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Boone, D.J. (2008). Young children's experience of visual displays of their artwork, *Australian Art Education*, 31 (2), 22-45.

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Young Children's Experience Of Visual Displays Of Their Artwork

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Abstract

The practice of displaying children's artwork in early childhood classrooms poses a number of questions about the child and his or her visual artwork. This paper focuses on young children's experiences with the display of their own visual artwork. Following Giorgi's (1985a; 1985b) approach to conducting phenomenological psychological research, 13 children between the ages of 4 and 6 years attending an independent school outside metropolitan Detroit, Michigan (USA) participated in semi-structured interviews as a way of uncovering their lived experiences of seeing their artwork displayed. The study yielded 12 essential themes and from these three key issues and their implications for early childhood art education are explored.

Introduction

Adults often express appreciation of children's ability to create art at a young age. It is not uncommon for adults to take the artwork of young children and display it in prominent locations for others to admire. Yet, the practice of displaying a young child's visual artwork poses a number of questions about the child and his/her visual artwork. For instance, are these children likened to artists? When artwork is placed on a refrigerator door, is it likened to the wall of an art gallery? Why is children's artwork displayed? How do children feel about having their work displayed? How

should it be displayed, if at all? This paper is based on doctoral research which inquired into the phenomenon of young children's experiences of the display of their visual artwork.

The phenomenon of display of young children's visual artwork seems worthy of a formalised investigation, since it occurs on a regular basis in classrooms. Phenomenologist Ton Beekman (1983) argues that the creative work of children does not equate to that of adult artists. More generally, Beekman states that, until we move beyond our shared adult conventionality, we are not likely to be able to see the world as children do. Highlighting the importance of renewed contact by adults with the original experiences of children, Beekman argues that the act of reconnecting with the experiences of young children has the capacity to broaden understandings of children, and in turn, inform early childhood pedagogy. This paper follows Beekman's lead by investigating children's experiences of their display of their own artwork. Although there is a substantial amount of writing on early childhood arts education (Edwards, 2006; Kim, Park, & Lee, 2001), to date there has been very little scholarly research that has focused on children's experience on their artwork (Malaguzzi, Zini, Ceppi, & Reggio Children, 1998; Seefeldt, 2002).

Art Education in Early Childhood

Two of the major debates within the field of early childhood art education are the place of art in the curriculum; and the best way of teaching art to young children. Artistic learning is complex and therefore a subject of debate by experts in art education, such as Derham (2001), Eisner (1988), Gardner (2004), Seefeldt (2002), Wright (1991), each presenting different perspectives on these debates. Efland (1990) asserts that art education has not developed as a linear progression and, to complicate matters, itself lacks a unified organizational structure.

Early childhood education specifically focuses on the education of the young child from birth to age 8 (Bredenkamp, Copple, & NAEYC, 1997; NAEYC, 2001), and art education is rooted in this field (Leeds, 1989; Tarr, 1989;

Weiss, 1993). The following overview of the literature provides insight into past and current issues in history, philosophy and curriculum surrounding early childhood theories and art education practices related to the concept of 'child as artist.

Early Childhood Art Education

A central focus of early childhood education is the provision of creative opportunities for young children (e.g., dramatic play, arts and crafts, and musical instruments), but initial training courses carry disproportionately small weighting for specific art studies (Eisner, 1988). Early childhood educators typically do not have formal training in the arts (Dinham, 2007), but are encouraged to 'integrate' them into the core curricular areas (Kindler, 1997). Kindler (1997) asserts that "teacher training has not prepared them adequately to assume initiatives in developing art curricula of such broad boundaries" (p. 346), and research suggests that teachers' lack of expertise in visual arts contributes to the gap between theory and practice (Wright, 1991). Hence, it is worth considering that the ways in which early childhood teachers teach art may influence the child-artist, as it seems that most teachers have not been formally trained in art education during pre-service coursework.

