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Nicole Renai Harper

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CULTURAL AESTHETIC EXPERIENCE: PERCEPTIONS OF LEARNING
DEVELOPED THROUGH CULTURAL IMMERSION

by

NICOLE RENAI HARPER

(Under the Direction of Delores Liston)

ABSTRACT

This study explored the role of cultural aesthetic expressions (often also referred to in this study as *cultural arts*) play in perceptions of learning while individuals are in the on-going process of being immersed in a non-native culture. This inquiry focused specifically on the narratives of seven expatriates undergoing the process of cultural immersion in Germany, Slovenia and the United States. Using narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; He, Phillion & Connelly, 2005), participants were engaged in discussion, observation and interview for the purpose of exploring and analyzing how they make meaning from previous knowledge and their developing encounters with aesthetic expressions, perceived of as culturally diverse from or similar to their own. The researcher's narrative is included as a voice in the study, contributing to establishing contextual elements as well as discussing perceptions of accessibility and awareness to the aesthetic expressions in these cultures. It also includes insights reflecting upon participant narratives, referencing additional research, and citing from formal interviews and informal consultations with host-country community members who practiced in the arts and education sectors of the respective cultures. The narratives included in this

dissertation offer significant evidence to suggest that intercultural literacy is developed in part through aesthetic forms of cultural exchange for this set of participants. The results of this study contribute to the discourse regarding how learning is perceived through cultural aesthetic expressions during the cultural immersion process by revealing some of the complex aspects of the meaning making process and presenting examples from lived-experience of how cross-cultural complexities are navigated by a diverse sample of individuals in relation to cultural aesthetic expressions.

INDEX WORDS: Aesthetic experience, Aesthetic expression, Cross-cultural experience, Cultural arts, Cultural immersion, Cultural adaptation, Intercultural literacy, Learning, Lived experience, Narrative inquiry

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DEVELOPED THROUGH CULTURAL IMMERSION

by

NICOLE RENAI HARPER

B.F.A., Eastern Michigan University, 1994

M.A., Michigan State University, 2001

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Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

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NICOLE RENAI HARPER

Major Professor: Delores Liston

Committee: Ming Fang He
Julie McGuire
Saundra Nettles

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

I have been fascinated with artistic expression as a mode of communication and learning since my childhood. I grew up in a makeshift apartment over my parents' struggling architectural salvage business, housed in an historic brick building in a small town in Michigan. The shop was always filled with exciting artistic pieces that were stumbled upon at auctions or rescued from old buildings sentenced to be demolished. Art nouveau, art deco and other period-style furnishings, exotic antique prints, oriental rugs and tiffany-style stained-glass windows appeared and disappeared as they were refurbished, displayed and sold. I would study these artifacts for hours and still often see traces of their likeness develop in my artwork.

Although I wasn't aware of it, I began learning about the inter-connectedness of cultures and history through an aesthetic inquiry that has sustained and developed as an intellectual focus throughout my life. Cultural artistic expressions have always interested me on an interpersonal level. I longed to learn from experience and interaction about the way that people in different cultural settings lived and how their respective cultures inspired diverse forms of expression.

One of the motivating factors that drove my persistence through my undergraduate years was the possibility of participating in cultural exchange through the Peace Corps. Later, as an Art teacher in the Peace Corps in Botswana, I learned through first-hand experience that cultural exchanges/cultural immersions are the most authentic, effective and enriching ways to develop understanding and appreciation between

cultures. I was also intrigued by the affect the experience had on my perceptions of learning—what is important to learn and how learning takes place.

I believe it is important to devote attention in education to developing intercultural literacy through aesthetic forms of cultural exchange. Cultural exchange should be a higher priority than it currently is for most scholars because contemporary global issues necessitate research with the goal of promoting constructive forms of mutual understanding between people around the world. I intend for this research to promote cultural exchange and understanding.

Study Overview

The objective of this study was to explore the role that cultural aesthetic expressions (often referred to in this study as *cultural arts*) play in perceptions of learning while individuals are in the on-going process of being immersed in a non-native culture. The study focuses specifically on the narratives of seven expatriates who are undergoing the process of cultural immersion in Germany, Slovenia and the United States. Using narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; He, Phillion & Connelly, 2005), I engaged participants in discussion, observation and interview for the purpose of exploring and analyzing how they make meaning from previous knowledge and their developing encounters with aesthetic expressions, perceived of as culturally diverse from or similar to their own. My own narrative is included as a voice in the study, as I underwent cultural immersion experiences in Germany and Slovenia. My narrative is presented as an unfolding ethnographic (Anderson, 2004; Chalmers, 1981; Eisenhart, 2001; Erickson, 2006; Geertz, 1973, 1988; Wolcott, 1988) process. It contributes to

establishing contextual elements as well as discussing perceptions of accessibility and awareness to the aesthetic expressions in these cultures. It also includes insights reflecting upon participant narratives, referencing additional research, and citing from formal interviews and informal consultations with host-country community members who practiced in the arts and education sectors of the respective cultures.

