensions of the Phenomenon across Multiple Theories	Seeing the Need for Change	Formulating Ideas for Change	Enacting Change
Sociological Creativity of Action Theory (Joas, 1996)	A different attitude toward pre-reflective impulses and perceptions	Non-teleological intentionality	A different attitude to the symbolic boundaries.
Psychological Theory of Personal Creativity (Runco, 2004)	Transformational capacity (ability to interpret or construct new meaning)	Intentionality	Discretion
Educational Reflective Practice (Dewey, 1933)	Open-mindedness	Whole-heartedness	Responsibility
Educational/ Organizational Reflective Practice (Schon, 1983) (based on Theory of Action—Argyris & Schon, 1978)	Governing variables for action (Theories-in-use vs. Espoused theories)	Action strategies	Consequences

Fig. 16.1 Teaching and learning as creative process: three dimensions of the phenomenon across a range of theories relevant to transformative teaching and learning (Narey, 2008)

meaning-making, then, perhaps we need to revisit and reevaluate the standards and goals to ask what purpose they serve and revise as necessary.

In my ongoing research into educational quality, I view teaching and learning as a creative process. Drawing upon a theoretical model (Fig. 16.1) that I developed in conjunction with my early research investigations, there are three dimensions of the phenomenon: (1) seeing the need for change, (2) formulating ideas for change, and (3) enacting change. The model, based upon my conceptual analysis of sociological and psychological theories of creativity and of educational and organizational theories of reflective practice, further supports the vision of this volume: the content knowledge, pedagogy, and practical models shared by the authors in this book will provoke us to see the need for change, help us to formulate ideas for change, and inspire us to enact change across our diverse contexts of early childhood education. Aimed at sensemaking, the chapter authors provide us with insights and structures surrounding visual texts in early childhood that can help us better understand how to construct or reconstruct our own multimodal perspective for language, literacy, and learning.

A multimodal perspective supports this transformative view of teaching and learning, as

a pedagogy of multiliteracies requires that the enormous role of agency in the meaning-making process be recognized, and in that recognition, it seeks to create a more productive, relevant, innovative, creative and even perhaps emancipatory, pedagogy. (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009, p. 175)

New London Group's (1996) pedagogy of multiliteracies underscores that meaning-making is a dynamic, transformative process and their view of constructing meaning (Available Designs, Designing, and The Redesigned) corresponds with the three dimensions of the phenomenon of teaching and learning illustrated in my model as the thought and action of creative process.

Available Designs (found representational forms); the Designing one does (the work you do when you make meaning, how you appropriate and revoice and transform Available Designs); and The Redesigned (how, through the act of Designing, the world and the person are transformed). (Cope & Kalantzis, 2013, p. 116)

Available Designs are the texts we encounter (seeing need for change). In Designing, we actively select and make meaning of the text (formulating ideas for change). The Redesigned is the text we produce in the act of designing that transforms the Available Design as well as the designer (enacting change). The Redesigned then becomes an Available Design for others to encounter, or for us to "re"-encounter.

This is how the world is left changed as a consequence of the transformational work of Designing. In the life of the meaning-maker, this process of transformation is the essence of learning. The act of representing to oneself the world and others' representations of it, transforms the learner him- or herself. The act of Designing leaves the designer Redesigned. As the designer makes meanings, they exert their subjectivity in the representational process, and as these meanings are always new ('insights', 'expressions', 'perspectives'), they remake themselves. (Cope & Kalantzis, 2013, p. 118)

A straightforward illustration of this process in planned practice is found in Brigita Strnad's Chap. 9 in this volume, "Children's Engagement with Contemporary Art in the Museum Context." Here, the Available Design is the adult-created art that the children, along with the museum pedagogue, select for engaging within a multi-modal dialogue of words, image, and movement (see Figs. 9.2 and 9.6). This multi-modal dialogue collectively and individually is the Designing, or meaning-making process, as the group interacts and each participant individually internalizes and responds. The Redesigned, or the artifacts from this meaning-making process, includes not only the child's own visual responses as can be viewed in Figs. 9.8 and 9.9 but also lingers in the meaningful conversations and interactions with the museum pedagogue and others, as the Designers "are Redesigned."