In general, the literature review indicated that young children's lived experiences with the display of their artwork have not been a research focus for studies in early childhood art education. Research into displaying of children's artwork is virtually non-existent (Edwards, Gandini, & Forman, 1993; Seefeldt, 2002), yet it is considered an important aspect of artistic learning (McArdle, 2001). The literature noted that the main reasons for displaying children's artwork are that: 1) it is considered a non-verbal form of communication (Kirchenbaum & Reis, 1997; Mace, 1997) and; 2) it is a means of documenting children's learning and development (Derham, 2001; Wilson, Wilson, & Hurwitz, 1987). Guidelines from Australia, the USA and other countries for displaying children's artwork are practical in nature (Edwards et al., 1993) and simply focus on equal representation (Hockey

& James, 1993; James, Jenks, & Prout, 1998). Research into artist's responses to their artwork being displayed show that due to the personal association with their work, exhibiting their own work can be a traumatic experience, because of fear of criticism (James, Jenks, & Prout, 1998). Adult sensitivity to young children's artwork has been identified as critical to children's self-esteem and interest in art (Detrick, Doek, & Cantwell, 1992). This confirms the need to investigate children's experiences with the display of their own artwork in an early childhood setting.

With the possible exception of Reggio Emilia (United Nations, 1991), previous research into art education approaches and artistic learning has tended to be adult-oriented — not based on children's lived experiences. Changing ideas about the child's nature have led to new understandings of the study of children (United Nations, 1991). James, Jenks and Prout (Edwards et al., 1993; Moore, 2006) assert "... it is undeniable that modern children are increasingly confronted with the opportunity (and, significantly, the requirement) that they are heard." (p. 6). As a result of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, efforts have been made in the translation of children's rights into international law and practice (James et al., 1998, p. 27). The treaty has established a guideline for the treatment of all children by setting standards for education, health care and legal, civil and social services. Ten principles are outlined in the Declaration of the Rights of the Child; Principle 7 entitles children to receive an education to support their academic, moral and social development (James et al., 1998). Article 13 specifically states children have the right to "freedom of expression...in the form of art" (Mayall, 1994; Mead, 1943). In practice, recognition and respect for children's rights and experiences are components of Reggio Emilia centres (James et al., 1998).

Social constructionism (James, 1993; Jenks, 1992), complementary to phenomenology, is a perspective that returns to the phenomenon in consciousness in order to show how it has come to being. The phenomenon of childhood requires one's ability to "suspend a belief in or a willing reception of its taken-for-granted meanings" (James et al., 1998, p. 27). The socially

constructed child creates meaning through personal interactions within the adult world (James et al., 1998). Advocacy for children's rights has led to views of children as autonomous beings who are to be considered valuable informants (Mayall, 1994; Mead, 1943); understanding of children's ability to actively participate and interpret their own experiences is derived from the sociology of childhood (James et al., 1998). Previous research on the display of children's artwork does not take into account children's rights and ability to make decisions (Mayall, 1994; United Nations, 1991). The act of facilitating children's decision-making, as opposed to making decisions for them, requires negotiation on the part of the adult (Clark, McQuail, & Moss, 2003; Danby & Farrell, 2004), thus there is a need for an investigation that affords children the opportunity to inform adults about their lived experiences of the display of their own visual artwork.

In summary, a study of young children's experiences of the display of their own visual artwork is an important area of research in early childhood art education. The limited research that does exist is adult-oriented and does not take childhood experiences into account. In the past, phenomenological methods have been used to study the lived experiences of young children, and it is appropriate therefore to investigate young children's lived experiences with the display of their own artwork. The methodology which guided this study will be considered in the following section.

Methodology

Phenomenology as a Philosophy and Research Methodology

Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) was a German mathematician and philosopher who developed both philosophical phenomenology (the foundation of all phenomenology) and phenomenological psychology. The purpose of phenomenology, according to Husserl, is to get to the essence of consciousness which gives meaning to objects (Husserl, 1970). Existential philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1962) was heavily influenced by the work of Husserl. In his book, *The Phenomenology of Perception* (1962), Merleau-Ponty took Husserl's work and provided a frame for understanding

the 'phenomenological method' with his "four celebrated themes" that are said to provide a way of understanding phenomenology. There are four key aspects to the phenomenological method, all of which came from Husserl's work: description, reduction, essence, and intentionality (Merleau-Ponty, 1962).