I acknowledge from the very beginning that the compelling nature of the chosen topic lies both in its breadth and limitations. The inquiry posed invokes the qualitative approach characteristic of narrative analysis, which limits the generalizability of findings and the predictability and control of repeated studies, yet enriches understanding through interpretation (Greene, 1997). “The understanding sought by the qualitative researcher is an understanding opened to a future, what might be and is not yet” (Greene, 1997, p. 198). Inclusion of my own voice among seven others, will allow this topic to be examined as thoroughly as is manageable, through a multifaceted approach; as a collective narrative and an ethnographic narrative. Presumably, inclusion of a multiplicity of perspectives will enhance the value and potential contribution of this study.

Purpose of Study

This study explored the role that aesthetic expressions, in the form of cultural arts, play in the perceptions of learning while individuals are experiencing the on-going process of immersion in a non-native culture. If we accept that the process of immersion undergone while adapting to the perceived peculiarities of a non-native culture results in some form of learning, as is the finding of numerous studies dealing with cultural exchange and cultural immersion (Burns, 1993; Carson & Widaman, 1988; Kafka, 1968;

Sanders & Morgan, 2001; Weaver, 1989), then this is a basis from which new questions arise for this research. Some questions that pertain to this study are: What is the nature of the learning that occurs as described by these individuals? How does this learning change the perceptions of the individual undergoing the cultural immersion process?

Additionally, if we recognize that aesthetic expressions are a factor in the formation and communication of cultural identities (Barone; 1995; Dewey, 1934; Eisner, 1985; Greene, 2001) and in the representation and reflection of cultural norms (Spradley, 1972), then they have an important role to play in informing the cultural immersion process. My study will explore this significant role. Among the questions I will investigate is how individuals undergoing cultural immersion interpret the meaning of that role? Important historical-political, anthropological, sociological and theoretical/philosophical factors must be considered in this investigation.

Learning takes place through both formal (schooling) and informal means. In academic literature, too little attention is focused on informally constructed learning. Both in the formal curriculum and outside of schooling, the arts and other forms of aesthetic expression are often viewed as an extra-curricular pursuit or a source of personal enjoyment and entertainment, rather than a source of educational engagement. The supposition underlying this research is that cultural aesthetic expressions play a significant role in people's perceptions of what it means to learn and what is important to learn, whether or not they are initially cognizant of this influence.

Also, the role of cultural aesthetic expression is changing in societies on a global-level. The trend is widening rifts in the distinctions between contemporary cultures and traditional cultures. Investigation of this trend and the impact it has on cultural exchanges

and perceptions of learning is important in order to prevent superficial understandings of culture. Superficial understanding can lead to misconceptions, deteriorating intercultural relations.

This study is significant to research in Curriculum Studies because little research has been conducted on how learning about other cultures and about our own culture takes place through exposure to cultural aesthetics. This study adds insight into how cultural aesthetic expressions fit into the complex equation of cultural immersion and shape perceptions regarding learning for the individuals interviewed and observed. Enhanced mutual understanding between cultures and a fuller context for more research to proceed also resulted. Professionals in several fields including: education, intercultural education and the arts; can then benefit from this data to establish further understanding of how individuals learn from and about other societies and their own through cultural aesthetic expressions.

An additional list of concept definitions and codes used in the analysis process has been included in Appendix 3 of the dissertation to assist readers. Many of the terms pertaining to learning are not cited due to the fact that they are a general part of my vocabulary as an educator and have been learned over 20 years, thus their theorist origins are unknown. Some of the terms are similar to those used in Bloom's taxonomy and transformative learning is a term expounded upon in adult learning contexts by Jack Mezirow, though I am unclear as to whether he coined the term.

Research Questions

What can we learn from studying how arts and aesthetic expressions affect the cultural

immersion process?

- a) What are participants' understandings of cultural arts/aesthetic cultural expressions in their own and other cultures?
- b) What is the nature of participants' exposure and access to cultural arts/aesthetic cultural expressions while undergoing a cultural immersion process?
- c) What are participants' understandings of the role of the cultural arts/aesthetic cultural expressions in their learning process through intercultural immersion?
- d) Given the experience of cultural immersion, what are participants' understandings of the role of cultural arts in the process of learning?

Theoretical Framework

This inquiry is informed through an interpretivistic, pragmatic-eclecticism—based in Deweyan naturalism—informed by postmodern assertions and critique. This theoretical perspective recognizes that the individuals' perspectives are informed by his or her unique experience, but not defined as such. That is to say, we are informed by our own experience, but not to the extent that our experience completely defines our identity, presenting strict limitations. The individual's experience is both consciously and unconsciously acquired through exposure to and processing (emotional, intellectual and physiological) of the concrete/material, abstract/ideological and abstract/metaphysical world (Dewey, 1910; Kolb, 1984; Vygotsky, 1978). From this perspective, individuals are considered complex beings who defy essentialist categorizations imposed by modernistic analysis. In addition, although experience directs to a large extent the connections we make in order to interpret meanings of new situations, we are not simply

predictable products of our lived experience. Imagination, for example, extends us beyond the limitations of our lived experience, allowing us to function fluidly within the constantly shifting contexts of time and space. In *Experience and Nature* (1958), John Dewey refers to imagination as a facet of human experience, thus including it as a factor defining identity. However, Maxine Greene, who asserts a strong influence from Dewey in many of her writings, refers to imagination as "...what enables us to cross the empty spaces between ourselves and [others]...If those others are willing to give us clues, we can look in some manner through strangers' eyes and hear through their ears" (Greene, 1995, p. 3). She continues, "...of all our cognitive capacities, imagination is the one that permits us to give credence to alternative realities" (Greene, 1995, p. 3) and perceives her own identity as "multiple" (Greene, 1995, p. 1). I align myself with Greene's perspective on the transformational capacity of imagination in relation to identity. The role of imagination in construction of identity, particularly cultural identity, is an important concern for this study, since expression of creativity and imagination is the determinant link regarding what is being referred to here as the cultural arts/ cultural aesthetic expressions.