Similarly, in Crafton, Brennan, and Silvers' Chap. 4, "Creating a Critical Multiliteracies Curriculum: Repositioning Art in the Early Childhood Classroom," we see how first grade teacher, Mary Brennan, encounters a newspaper article about an elderly woman who was about to lose her home. This Available Design of photograph and headline became the focus of the children's Designing as Mary leads them to critically engage in multimodal meaning-making. The Redesigned (artifacts) are poignantly recounted in the chapter, highlighted with samples of dialogue, image, and correspondence from the elderly woman who became known as Grandma Ruth. However, what we also can see in this chapter is that Mary and her coauthors

view Mary's teaching as an Available Design. Through Mary's journal notes and continued reflection, she was Designing the "text" of her pedagogy. We read the excerpt where she notes transformative change (The Redesigned) as she moved from merely valuing the arts to actively engaging them as powerful forces in identity development and social engagement for a just society:

This experience [Grandma Ruth] is representative of so many opportunities this year for 1st graders to become empowered learners. Opening up space in the curriculum for students to think critically, to care, and to use the tools of 21st century learners was transformational for me. The support of our community of practice, the theory that I revisited, relearned, and was introduced to this year became the support I needed as I returned to teaching the multimodal world of 1st grade. (Mary, personal journal, 6/05) (Crafton, Brennan, & Silvers, Chap. 4, this volume)

This idea of teaching as text, and thus, an Available Design, is at the heart of transforming teaching through reflective practice. Throughout this volume, the authors not only share examples of children's Designing processes but also, we find examples like Mary Brennan's, where teaching is also approached as an Available Design. In my Chap. 15, "'Struggling Learner'... or Struggling Teacher?," I call upon teacher education to see the need for change: to seek out Available Designs for making meaning of their own programs and practices. In a like-minded work, Kelli Jo Kerry-Moran has devoted her Chap. 14, "Stretching Towards Multimodality," to looking at the decade of her evolving practice as a teacher educator in a recursive process of Designing. Her teaching and that of others become Available Designs from which she continues to make meaning and comes to be "Redesigned" herself. In other chapters, such as Chap. 13, "Empowering Preservice Teachers to Design a Classroom Environment that Serves as a Third Teacher," by Katherina Danko-McGhee and Ruslan Slutsky, we find formal inquiries into two Available Designs of teaching. Where in others, we find informal instances of teaching episodes as sites of the adults' meaning-making of practice.

As we engage with this volume, whether cover to cover or flipping back and forth across various sections, in print form, or on a screen, we recognize that we are encountering this book as a source of Available Designs from which we can select, not in the manner that Cope and Kalantzis (2013) decry as "the inert notions of acquisition, articulation, competence or interpretation that underpin the old literacy" (p. 117) but rather with the active engagement of a Designer of meaning, to bring forth our own "identity at the unique junction of intersecting lines of social and cultural experience" (p. 118).

Making Meaning as Creative Process: Available Designs

The challenges in undertaking a work that advocates for a multimodal view of teaching and learning centered on visual textual forms (e.g., drawing, photographs) include the general early childhood education community's seeming confusion surrounding the construct of multimodality and assumptions about children's "art," as

well as the practical modal limitations of a traditional book format. The authors have met these challenges with cogent descriptions and thoughtfully selected images and have aptly addressed the complex issues with current research from relevant fields.

While centering the chapters on experiences with visual textual forms allows for a closer study of how multimodality functions in early childhood “art” experiences, this also poses the need to ensure that the broader context of multimodal meaning-making remains in the forefront of discussions of pedagogy. In this section, I revisit some of the chapters to examine meaning-making processes in practice, as children and adults encounter Available Designs, engage in Designing, and leave us with the artifacts of The Redesigned.

A Rich and Powerful Pedagogy

James Haywood Rolling, Jr. demonstrates rich and powerful pedagogy in his Chap. 3, “Sacred Structures: Assembling Meaning, Constructing Self.” I begin with a close look at Rolling’s description of his learning design planned for, and implemented with, his second-grade students in order to draw out several key features that define a practice that notably models the creative and critical “art” of making meaning: complexity of thought; multimodal actions and interactions; a critically reflective and collaborative environment; sustained, meaningful engagement; and the adult’s observable respect for children’s multimodal production and interpretation.