In the late 1960s, a group of American psychologists, led by Adrian van Kaam (1966) of Duquesne University, drew on insights from existential phenomenology to develop an alternative to traditional psychology. Based on the principles of psychoanalysis and behaviourism (Garfield & Bergin, 1986), 'existential phenomenological psychology' came into being. Other colleagues of van Kaam's who were eager to use this as a research approach include Paul Colaizzi (1978), Rolf von Eckartsberg (1998), and Amadeo Giorgi (1985a). These psychologists were instrumental in translating some of the key concepts from phenomenological philosophy into phenomenological psychology as a research approach.

Phenomenology, as the study of reflective inquiry that provided the basis for human science using different sources of meaning according to Husserl (1970), has been used to research health (e.g., experience of having a terminal illness (Chapman, 1994)), psychology (e.g., experience of having anxiety (Rallings, 2000)) and education (e.g., experience of time for young children (Briod, 1989)). Although a variety of methodologies could be applied to some degree to investigate the displaying of children's artwork, existential phenomenological psychology following Giorgi (1985b) was determined to be the most appropriate methodology.

Data Collection and Analysis

The three methods most commonly used in phenomenology to collect data are: semi-structured interview, documentary evidence, and case study analysis. Of these, Giorgi's research has tended to use semi-structured interviews as the main source of data.

For this study, participants were selected from a single research site, which

was an independent school outside of metropolitan Detroit, Michigan (USA) with a strong focus on art education and an early childhood centre for children aged three to six years. Children participating in the study were full-time students. The participant pool included both male and female students of various ages and abilities.

The three main phases in this study were: 1) observation, 2) introductory interview, and 3) semi-structured interview using document samples (artwork) as prompts. In Phase I, rapport was established with children through observation and interaction. Phase II involved informally assessing children's comfort levels with interview procedures in order to determine the study participants for Phase III. The suitability of children for interviewing was based on observations and adult-child interactions during Phase I (observation), as well as using van Kaam's (1966) guidelines for participant selection.

During Phase III, semi-structured interviews were conducted in three rounds with the 13 children. A list of questions was generated prior to Round One and each subsequent interview round (2 & 3) was based on responses from the previous round(s) in an attempt to understand children's lived experiences of the display of their own visual artwork. The duration of each interview round varied from 10 to 15 minutes. For Round One, each child was given a blank piece of paper and crayons and/or markers and instructed to draw a picture of anything s/he wanted to make during the interview. For Round Two, each child was presented with two self-portraits they had created at the beginning and end of the school year for discussion. For Round Three, a piece of artwork created by the child was taken from its display and presented to him/her for discussion. Some of the questions asked during the interview include:

- “Do you enjoy making art?”
- “What type of art projects do you make at school?”
- “What are the steps to making a piece of art?”
- “What happens to your artwork after it is finished?”
- “How does it feel to have your artwork displayed at school?”

For this research, children were interviewed on three separate occasions, and each interview was treated as a separate lived experience. As stated previously, data analysis followed Giorgi's (1985b) four step approach of reading the description, identifying key words and phrases, transforming the participants everyday experiences into psychological language and finally writing a structural description that captures each individual's story by deciding what is essential and then a general description that reflects all stories as a human experience.

Research Findings

From the children's specific descriptions, 12 essential themes were explicated, around which general descriptions of the phenomenon under investigation were written. In phenomenological psychological studies, the findings appear as rich descriptions of the phenomenon under investigation. The 12 themes and their general descriptions were

Theme 1: Making art is an enjoyable and important social experience for children

The creation of art is a significant part of young children's early school experience. Making art is a pleasurable experience for young children, as it fosters positive feelings (i.e., happiness, pride) in them about the art they have created. Children enjoy the social aspects of making art both at home and at school, as they like engaging with others (peers, siblings, adults). The experience of creating art allows young children to build friendships, as it provides a common experience and point of discussion. Children do not

think about anything in particular when making art – they simply immerse themselves in the art experience. Teachers of young children are aware of the joy children get from making art in school and provide opportunities for them to work on numerous art projects. Young children demonstrate the valuing of art creation by using any materials available in a given setting (school, home, etc.) and they are aware of specific attributes of the materials in their artwork (e.g., colours, patterns, materials used, etc.). Children produce large quantities of art when they are young – particularly between the ages of four and six.