Much like identity, culture and aesthetics are also considered fluid concepts. Therefore, it must be declared from the beginning that the objective of this study is not to define, characterize or present inert limitations. As a qualitative inquiry utilizing narrative data and theoretical analysis, this research does not aim to narrowly delineate cultures or to develop universally generalizable conclusions. In the words of the *fin-de-siècle* French symbolist poet, Stéphane Mallarmé, "To define is to kill. To suggest is to create." In light of this perspective the purpose of this inquiry is to explore and to

expand, to incite celebration of the complexity of the topic under investigation, not to impose restrictive limitations.

However contradictory or multifarious the theoretical lens just described may seem from an essentialist perspective; it may be best understood as the pragmatic condition of this researcher. Yet, since some semblance of communal understanding is necessary for the purposes of study, analysis and communication; working definitions of terms and concepts will have to be employed or at least *suggested*. My intention is to present these terms and concepts to participants and readers as having expandable and interpretable meanings, suggesting life and learning beyond the limitations presented here.

As previously discussed, the terms “cultural arts,” used interchangeably with “cultural aesthetic expressions,” is broadly defined by the nature of conception. Cultural arts may include forms of aesthetic expression such as: contemporary and traditional visual arts, performance arts (i.e., drama, dance, and music), traditional crafts, traditional folklore, architecture, popular culture (Weaver, 2005; Weaver & Daspit, 2003; Williams, 1961), certain forms of media (Hall, 1980; Manovich, 2002) and aesthetic cultural practices/ceremonies (Grossberg, Nelson & Treichler, 1992). The cultural arts are a form of communication (Dewey, 1934); a medium through which cultures express their values and communicate their thought process, both individually and communally and “each artistic medium...has its own language of expression (Van Manen, 1990, p. 74). Through our intellect and emotions cultural art forms communicate information and attitudes which are affective and often absorbed on a sub-conscious level. Therefore, it is

important to devote attention to this form of cultural exchange and develop our understanding of intercultural literacy through aesthetic expressions of culture.

As a form of text (Derrida, 1997), arts are an expression of histories as well as historical memory (Crary, 1992, 1999; Gallagher & Greenblatt, 2000; Morris, 2001). Non-static, non-universal identities (Hall, 1991) and political struggles (Williams, 1961) that characterize “culture” are communicated as a non-normative (Carlson, 1997) phenomenon expressed within the cultural arts. As text, cultural artistic expressions attest to, participate in, and suggest alternatives to the contexts of colonialism (Said, 1978), marginalization (Anzueldua, 1987; Haraway, 1991), oppression (Friere, 1970) and hegemony (Gramsci, 1971; Laclau & Mouffe, 1985).

Many societal aspects play into the process of experiencing intercultural immersion, such as differences in language, non-verbal communications, etiquette customs and social codes, cultural foods and other forms of cultural expression. For the purposes of this study the focus will be on the role of these and the other previously mentioned forms of cultural aesthetic expression, in the process of learning and perceiving of culture.

CHAPTER II

Literature Review

This study presents a broadly inclusive, cross-disciplinary inquiry. In alignment with the theoretical framework, the nature of this inquiry will be to celebrate the complexity and context of themes and concepts. The exploration of the themes presented will involve blurred borders between disciplinary discourse in philosophy, anthropology, arts, cultural studies, sociology, history, politics, international studies, etc. There is a rich body of literature and many studies available relating to the larger themes that feed into and provide an armature for this study. There have been no studies found that specifically address the topic as presented. Therefore, the next three sections will address the wealth of literature available on the thematic concerns that inform the basis from which this study will proceed. These themes represented are: Part 1: *Cultural Immersion*; Part 2: *Aesthetics & Education*; and Part 3: *Cultural Aesthetic Experience*. Part 4 will pull all three thematic literature reviews together to provide a synoptical view of the field.

The discussion will begin with a survey of research regarding cultural immersion. Attention will then turn to the topic of education and aesthetics in order to gain perspective on aesthetics within the context of the field of curriculum studies. The literature review will conclude by exploring the literature on culture and aesthetics to formulate a better understanding of these concepts. Investigation of this series of topics, in this order, should set the stage appropriately to proceed with further inquiry into the role that cultural aesthetics play in learning through the intercultural immersion process.

Part 1: Cultural Immersion

This part will present a literature review offering a cross-section of relevant theory and scholarly studies conducted on the topic of cultural immersion in relation to education. The review will provide a substantial basis from which to understand the current status of this topic and field. This will also provide a framework from which to navigate and explore relationships between topics, particularly between cultural immersions in relation to cultural aesthetics.

The term “cultural immersion” is broadly defined in the academic literature. This was not my original choice of terms but has been adopted as a result of trends in the field. I had originally intended to use the term “intercultural immersion” in my study to imply an international character to the immersion. Search results for this term produced only two articles, neither of which was relevant to my research. I am not the first to try to make this distinction in terms (Cornwell & Stoddard, 1994; Lee, 2005).