In this example that I have highlighted from Rolling’s Chap. 3, the author describes a component of the children’s yearlong study, “Me and My Community.” “Community” is a theme frequently initiated by teachers to be explored in preschool and primary grade classrooms. Such units often include an excursion into the children’s neighborhood and/or the creation of displays that range from painted empty milk carton “buildings” to crayon-colored maps of Main Street. However, in Rolling’s example, we see he has introduced opportunity for the children’s complex thought: a space for higher-level thinking that is not often observed in early childhood renditions of the “community” theme. As a component within the yearlong theme, Rolling challenges his young learners with the task of reflecting upon the concept of “sacred” to plan and build models of structures in which their conceptualizations of sacred activities could be practiced. Aware of his critical role as teacher, Rolling carefully prepares the children to engage in this complex level of thought through a range of multimodal actions and interactions.

Recalling the sacred structures that were among the buildings visited on their field trip, Rolling compiles slideshows of images to use in his dialogue with the children as they examine how buildings can hold “hidden meanings” in the shapes, colors, and elements of the architecture. Following this collaborative inquiry, he assigns them to write their ideas about structures they want to build on a special worksheet that keeps them focused on the ideas, asking them to describe the parts and explain what the parts were designed to symbolize. The dialogue is oral, visual, written, and enacted in demonstration and construction. The multimodal meaning-making is ongoing as the children and teacher engage in the critically reflective and

collaborative space with the children drawing upon earlier work and pressing forward with evolving ideas. In Rolling's excerpt from the video documentation of his student, Oscar's work, we see the depth of the young child's thinking and meaning-making, as he and his teacher are transformed with the new meanings made. Throughout the remainder of his chapter, the author offers further compelling descriptions and images of his work with other young children as they explore their evolving identities within the societies they inhabit and help create. The respect that he affords the children as capable and talented thinkers and meaning-makers is evident in his planning, interactions, and reflection upon his teaching.

Reflection on Our Designs for Learning: Five Key Features

It is important to draw attention here to these five key features that emerge from examining this example of Rolling's pedagogy and that are evident across the collected works in this volume as each author demonstrates the creative "art" of making meaning. As noted at the start of my discussion, Rolling's Available Design:

- Promotes complexity of thought.
- Incorporates multimodal actions and interactions.
- Establishes a critically reflective and collaborative environment.
- Produces sustained, meaningful engagement.
- Demonstrates adult's observable respect for children's multimodal production and interpretation.

The early childhood educator's critical role in creating spaces for these key features in designs for learning is expressed throughout the chapters. Young children's meaning-making through interpretation and production of visual texts can reach high levels of sophistication when adults design challenging opportunities for meaning-making within supportive contexts for transformative learning.

Therefore, as practitioners, parents, and policymakers, we are called upon to question those too commonly observed practices when adults prompt young children to make meaningless products in the name of "art" or "creativity." While teacher-directed projects like the paper bag owl example shown in Fig. 16.2 may serve as an exercise in following directions or offer practice in gluing, this type of activity fails to contribute substantively to children's learning and development. As underscored throughout this volume, mere use of glue or paint does not denote art, creativity, or multimodal language, literacy, and learning. Therefore, instead of subjecting our young children to such mindless activities, we need to ensure that they have frequent opportunities to experience the key features found in rich and powerful pedagogy as demonstrated by Rolling and others in this volume.

These key features that I have put forth align with established respected models of practice, such as the schools of Reggio Emilia, that are already well known to most early childhood educators. Yet as pointed out in my discussion in Chap. 15, despite awareness of good learning designs, our unexamined beliefs can result in our holding onto mindless practices like the paper bag owl activity. In this conclud-

Fig. 16.2 Teacher-directed activities that result in children's meaningless products like this paper bag owl example fail to contribute substantively to children's learning and development



ing chapter, we are reminded of the importance of reflecting upon the texts of our designs for learning. The five key features drawn from my discussion of Rolling's pedagogy can offer another lens through which we can reflect upon our practice. Revisiting the chapters through the brief overviews that I provide in this concluding chapter can facilitate reflection through the lens of these five features that have emerged across the collected works.