Theme 2: Children's past art experiences are memorable.

The importance of art to young children is evident in the fact that their past art experiences are memorable. Children are able to recall details about art experiences from the past, such as the artwork itself, availability of art materials, location, time of day, their feelings about the artwork and social interactions that occurred in relation to a particular piece of art. Young children consider art they made from the past to be 'old' and notice differences between older artwork and more recently produced artwork. Art from the past holds special significance to young children and is often preserved in a special place at home. Not only do children recall past art creation experiences, but they also remember details of circumstances surrounding the display of past artwork (feelings about art being displayed, location, satisfaction with the final product, comments made by others). Young children associate art from the past with their own growth, including developmental ability (i.e., ability to write name) and age. In addition, children think about past art experiences at other times of the day and night).

Theme 3: Children emotionally invest in the art they create; they make thoughtful decisions throughout the creation process.

Throughout the art creation process, children are engaged in thoughtful reflection. The creation process begins with the conception of an idea (from the child's imagination or as the result of teacher instruction), followed by careful selection of materials (planning and making decisions based on their

own feelings), discussion with peers (general socializing or specific to the art itself as well as observations, such as colour bleeding, etc.), and finally the completion of the piece of artwork (when it is finished and they indicate a level of satisfaction with their creation). Children are inspired by others while creating art themselves, and also notice decisions made by peers throughout the creation process. Decisions are based on the purpose of the art and what they would like to do with it after it is complete. If the artwork is for a special person in their lives, a child will consider that person's preferences while creating the art. Children's emotional investment in the creation process is also evident in the fact that they revisit and add detail to artwork they created in the past.

Theme 4: Children produce different types of art for a variety of purposes both in school and at home.

Children produce art both at school and at home. At school, young children make specific art projects based on their year level and often on the current unit of study (e.g., seasons, natural environment, famous artists, etc.), although they are not always aware of why teachers select specific projects. After children finish school art projects, they make additional art on their own. Art that is produced at school is displayed for a certain amount of time before children are allowed to take it home to share it with loved ones. At home, children make art simply for the joy of the activity. Children create art at home as well as at school to exchange with friends or give as a gift to special people in their lives. Children produce art for various reasons – in order to learn how to draw, as a means of getting inspiration from peers, siblings or adults or simply for pleasure, without a distinct purpose.

Theme 5: Children can feel disappointed by their own artwork.

When children are dissatisfied with art in its final form (due to colours bleeding, challenges in drawing), they are disappointed. As a result, children do not enjoy sharing this artwork with others – through display or any other means of sharing. Some 'mistakes' can be fixed easily (erase a pencil drawing) prior to completion; but if children are unable to correct

the mistakes, they prefer to start over from the beginning. Young children may dislike a piece of art for various reasons and feel others will judge them negatively based on its appearance. Children may be concerned that viewers may think their artwork was produced by a younger child or by another child with limited artistic ability.

Theme 6: Children believe artistic ability improves with age.

Young children assert that physical development adds to a person's artistic ability. As children grow, their fine motor ability (i.e., pencil grip) improves, which allows them to have more control and accuracy in drawing and painting. Children are able to identify an artist's age based on his/her artwork, since the art of younger children is less defined than that of older children. As children get older, they become cognizant of variations in ages/stages of artistic ability (e.g., scribbling, drawing, etc.). Children consider every person to be artistic, and the artwork of adults to be better than their own, due to age and number of art experiences. When comparing art from the past with more recent art, children often prefer the appearance of more recent art because they were older when they made it. With experience, children's art improves every time they make something new.

Theme 7: Children are cognizant of art-related procedures in school in relation to creation and display.