It is significant, for example, that an electronic search of the database of the Chronicle of Higher Education from 1989 to 2004 produced a result of 432 listings for the word ‘multiculturalism’ and only two on ‘interculturalism’. The result suggest that, in higher education, the term ‘multiculturalism’ is no more than an umbrella term for change, ranging from affirmative action in admissions and faculty hiring to the cultivation of global citizenship (Lee, 2005, p. 203).

I will discuss these semantic issues again later in this section. For now it is only important to foster awareness that in curriculum matters, multiculturalism “is in no way synonymous with interculturalism, although such a curriculum is no doubt an important

prerequisite for attaining such an objective... Yet it is precisely this awareness that appears to be lacking in the curriculum debate in higher education” (Lee, 2005, p. 203).

The term “cultural immersion” was much more prevalent within the literature and seemed a more pertinent term in relation to my research needs than the term “multicultural immersion.” However, it still proved to be an “umbrella term” (Lee, 2005, p. 203). Researchers have used the term “cultural immersion” to describe experiences that range from immigration into a full acculturation situation (Amobi, 2004), to a domestic one-time visit to a national heritage site such as Gettysburg, Pennsylvania (Chronis, 2003). Therefore, it is important to delineate how the term is understood for the purposes of this research study. This determination will be made by reviewing the relevant literature in order to develop informed insight with which to proceed.

I conducted searches using “cultural immersion” as the key phrase, resulting in the following number of articles: *Article First* (19), *Project Muse* (1332), *JSTOR* (8), *EBSCO Host* including: *Academic Search Primer*, *ERIC*, *MLA International Bibliography*, *Professional Development Collection*, *Sociological Collection*, *EJS E-Journals*, and *Hospitality & Tourism Index* (172); *ProQuest: Dissertation Abstracts* (48); and *Google Scholar* (1,050). Articles from this pool that also related to “education” totaled (1659) from all search engines. Articles from the “cultural immersion” pool that related intercultural immersion to “aesthetics” or “the arts” totaled (638). These articles were narrowed to those deemed relevant to my research. *Project Muse* displayed (118) results that included all of the key words. However, no articles were found that matched all themes directly.

Several significant themes emerged from the literature that focused on cultural immersion in ways that informed my study. Articles tended to focus in one of these main areas:

1) Theory and studies devoted to cultural studies program concerns (e.g., Altbach & Teichler, 2001; Altbach & Wang, 1989; Ashwill, 2004; Beckford, 2003; Bilis-Bastos, 1998; Bradfield-Kreider, 2001; Chao, 2001; Comp, 2004; Dooly & Villanueva, 2006; Emmanuel, 2002; Hser, 2003; Lee, 2005; Mahan, 1979; Weaver, 1989; Wiest, 1998; Yang, 2002).

2) Theory and studies about study abroad or multicultural educational experiences (Amobi, 2004; Appiah-Padi, 1999; Ashwill, 2004; Bradfield-Kreider, 2001; Couper, 2001; Dwyer, 2004; Dziegielewska, 1988; Herrin, 2004; Jenkins & Skelly, 2004; Laubscher, 1994; O'Brien, 2006; Pohan, 1996; Ribeiro, 2005; Sanders & Morgan, 2001; Scott, 1997; Sleeter, 1995; Stier, 2003; Tamam, 1993; Tellez et al., 1995; Weist, 1998; Yamada, 2001; Zeichner & Hoefft, 1996).

3) Study of other related issues, such as expatriate experience, tourist immersion and artistic immersion (Desforges, 2000; Richardson, 1996; Shaules, 2004; Stock, 2000).

The literature exposed significant variance in understanding regarding cultural immersion. Variations included: research methodology and theoretical framework, time spent abroad (if any), cultures represented, educational level and aims of sojourners and subject areas researched. Multiple models for understanding and/or explanation were presented. I will briefly describe each of the three areas of focus listed above and then synthesize with my perspective as informed by this body of literature.

Program Concerns: The Institutional Take on Cultural Immersion

The literature exploring cultural studies program concerns centered on describing or rationalizing models to develop or enhance cultural immersion practices within institutions. I reviewed a large number of studies spanning research from 1951 to 2005 on the topic of study abroad (e.g., Altbach & Wang, 1989; Chao, 2001; Comp, 2004; Weaver, 1989). Review of these articles revealed two sub-sections of importance: internationalization in university programs on the whole and cultural immersion practices in teacher training. The following paragraphs will cite a number of the most relevant articles and shed light on how the review conducted on institutional trends is significant to my research on the role of cultural arts in learning during the cultural immersion process.

Institutions of higher education have a profound impact on what individuals perceive as learning and how the process of learning should take place. Therefore, trends in higher education that promote cultural immersion are important indicators of how individuals may perceive the meaning of cultural immersion and, however ironically, our societal norms of this process. The literature indicates that since the 1980s, higher education institutions have continued to undergo a trend to “internationalize” their curricula (Altbach & Teichler, 2001; Beckford, 2003; Hser, 2003; Yang, 2002) throughout the United States, as well as in other Western nations (Dooly & Villanueva, 2006; Lee, 2005).