Threading throughout the chapters in this volume, we can trace the five key features as a major line connecting the experiences of meaning-making across the diverse contexts of the authors' works. For instance, in revisiting Crafton, Brennan, and Silvers' chapter discussed earlier, we see qualities in Mary Brennan's practice linked to those key features that I have pointed out were modeled by James Haywood Rolling, Jr. In the following subsections, I touch briefly on how these features emerge in the work of other authors across the volume. I do not list every key feature that is evident in each chapter, but rather, I pull out various threads that stand out as particularly effective demonstrations or that indicate a variance in the feature that is worth noting.

Complexity of Thought

In Margaret Brooks' Chap. 2, "Drawing to Learn," we note how she (as the teacher), in a kindergarten classroom, has prompted children's complexity of thought as she facilitates their ongoing study of light. Her description of Ed's investigation into the

workings of a flashlight that produced three levels of light demonstrates his complexity of thought as he engaged in multimodal meaning-making (talk, drawing, viewing, enacting) to understand how it worked (see Figs. 2.5, 2.6, and 2.7 in this volume). As Brooks underscores, teachers must acknowledge that drawing and talk contribute to children's higher mental functioning, and therefore practitioners should thoughtfully plan opportunities to promote and support multimodal meaning-making that encourages children's complex thinking.

Children are curious. They wonder how and why the world works. When adults provide supportive environments for exploration of children's questions, even very young children are eager to engage with complex ideas. In Chap. 6, "'Look Mother! Mother Look!' – Young Children Exploring Life with Their Mother," Susanna Kinnunen and Johanna Einarsdóttir provide an account of 3-year-old Anna's meaning-making of the events of her little sister's birth through their description of the child's multimodal narration. Like Daniel and the pirate ship drawing that I described in Chap. 1 of this volume, young Anna did not plan to draw a bear, but as her beginning marks began to suggest a shape that resembled one, she proceeded to engage in a multimodal storytelling of a mother and baby bear (see Fig. 6.4). Through her multimodal narrative and in interaction with her mother and sister, Anna shares her complex thinking about her own family's new arrival of her baby sister.

Multimodal Actions and Interactions

Each of the chapters is notably focused upon multimodal actions and interactions surrounding visual texts, but it is useful to examine aspects put forth by several of the authors. The previously discussed bear and baby example is one of several multimodal narrations that Kinnunen and Einarsdóttir (Chap. 6, this volume) include in their chapter that provide us with important understandings about multimodal meaning-making. In a subsection of their chapter, under the heading *Everything Is Not Seen – Being "Beside" and Drawing Together*, and through the accompanying drawing (Fig. 6.5), we get a glimpse of how Anna becomes a part of her drawing as she constructs her picture while storying the experience: all the while, talking, gesturing, and imagining as her pencil draws the curtains closed and tenderly covers her sister with a blanket. As the title of the subsection implies, the adult gains much from entering in the space to co-draw and be beside the child as she engages in the multimodal narrative.

Kristine Sunday's intriguing story of Lucy further demonstrates the need for adults to be "beside" and engaged in children's drawing events:

Lucy would ask me draw something but before I could finish the work, she would push her own marker over my own and scribble with frantic motion to obscure the picture. My request for an explanation went unanswered for several class periods, until one morning, she began to talk while she scribbled. Pushing the tip of her marker, in rapid circular motions, she playfully announced, "Now you are dying. You are almost dead. You're lifeline is running out." And with the final verbal explanation, proceeded to draw rectangular shaped

boxes in the lower quadrants of the page. With each explosive action, Lucy would fill in a small portion of the box. It was then that I realized what had previously been a mystery; we were playing a video game. (Sunday, Chap. 5, this volume)