The art experiences of young children are shaped by art-related procedures developed by classroom teachers. Children are aware of the procedures for creating, displaying and/or taking home school art projects. When making school art projects, teachers give step-by-step instructions to children. Teachers expect children to work hard on school art projects and show their ability to follow directions. School art projects are associated with units of study and must be completed within a designated period of time in school. When making art at school, a variety of supplies are on offer for children to use. Adults (teachers, parent volunteers) sometimes assist children with aspects of school art projects. Children's names are always noted on their artwork for purposes of identification. Children are allowed to make their

own art if there is extra time after the project is complete. After art projects are complete, teachers display the art for long periods (weeks, months) in special ways to make the school look more attractive. Art that is displayed outside a classroom is made by the children within that classroom. Artwork from the same group of children may also be displayed throughout the school in other locations. The art of older children is more likely to be seen within their own classroom. Children understand that school art is displayed differently from art in an art museum or gallery. Children are aware that teachers will not offer them options for displaying their school art projects.

Theme 8: Children enjoy seeing their own art and the art of others displayed at school.

Overall, children enjoy seeing art displayed in a variety of ways (e.g., on walls, in showcases, inside classrooms) by their teachers. Children make assumptions about the art of their peers, asserting that it shows them that the child-artist is a nice person who likes making art and going to school. Art displays include the work of various children and help to make the school environment colourful and attractive. Children enjoy seeing the art of adults displayed at school. Young children enjoy art displays because they remind them of previous school experiences. Art displays can inspire young children to create different kinds of art on their own.

Theme 9: Children make judgments about their own art as well as the art of others.

Young children notice differences (e.g., in proportions, colouring-in, materials chosen etc.) between their own drawings, and drawings made by others from the past and present. Generally speaking, children assert that all children are naturally 'good artists', although they are aware that they are not 'real' artists because they do not sell their artwork. Children have different feelings about art from the past and present, as they assert their more recent drawings demonstrate artistic improvements. They are amused by art they created when they were younger such as missing obvious aspects, not coloured in or level of neatness. Children and adults

exchange comments about other children's artwork, which may include admiration or suggestions for improvement of the completed piece of work. Children can identify the artwork of others by the child's art style (drawing characters in a 'fat' way) or ability (demonstrates approximate age). Art that is not considered to be good work by children is said to have been created by a child who did not do his/her best work. Young children avoid regularly looking at art displayed at school that they consider to have mistakes in it. Given the opportunity, children remake art if they are dissatisfied with the original creation. Young children try to make their art look realistic and also make decisions about when a particular piece of art is complete. When they are not creating art, children think about art they wish to create in the future and get ideas for things to make from the art of other children.

Theme 10: Children are aware that people viewing their art make judgments about them based on their artistic ability.

Children make comments to one another about their artwork. Young children assert that when people view their artwork, they remember the art they created in the past and recognize individual improvement or mistakes in the art. If a child is dissatisfied with art, s/he does not want it to be displayed because viewers might perceive them as artistically inadequate. Children see themselves as artists and it is important to them that others believe they created the art without assistance from anyone else. Viewers of children's artwork are able to identify the artist by name, ability and characteristics of the art itself. The age and grade level of children is also identifiable, based on the school art project (i.e., projects associated with specific ages of students in specific grades). Children tend to be proud of the artwork they create and are happy for others to see it because children's art makes viewers feel happy.

Theme 11: Children share their art in various ways with different types of audiences.

Young children enjoy sharing their art both at school and at home. Children are aware that many different people (adults, children and visitors to the

school) view their art when it is on display at school. Teachers display children's artwork for a variety of audiences in a variety of locations. For children, art can be very private – especially when it is made with the intent of sharing it with one special person. When giving art as a gift to a special person in their lives, both the child-artist and recipient feel good. Adults who receive art as a gift from a child often praise the artist and display it to demonstrate their appreciation for the gift. Children do not always like to share their artwork with a wide audience – especially if they created it for someone special or are dissatisfied with it for any reason.

Theme 12: Children like to make choices about the display of their own artwork.