The inclination to internationalize higher education curricula is primarily attributed to societal pressures in dealing with economic, political, and cultural globalization (Altbach & Teichler, 2001; Ashwill, 2004; Beckford, 2003). Theorists

argue that globalization creates the need to explore new ways of promoting understanding and communicating effectively within a more diverse cultural dynamic (Dooly & Villanueva, 2006). The term internationalization has appeared on the higher education scene to address globalization "...whereas globalization is an extension of historical imbalances linked to Western colonialisation and dominance, internationalization has the potential to create more equitable relations" (Yang, 2002, p. 81). However, due to lack of coordination in the establishment and administration of programs and non-agreement on some of the important educational issues involved over the past half-century, many institutional internationalization efforts have tended to develop in a makeshift manner (Yang, 2002) often resulting in programs and services that prove inadequate to deal with the impact of globalization (Hser, 2003).

Internationalization efforts are not standardized, they can take any number of forms and be applied to varying extents. Forms include: diversifying subject curricula, promoting teacher and student exchanges, focusing on foreign language education or area studies, developing extracurricular activities with international themes and/or developing international research initiatives (Yang, 2002). The extent to which international issues are addressed can vary immensely from situation to situation (Beckford, 2003; Hser, 2003; Yang, 2002). Thus, this body of literature indicates that there may be a multiplicity of perceptions (possibly misconceptions) and depths of understanding emitted through institutions of higher education which determine aspects of the process of learning through cultural immersion.

This review of literature exposed not only that there is no agreed understanding of what it means to "internationalize," but also that there is a void in any mention or

significant consideration of the role of cultural arts in institutional efforts to internationalize. There was no discussion found on how inquiry into cultural arts may facilitate a move beyond presenting remote spectacles of cultural diversity into allowing students to explore living diversity, through contemporary and historically grounded expressions of culture. The void may indicate that cultural arts are just generally overlooked, or that they are purposely ignored as an important contributor to formal education's internationalization project. Through its absence in the literature, the role of cultural arts has implicitly been deemed ineffective in the meaning making process of internationalization in the larger institutional plans for formal, higher education and thus deficient in the minds of its student product.

As previously discussed, additional literature related to internationalization reforms in higher education presented curricula reform with the terms *multicultural* and *intercultural*. These approaches warrant further discussion. The drive to reform curriculum through *multiculturalism* emerged in higher education to address social injustices stemming from colonialism (Giroux, 2001, McLaren & Giroux, 1995). *Intercultural* curricula reform (Lee, 2005), on the other hand, describes teaching that "is about working through a dialogue between cultures. A dialogue...requires minimally a party of two. Once that requirement is satisfied...the focus should then be on the dialogue itself rather than on the multiplicity of voices for the sake of inclusivity" (Lee, 2005, p. 201).

Lee's approach offers an alternative to the highly politicized manner in which higher education institutions have gone about incorporating diversity into the curriculum. She criticizes the administrative 'quota' approach that is a tendency in efforts to

internationalize, as well as the undertone that “diversifying the curriculum is more about correcting a past wrong and enhancing social justice rather than forging critical thinking through a more nuanced and increasingly complex intellectual landscape” (Lee, 2005, p. 202). For Lee, a curriculum presenting diversity alone is useless unless cross-cultural dialogue is improved (Lee, 2005). Lee bases her ideas about dialogue on the influence of Socrates, which she ironically considers a basis for Western thought (Lee, 2005).

The intercultural focus on communication/dialogue as paramount to effective cross-cultural education presents a springboard from which to express my views on the role that cultural arts should play in perceptions of learning in intercultural contexts. Cultural arts present a form of communication that has yet to be fully tapped. As artifacts of human experience, cultural values and historical statements, cultural arts exhibit an aesthetic dialogue which unfolds when provided attention in the form of inquiry. Learning should be this type of inquiry. I am not suggesting that cultural arts are the only means of inquiry, just that they are a means too often ignored and underestimated. This is especially ironic in consideration of intercultural contexts in education.

Cultural Immersion in Teacher Training

My review of the literature continued and led me to next examine cultural immersion as an aspect of teacher training curricula. This body of literature offered insight into how perceptions of the intercultural immersion process are disseminated to the next generation of teachers via academia. Mostly, these articles described specific education programs (Bilis-Bastos, 1998; Bradfield-Kreider, 2001; Dooly & Villanueva, 2006; Mahan, 1979; Wiest, 1998). One dissertation presented research on the attitudes

regarding cultural diversity of pre-service teachers involved in a music education immersion internship (Emmanuel, 2002), but this research proved as distant in exploring the role of the art form as any of the other studies cited in this review.

Overall, the purposes named for incorporating cultural immersion experiences into teacher training programs in this body of literature were fairly standard. The literature suggested that pre-service teachers can benefit from cultural immersion experiences by acquiring multicultural competencies and intercultural awareness which prepares them to work with diverse student populations (Bradfield-Kreider, 2001; Pohan, 1996; Sleeter, 1995; Tellez et al., 1995; Weist, 1998). These purposes were similar to suggestions made in other articles that discussed study abroad programs in general and tended to cite increased population diversity among other globalization trends as rationale (Herrin, 2004; Jenkins & Skelly, 2004; Stier, 2003). I will discuss the significance of globalization trends in further detail in my literature review on the topic of culture and aesthetics.