Although we, like Reggio Emilia's Loris Malaguzzi, may wish to defend the school and culture from "stealing" the child's "a hundred languages," (Edwards, Gandini, & Forman, 1998, p. 3), this is not enough. As parents, teachers, and caregivers, not only must we support young children, as Anna and Lucy were supported in the highlighted scenarios, but we must actively work to nurture development in using multiple "languages" in order to enhance children's capacity to make meaning. In my introductory chapter, "The Creative 'Art' of Making Meaning," (see Narey, Chap.1, this volume) I describe a model of an adult's multimodal interactions with a toddler that encourage synaesthesia, or the

process of emergence, where meanings presented in two or more co-present semiotic modes, e.g. the visual/pictorial and oral/linguistic, combine in such a way that new forms of meaning may obtain... a whole that is irreducible to and represents more than the sum of its parts. (Nelson, 2006, p. 58, as cited in Narey, Chap. 1, this volume)

My co-drawing with the toddler as we engaged in reflective talk and actions promoted his synaesthetic capacities beyond contributing to his visual language development.

As Daniel and I drew, I would extend my modality of speech to embody constructs of fast and slow by modulating the tempo of my spoken words to the lines I was drawing, or by changing my pitch to a high squeaky tone while drawing short little scribbles with a thin drawing tool or a low resounding pitch when I used a fatter tool. Daniel, already quite verbal, appeared to enjoy this playful use of voice and would experiment with his tone as he drew alongside me and when sharing his scribbles with his father. (Narey, Chap. 1, this volume)

This example from a home environment is even more relevant now due to the increasing number of formal learning environments for toddlers. If we do not want the school and culture to steal children's hundred languages, we must utilize models of multimodal interactions like this not only in the home but also begin early with our youngest learners in contexts outside the home.

The photograph of two pairs of hands (Fig. 8.4) from "Children, Elders, and Multimodal Arts Curricula" (Chap. 8, this volume) by Rachel Heydon and Susan O'Neill speaks to the multimodal interactions precipitated by intentional design of an intergenerational art class. As the chapter authors point out, all people's meaning-making, young and elderly, can be enhanced through their multimodal interactions. The digital technology utilized in the learning design supported this multimodal experience.

The formal learning space of the primary classroom is a critical space for careful design of instruction that incorporates multimodal action and interaction. Davidson, Danby, and Thorpe detail the many multimodal resources employed by the teacher and children as they make meaning of the YouTube video in Chap. 12. Not only viewing and reflective talk but also gaze, gesture, laughter, and shifts in body position were multimodal interactions that the researchers observed were used in interpreting the visual text of the video.

In addition to incorporating multimodal actions and interactions as we engage in work with multimodal texts like video, television, and film, it is important to recognize the need for teachers to develop opportunities for critical analysis of both visual and other modal aspects, alone and in combination. In Chap. 14, Kelli Jo Kerry-Moran underscores this as she brings her class of preservice teachers to understand that

film was not merely a visual art form, an aural art form, or a performance art form but a multimodal text. While the students were aware that film is multimodal, most had not considered how the sum of the modalities in film is more than its parts. These exercises in deconstructing the film and considering the various modalities in isolation from one another enriched the group's understanding of how those modalities work together to create and even manipulate meaning-making. (Kerry-Moran, Chap. 14, this volume)

Critically Reflective and Collaborative Environment

Revisiting Chap. 12, we note that Davidson, Danby, and Thorpe reveal the teacher's capacity to effectively create a critically reflective and collaborative environment for children's interpretation of the visual aspects of the YouTube video, and in that process, the teacher also models the role of multimodal interactions in negotiating joint meanings.

In this final extract we see the way in which the teacher seamlessly shifted from viewing and talking about the video, to talk about what the children might do in the future. Talk was used to further explore the question of how a hole got in the bridge and opportunities were created for children to express their own experiences that relate in some way to the problem and to suggest possibilities for exploring the problem further through their own activities. (Davidson, Danby, & Thorpe, Chap. 12, this volume)

Referring to Brooks' Chap. 2 again, the description about the light trap, planned and constructed by Stuart and Anton, gives us a rich example of young children's multimodal interactions as they collaborate and critically reflect on their plans and revisions (see Figs. 2.15 and 2.16). The multimodal experience enabled them to share and extend individual knowledge as well as collective knowledge.