Young children dispose of 'old' art to make room for 'new' art. Art is kept in a special place at home, often times in the child's bedroom desk or drawers. Children prefer to take art home once it is complete at school, or else only have it on display for short periods of time. When children request that their art is not displayed, teachers display their art anyway. Teachers do not offer children the opportunity to make decisions about their artwork being displayed at school. If children are dissatisfied with their art for any reason, they prefer not to share it. Young children will not look at art displayed that they are dissatisfied with for any reason. Children like making decisions about the display of their own artwork both at school (taking it home immediately after completion, for example) and at home (prominent visibility on refrigerator door, for example) because they have a strong sense of ownership of their artwork.

Discussion

As a result of this investigation into young children's lived experiences of the display of their own visual artwork, two broader themes emerged, namely: 1) the creation, enjoyment and the experience of making art; and 2) the display of art following its creation. These two themes could not be separated. The research findings from this study highlighted the connections these young children have to their artwork and underscored the personal investment

they make throughout the entire art experience, that is, from the initial idea to the finished piece on display and every step in between. In addition, multiple themes emerged within each of the 12 tentative themes, indicating crossover between many of the experiences in the data set.

These key issues are.

Issue One: Despite the acknowledgment of the uniqueness of children's creation of artwork, the adult world fails to acknowledge that the practices of making and displaying art cannot be separated

The first issue focuses on the relationship between the practices of making and displaying art. The original intent of this study was to investigate children's experiences with the display of their own visual artwork. For purposes of this study, it was presumed these two practices were discrete and only tenuously related. Through the process of collecting data from the children, it was later revealed that for children, the practice of displaying their own visual artwork was strongly linked to the practice of making the art in the first instance. That is, children consider display a significant aspect of the art experience. Interestingly, when questioned about their experiences of ways in which adults consider children's art displays, the children participating in the study commented on the procedural manner in which adults maintained art displays in school. Data collected from this study indicated that adults do not consider the practice of display in any way attached to the practice of making art.

Early childhood literature acknowledges art for its contribution to the general development of children (Tarr, 1989), but does not specifically discuss the pleasure and social skills children derive from art experiences. Early childhood is exploratory in nature, so play-based learning is promoted within early childhood settings. Play and art are acknowledged in Froebel's work as sharing similar characteristics (Burnaford, 2001; Edwards et al., 1993). The 'Reggio Emilia approach' views art as one of the languages children use to express themselves (Bredenkamp et al., 1997), although this approach

focuses on child-adult, as opposed to child-child, communication.

Overall, making art is an enjoyable and important social experience for children, but this is not directly reflected in the early childhood art education literature. Although the broad significance of art in the lives of young children is acknowledged, this study revealed how prevalent this theme was in their lives. The fact that this theme is neglected has implications for the display of children's artwork in its relation to children's experiences with art creation.

Lack of acknowledgment of the relationship between making and displaying art by adults has serious implications because it highlights the considerable impact adult views of artistic learning have on young children. By treating the practice of displaying children's artwork with less sensitivity than the practice of making art, adults diminish the emotional investment children make in their own visual artwork.

Issue Two: Despite clear evidence that young children have strong views about their own artwork, decisions about the display of children's visual artwork continue to be made by adults.

The second issue which emerged from the research findings directly related to the decision-making process that precedes the display of children's visual artwork. The decision-making process for displaying children's artwork came up repeatedly throughout the data collection phase of the study. Of the 13 children interviewed, not one child was able to recall a time when adults offered them an opportunity to make a decision about their own artwork being displayed. Some children participating in this study attempted to tell teachers that they did not wish to have their artwork displayed. even when children in this study vocalized their desire not to participate in the children's art display, adults neglected to accept their requests. The research findings indicated that a lack of consideration on the part of adults to allow children to make decisions about the display of their own visual artwork was the norm.