The types of experiences that were considered cultural immersions varied in the teacher training program articles based on the respective definition of the concepts of *culture* and *immersion*. This is an important point concerning my study. Since there seems to be a broad understanding of the use of these terms in educational settings, participants in my study may exhibit confusion or be limited by their prior academic experience when approached with these concepts. I am not saying the source of confusion about the meaning of concepts is related to this body of literature or the institutional process, but acknowledging the foreshadowing of confusion based on the same issue in the literature.

For example, one article provided an autobiographical account of a foreign-born scholar from Nigeria who moved to the United States (Amobi, 2004). Amobi described her own intercultural immersion and discussed how her continuing work as a foreign-born scholar contributed to sensitizing prospective teachers to issues of cultural diversity in the United States. Amobi's personal experience in moving to the United States from Nigeria is in line with what I consider a cultural immersion for the purposes of this study. The multiculturalism she claims to embody for her American students as their professor in the United States falls outside of my use of the term, cultural immersion. Other articles also offered assorted examples: from an assignment that required students to spend one hour with a group who exhibited diverse values (Wiest, 1998) that took place in the United States, to a program in the European Union that involved teacher trainees to undergo several weeks of primary school teaching in a foreign country (Dooly & Villanueva, 2006). Neither of these examples are consistent with my understanding of cultural immersion, though the later is closer akin.

The difference in the above articles seems to lie more in the concept of *immersion* than in that of *culture*. Neither of the later studies required enough time or depth of experience to equate an immersion of acceptable stature. However, in the Wiest article the concept of culture is also in need of analysis. Wiest defined culture as "shared beliefs, experiences, status, or other background characteristics that influence a group of individuals' worldview and framework for interpreting the world (hence, different cultures form, for example, by gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, vocational or avocational pursuits)" (Wiest, 1998, p. 359). This definition of the term *culture* is acceptable as long as it is embedded within the historical complexity of modern

and postmodern human relations. That is to say that the hierarchy of influences that determine culture differs in usage from my hierarchy of influences in relation to this study. My study is looking at culture from an international perspective first (a meta-culture), and then also dealing with further grouping complexities as sub-cultures. I will then explore how the sub-cultures that emerge from my investigation operate fluidly within and outside of the structured meta-culture. I will investigate the concept of culture further in my review of the literature on culture and aesthetics.

Discussion in the literature on cultural immersion in teacher training programs also revealed a principal viewpoint among researchers that a goal of promoting pluralism can be achieved through the training of future teachers to disseminate multicultural awareness. “Educators can take a proactive role in promoting knowledge and actions which will be favourable towards greater intercultural understanding” (Dooly & Villanueva, 2006, p. 225). The argument for this perspective was based on the belief that “all individuals are intercultural beings and all teachers have to be concerned with the challenge of intercultural communication regardless of their particular cultural identity” (Zeichner & Hoeft, 1996, p. 525).

There is the admission that this is a lofty mission to place on the shoulders of educators. The currently a lack in teacher resources, experience and “personal point of view” (Dooly & Villanueva, 2006, p. 226) are pointed out. According to Dooly & Villanueva’s account of a pilot project for the European Union, this problem presented a need for pre-service teachers to experience “personal exchange beyond their own cultural context” (Dooly & Villanueva, 2006, p. 227) in order to “...engage in the learning process as empirical investigators” (Dooly & Villanueva, 2006, p. 227). This in turn

would enhance intercultural skills, including “the ability to fulfill the role of cultural intermediary between one’s own culture and the foreign culture and to deal effectively with intercultural misunderstanding and conflict situations” (Dooly & Villanueva, 2006, p. 229).

Dooly & Villanueva concluded that the cultural immersion experiences they studied resulted in teachers’ raised awareness to the influences of their own backgrounds and the social and cultural contexts which made up their own worldviews. The proposed international cultural immersion experiences also tended to lead to a desire in the teachers to seek further international experience. They suggested that teacher training programs incorporating international cultural immersions like the one they described will be successful in helping teachers to develop professionally by,

...facilitating mutual understanding and respect for other individuals and cultures.

By doing so, future teachers will be better equipped to understand the importance of negotiating contextual, social and cultural meaning outside of their own educational environment. They will be better able to open up their learners to other ways of thinking and to show them that their own view of the world is just one among many. (Dooly & Villanueva, 2006, p. 238)

This body of literature is significant to my research because it points out that education is not yet effectively dealing with contemporary societal changes. This issue has undoubtedly impacted generations of students’ and teachers’ perceptions of learning through cultural immersion. The directions currently being proposed and evaluated for further implementation of cultural immersion in teacher education curricula (minus the focus on the role of cultural arts) are aligned with the purposes and significance declared

within this research project. However, like the review of literature concerned with internationalization in higher education, this review has also exposed a void in the mention and utilization of cultural arts in teacher education cultural immersion efforts. Again, this void may indicate that cultural arts are generally overlooked or even purposely ignored as an important contributor to formal education's pre-service teacher cultural immersion project. Through its absence in the literature, the role of cultural arts has implicitly been denied as an effective way to make meaning of cultural diversity in the institutional plans for training teachers. This review of literature has indicated that the field is in need of research exploring the role of cultural arts in process of cultural immersion.

Study Abroad: How is Learning Perceived in this Context?