Stuart suggested a mirror be placed in the tower with the windows. Anton ignored that suggestion and pointed out that the drawbridge was hollow. He reasoned that the light would only be able to go up the tower, through the drawbridge and down the other tower. There would then only be one path for the light to travel and it would not be able to go anywhere else. This plan seemed to make the mirror redundant. Stuart suggested trying to incorporate the mirror at the end of the drawbridge. The two boys discussed the necessity of the mirror. Stuart insisted that it was the mirror that made the light "bounce off" and "keep moving". When Stuart mentioned, "keep moving" Anton paused and suddenly seemed to understand the purpose of the mirror. If they placed a mirror strategically at both ends of the drawbridge then the light would be forced to travel back and forwards across the drawbridge indefinitely thus creating the perfect trap. Anton revised his drawing to show how the light would bounce between the mirrors at either end of the drawbridge. Stuart also revised his drawing to incorporate Anton's ideas with his own. Drawing helped the two boys take some initial

and tentative ideas about how to trap light and elaborate and extend them through their drawing, talking, and building. (Brooks, Chap. 2, this volume)

In my Chap. 15, “‘Struggling Learner’... or Struggling Teacher?,” I focus on the need to teach young children how to critically reflect and offer the example of the children’s collaborative peer critique (see Fig. 15.5, this volume). In this example, Ryan’s thoughtful analysis of Tyler’s drawing demonstrates the critically reflective and collaborative environment that the preservice teacher established in her second grade classroom. Through teacher educators’ effective modeling of critical reflection in the university classroom, preservice teachers can learn how they can develop young learners’ capacities for critical analysis.

Rosemary Richards’ Chap. 7, “Young Children’s Drawing and Storytelling,” gives us the opportunity to understand how a young child’s multimodal story of Farmer Bob helped him to mediate his immigrant experience and identity. A particular note in regard to his process is the critically reflective and collaborative supportive relationship between his mother and the researcher as the mother was able to share the child’s reflective talk and multimodal interactions that the researcher was not able to observe.

In Chap. 11, “Studio Thinking,” Kimberly Sheridan shares an example from her recent research in the MAKESHOP space at the Children’s Museum of Pittsburgh to illustrate how the studio approach works in early childhood contexts. Here, we see how the MAKESHOP artist-educator’s interactions with the young child visitor support the child’s critical reflection as the child makes her stuffed animal. The critically reflective and collaborative environment allowed for the child to select the problem and plan and enact her approach with the support of the artist-educator who Sheridan (Chap. 11, this volume) explains, “anticipates technical challenges and key decision points and provides ‘just in time’ teaching and help.”

Sustained, Meaningful Engagement Over Time

Throughout the volume, we note that the meaning-making experiences described are not isolated events but rather are situated as points of evolving understandings in which children (and the adults who work with them) make discoveries, reveal inaccuracies in thinking, and encounter more questions within a broader context of learning. As we have noted, Margaret Brooks (Chap. 2), James Haywood Rolling, Jr. (Chap. 3), and Crafton, Brennan, and Silvers (Chap. 4) have provided instances of children’s meaning-making as these were developing over the academic year and beyond. However, even in the out of school contexts described by Heise (Chap. 10), Sunday (Chap. 5), and Strnad (Chap. 9), the children’s meaning-making experiences are connected and evolve over a period of time, wherein children and adults can meaningfully explore an idea in more depth.

The commonly observed early childhood classroom practices of rotating young children through an art station with minimal adult engagement in the child’s work or directing one-shot lessons like the paper bag owl activity mentioned earlier do not

encourage environments for sustained, meaningful engagement over time. Such shallow activities contrast sharply with the numerous rich examples of children's engaged and meaningful learning presented by the authors of the chapters in this text.

Adult's Observable Respect for Children's Multimodal Production and Interpretation

The authors' underlying respect for children's multimodal production and interpretation is apparent throughout the volume and is the reason that they have devoted their professional lives to this work. Yet it is useful to highlight important demonstrations of this respect that were explicitly discussed. The first is offered by Kinnunen and Einarsdóttir (Chap. 6) and deals with this respect for children from a researcher's perspective. Although one of the authors (Susanna) is also the mother of the children discussed in her research, she did not position her daughters as subjects of her study but rather explains in great detail her thought process and how she engaged the children as "co-researchers." The second important example is demonstrated throughout Kristine Sunday's Chap. 5, "Drawing as a Relational Event." Here, we see the author (as teacher) engage in regular multimodal dialogue with her young learners. Rarely do we observe early childhood educators demonstrating this respect of using the child's multiple languages. Rather, most adults respond to children's drawings with oral or written comments instead of drawing along with children in a mutual visual dialogue. Finally, respect for children's multimodal production and interpretation extends to respecting the contexts in which they live. Donalyn Heise (Chap. 10, this volume) brings out this important point as she describes her work with children who experience homelessness.