This issue is complex, as the act of excluding children from the decision-making process in relation to the display of their own artwork appears to contradict one of the major tenets of the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) guidelines (1991) for developmentally appropriate practice. This guideline asserts children are individuals with unique personalities, learning styles and family backgrounds, therefore "adults are expected to respond quickly to the children's needs, desires and messages." In fact, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1991) has led to the translation of children's rights into international law and practice, and advocacy for children's rights has led to views of children as autonomous beings who are to be considered valuable informants. With this, James, Jenks and Prout (James et al., 1998) assert "... (i)t is undeniable that modern children are increasingly confronted with the opportunity (and, significantly, the requirement) that they are heard." (p. 6) Yet, all of the children interviewed for this study reported they had never been given the opportunity to make a decision about whether or not their artwork was displayed by adults.

This finding challenges the claim by Lowenfeld and Brittain (1970) that children quickly lose intimacy with art after it has been created, therefore it should not be displayed for lengthy periods of time. Writing about early childhood education in relation to children's rights (Edwards et al, 1993; James et al., 1998; Malaguzzi et al, 1998) strongly supports the finding that children like to make choices about their own artwork being displayed. Recognition and respect for children's rights and experiences are components of many early childhood educational settings, including those influenced by the Reggio Emilia approach (Clark et al., 2003; Danby & Farrell, 2004). However, the act of facilitating children's decision-making requires negotiation and willingness on the part of the adult (van Manen, 1991).

In summary, this finding brings to light children's rights in terms of the display of their own artwork. Both the early childhood art education literature and this study call again for an adult sensitivity to children (Edwards, 2006; Kim

et al., 2001). It is important to note that none of the children involved in this study had been given an opportunity to make a decision about the display of their artwork by an adult. Some had made quiet pleas to the teacher, while others had not felt comfortable challenging existing methods of display. Those children who had vocalized their preference to teachers at school had not been afforded the opportunity to withdraw their artwork from display.

The implications are that decisions about the display of children's visual artwork need to be made in consultation with child-artists. The assumption that all children like all of their artwork displayed all of the time is false. Adults (including teachers, parents, researchers, carers and others) must begin to acknowledge children's rights in relation to the child as artist. The simple act of discussing the artwork and the proposed method of display with every child is a very powerful, yet subtle way to advocate for children's rights in relation to their own visual artwork.

Issue Three: The adult world frequently fails to appreciate the extent to which art experiences directly affect the lives of young children.

The third issue that emerged from the research findings from this study was that art experiences directly affected the lives of young children. The argument that art education is a significant part of the school experience for young children (Boone, 2007) was confirmed by the findings of this study. In addition, art experiences in the home were viewed equally significantly by the children in this study. Children, unlike adults, did not appear to categorise art experiences in the same way as adults (1762/1911). The art they create can serve many purposes. For example, a piece of school art may be taken home and given to a parent as a gift. Or, art that is created in the home may be kept in a private place, as it was never intended to be shared with others but was made for the pure pleasure of the activity itself.

Conclusion

Overall, the findings indicate that children recall past art experiences in great detail. They easily recall memories of past art experiences when they are presented with a piece of artwork they created in the past. Revisiting a piece of art made long ago can stir up an array of emotions from the child-artist ranging from laughter to sadness and anything in between. For young children, art has great meaning. A child's artwork is an extension of him/her as a human being. At different times, it can demonstrate a child's self-understanding or relationship to others, document new learning, or simply be an expression of the joy of making art! The research findings indicated that adults underestimate the significance of art experiences and the direct impact they have on young children. The research findings bring to light children's rights in terms of the display of their own artwork. This study and the literature that supports it call again for more adult sensitivity to children. It is important to note that none of the children involved in this study had been given an opportunity to make a decision about the display of their artwork by an adult. Some had made quiet pleas to the teacher, while others had not felt comfortable challenging existing methods of display. Those children who had vocalized their preference to teachers at school had not been afforded the opportunity to withdraw their artwork from display.

Young children's lived experience with the display of their own visual artwork is merely one aspect of their artistic lives. Regardless of the way in which the artwork of children is displayed, it is clear that all art experiences shape individual's views of themselves. Future investigations of the lived experiences of young children based upon the findings from this study may assist in the advancement of early childhood and art education research.

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