My main objective in performing a literature review on the topic of study abroad was to establish insight into how learning is perceived during the cultural immersion process. From there my study could analyze the learning process more deeply to focus on the role of cultural arts. Therefore, multiple articles about study abroad were collected from the literature resulting from searches on the subjects of: "international experience" or "multicultural experience" and "education," "intercultural" and "art" or "aesthetic," "immersion experience" and "learning." A sizeable body of extremely diversified literature was discovered. A scholarly examination of pertinent articles was performed in order to survey this topic. These articles were analyzed and synthesized in this section to provide an overview of the field as it relates to my study.

The reviewed literature investigated the study abroad experience from multiple angles. The topic was addressed in terms of participant motivation (Scott, 1997; Yamada, 2001), conditions or attributes leading to intercultural competency (Dziegielewska, 1988; Stier, 2003; Tamam, 1993), and societal benefits such as increased public diplomacy, national security and global economic competitiveness (Ashwill, 2004). Impact studies concluded that study abroad resulted in benefits such as: growth, critical mindedness and enhanced intercultural awareness (Laubscher, 1994; Ribeiro, 2005; Scott, 1997); conditions critical to learning and enhanced attitudes toward diversity (Laubscher, 1994; O'Brien, 2006; Ribeiro, 2005); development of continuing education needs and networking (Ribeiro, 2005); and professional development (Stier, 2003; Yamada, 2001). It is also well documented that individuals who study abroad undergo a transformative learning process (Appiah-Padi, 1999; Couper, 2001; Ribeiro, 2005; Sanders & Morgan, 2001; Scott, 1997).

The issue of defining the term *cultural immersion* surfaced again within this body of literature. There is debate within this field about whether study abroad programs are actually successfully facilitating cultural immersions. Institutions and students are charged with not focusing on educationally intentioned culture exchanges (Jenkins & Skelly, 2004). Rather, some study abroad programs may have succumbed to the service industry, “contributing to a consumerist orientation toward other cultures and societies....If education abroad is approached as a commodity, students are not prepared or expected to experience the reality and complexity of life in another country” (Jenkins & Skelly, 2004, p. 7). Approaching study abroad as consumers means that students are looking for the best deal in the most popular destination, where they can claim

intercultural competence for job prospect marketability within the shortest length of time (Jenkins & Skelly, 2004).

A deep understanding of other cultures is rendered not only more difficult...but such understanding as may be gained is at best distorted....Australia approached as a commodity does not allow a student to experience the reality or complexity of Australian society, even though he or she may come to appreciate the extraordinary beauty of the beaches. (Jenkins & Skelly, 2004, p. 12).

Another debate considers the duration necessary for a study abroad experience to meet favorably with educational goals. Some researchers claim that despite shorter terms abroad (less than 10 weeks) students “are still benefiting significantly from the academic, language and intercultural results of an education abroad experience” (Dwyer, 2004, p. 14). The length of time necessary to be considered immersed in a non-native culture is difficult to affirm. Technically, one can be “immersed” for a day. The importance is not in the exact amount of time one is immersed, but in the process that evolves. For the purposes of this study, to be considered a *cultural immersion*, an individual must live in a non-native culture in a situation requiring interaction directly within the host culture on a daily basis. This study has been laid out with a certain length of time (at least three weeks) between each of the three interviews with participants, in order to allow time for the cultural immersion process to unfold as participants experience life. The proposed interview schedule requires the cultural immersion to continue for a period longer than 6 months from the point of initial researcher/ participant contact. This length of time is considered minimal for a cultural immersion. From my own personal experience, I believe that a time frame of six months provides a very limited opportunity to acquire

significant depth of exposure to another culture if a more than superficial understanding is desired. I consider nine months to a full year of immersion experience nominally adequate for the immersion process to establish a meaningful effect on the individual. Participants for this study will be selected from a varying pool; some will have begun the immersion process years prior to initial researcher/ participant contact, others will be newly embarking on this experience. The study of my own cultural immersion for the purposes of this research will take place in the span of an academic year.

For some participants, the immersion experience being studied will be their first intercultural experience. Others will vary in the depth of their previous intercultural experience. No two individuals will be arriving to the study with the same background or attitude. Relevant variations, such as previous intercultural experience, will be noted in the analysis of data as it may be a factor influencing the intensity of the experience for the participating individual, especially regarding contrasting perceptions of cultural norms. However, cultural aesthetic experience is not limited to a one-time deal. Further experience can have a refining effect, contributing to depth of perception and providing the individual with a broader, more complex understanding from which to draw.

Institutional Cultural Immersion Conclusion

Thus far, this review of the literature focused on the topic of intercultural immersion by examining current trends associated with intercultural immersion in education institutions. Institutional efforts to internationalize translate into societal norm perceptions in relation to learning through intercultural immersion. While reviewing this body of research, concerns developed as to how authentic an example of intercultural

immersion study abroad experiences actually are. As emerged through the literature I reviewed earlier, in light of their institutional facilitation, study abroad programs are planned and implemented in order to meet the goal of internationalization of institutional curricula. Therefore these experiences are primarily planned and directed by a professional educator, or group of educators, through an existing educational institution with pre-existing learning objectives in mind and a controlled environment in place to insure successful outcomes. This alters the experience in ways that shelter the individual from experiencing varied aspects of the lived culture, perhaps not completely denying authenticity, but limiting and confining it to formal program objectives.