Making Sense of the World Together: Multimodal Visions

This book is about bringing "sense" to the diverse texts of our experiences in twenty-first century early childhood education: "sense" as related to modalities (sight, hearing) and "sense" in terms of making meaning. Specifically, the book is intended to: (1) provoke readers to examine their current understandings of language, literacy, and learning through a multimodal lens; (2) provide a starting point for constructing broader, multimodal views of what it might mean to "make meaning"; and (3) underscore the production and interpretation of visual texts as meaning-making processes that are especially critical to early childhood education in the twenty-first century.

While this is not a book about teaching children art, the authors have offered a substantive understanding of art knowledge, practice, and pedagogy, and while it also is not about teaching multimodality, the chapters provide a supportive theoretic-

cal and practical basis for understanding how multimodal perspectives can contribute to developing the capacity for meaning-making that goes beyond the current narrow focus on verbal language and literacy. Through examining these authors' ideas about children's production and interpretation of visual textual forms ("art"), we can begin understand not only the substance of the language and its value but also the interplay of a wide variety of influences on its development. Building upon these understandings, we can move closer to understandings of other modes (e.g., sound, movement) and a better realization of how to support children's synaesthetic capacities for multimodal meaning-making. By engaging in the creative and critical "art" of making meaning, caring adults across the world can move forward with our children and each other to explore our global futures.

References

- Argyris, C., & Schön, D. (1978). *Organizational learning: A theory of action perspective*. Reading, MA: Addison Wesley.
- Cope, B., & Kalantzis, M. (2009). "Multiliteracies": New literacies, new learning. *Pedagogies: An International Journal*, 4(3), 164–195.
- Cope, B., & Kalantzis, M. (2013). "Multiliteracies": New literacies, new learning. In M. Hawkins (Ed.), *Framing languages and literacies: Socially situated views and perspectives* (pp. 105–135). New York: Routledge.
- Dewey, J. (1916). *Democracy and education*. New York: Macmillan.
- Dewey, J. (1933). *How we think: A restatement of reflective thinking to the education process*. Boston: D.C. Heath.
- Edwards, C. P., Gandini, L., & Forman, G. E. (Eds.). (1998). *The hundred languages of children: The Reggio Emilia approach – advanced Reflections* (2nd ed.). Greenwich, CT: Ablex.
- Goodman, K. S. (1996). *Ken Goodman on reading*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Joas, H. (1996). *The creativity of action*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.
- Narey, M. J. (2008). *Social and psychological theories of creativity and reflective practice: A conceptual analysis*. Paper presented at the 2008 annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association. <http://www.aera.net/repository>
- Nelson, M. E. (2006). Mode, meaning, and synaesthesia in multimedia L2 writing. *Language Learning & Technology*, 10(2), 56–76.
- New London Group. (1996). A pedagogy of multiliteracies: Designing social futures. *Harvard Educational Review*, 66(1), 60–92.
- Schon, D. (1983). *The reflective practitioner: How professionals think in action*. New York: Basic Books.

Marilyn J. Narey Narey Educational Consulting, LLC, Pittsburgh, PA, USA

Dr. Marilyn J. Narey is a scholar, researcher, and teacher/teacher educator specializing in multimodal literacy, creativity, and transdisciplinary curriculum. As founder of Narey Educational Consulting, LLC, she currently leads professional development, curricular design services, and research initiatives for diverse educational institutions and community groups. Dr. Narey's background as a tenured Associate Professor of Education at East Stroudsburg University of Pennsylvania, as teacher with 20 years of experience in K-12 public schools, and as a recipient of numerous awards for her design of innovative curricular, community-based projects and partnerships, serves to inform her ongoing engagement in a variety of educational initiatives.