For the sake of authenticity, my study will focus on more independent aspects of intercultural immersions (the part of the immersion process that takes place outside of involvement with an educational curriculum). In the autonomous spaces of unfamiliarity, which often extend further beyond the individuals' control or comfort zone, opportunities present themselves in which one must learn independently and implement new learning strategies autonomously in order to operate effectively in daily life (Kolb, 1984; Vygotsky, 1978; Dewey, 1938). In non-institutional, real-life spaces, authentic experiential learning and application can be observed (Dewey, 1938). The learning that takes place primarily through this independently experienced intercultural immersion process will be the focus, regardless of the student or non-student status of the subject/participants of this study.

An individual's perceptions regarding learning, applicable to formal as well as non-formal learning (e.g. institutional educational settings and informal learning), play an important role in many aspects of the growth and development required to successfully

interact independently in diverse and unfamiliar situations (Spradley, 1972). Perceptions regarding learning affect an individual's complete worldview—motivation, attitude, identity and understanding of the world (Kafka, 1968; Hensley & Sell, 1979; Carson & Widaman, 1988)—and are impacted by the process of growth and extension of the comfort zone and exposure to diverse cultural expressions.

Also, as an individual undergoes the process of intercultural immersion, a dual cultural educational process often takes place—how the individual understands their own culture may be challenged as they acquire knowledge of the new culture, perceptions of learning may be broadened. This process may also affect host country locals who interact with the visitor in ways that reshape preconceived notions regarding the visitor's culture. What role do the cultural arts play in these preconceived notions? Incorporating local insights gathered through personal communications will add insight into phenomenon related to the study and enhance cross cultural understandings.

Multicultural Education and Cultural Immersion

Another stream of literature pertaining to this research is somewhat distanced from the institutional/ programmatic concerns of cultural immersion and reveals a different approach to thinking about cross-cultural experiences. This body of literature discusses a concept most frequently referred to as *multicultural education*. This discourse often explores the dimensions of multicultural interaction and promotes cross cultural understanding. I have included this segment at the end of this section not only to augment, but also as a point of contrast with the institutional concerns about cultural immersion.

For example, Paulo Freire promotes democratic education as a form of multicultural education, incorporating a view of culture that positions culture as a pedagogical concept and an element of every day social interaction (McLaren & Leonard, 1992).

According to this idea, culture is the actions and results of humans in society, the way people interact in their communities, and the addition people make to the world they find. Culture is what ordinary people do every day, how they behave, speak, relate, and make things. Everyone has and makes culture, not only aesthetic specialists or members of the elite. Culture is the speech and behavior in everyday life, which liberating educators study anthropologically before they can offer effective critical learning. (McLaren & Leonard, 1992, p. 31)

For Freire, viewing culture in this way contributes to the democratization of education, “because the curriculum is built around the themes and conditions of people’s lives” (McLaren & Leonard, 1992, p. 31) since this is an inclusive notion. An inclusive conception of culture is better suited to democratized pedagogy than that of culture as “the correct usage of the upper classes, or as the information and experience familiar to the elite...whose ways of doing these things are the only ones acceptable” (McLaren & Leonard, 1992, p. 31).

The essay entitled “The Artistic-Aesthetic Curriculum: Leaving Imprints on the Changing Face of the World,” is one instance in which Maxine Greene confronts the issue of multicultural education. Greene approaches multicultural encounters in terms of a learning attitude of awareness. For Greene, multicultural encounters are a matter of

learning how to learn and should be considered within the diverse contexts within which they belong (Greene, 2001).

The literature indicates that approaching the topic of multiculturalism using a narrative inquiry is an effective way of presenting the learning process through multiple viewpoints. In *Cultural Otherness: Correspondences with Richard Rorty*, Anindita Niyogi Balslev suggest, “What is needed is a multi-layered narrative...in order to confront the subtleties and complexities of the cross-cultural encounter” (Balslev, 1991, p. 13). She also voices her concern that in order to promote mutual understanding inquiries should include the voice of the cultural Other within the same forum (Balslev, 1991). Richard Rorty corresponds to the author in this book with his pragmatic response stating, “I am reluctant to speak, as you do, of ‘exploring otherness’ [between cultures or traditions] in an authentic manner.’ I would prefer to speak of the practical need of the members of an interdependent global society to get in touch with each other” (Balslev, 1991, p. 40). Thus the book presents a dialogue about cross cultural issues from different theoretical perspectives without exclusively privileging either.

Multicultural narrative inquiries also present cultural immersion studies in an experiential manner. Two model examples of this approach are Mary Catherine Bateson’s books *Peripheral Visions : Learning Along the Way* (1994) and Ming Fang He’s book *A River Forever Flowing: Cross-Cultural Lives and Identities in the Multicultural Landscape* (2003). Both of these books address learning through intercultural experience while the author is personally engaged in multicultural spaces. Furthermore, the issue of multicultural teacher education in international forums is addressed in narrative form through essays in the book *Narrative & Experience in Multicultural Education* (Phillion,

He & Connelly, 2005). In this book three essays present stories that include the autobiographical context of the author as part of the inquiry. The autobiographical component allows additional understanding through access into the subtleties of the cultural interpretation process as perceived by the individual undergoing the process.

This section reviews only a few examples of the multicultural education discourse concerned with intercultural immersion. As previously mentioned, this section was included not only to add to but also to contrast with the previous discussion of the institutional/ programmatic literature on study abroad. Although only a small sampling of the literature concerned with multiculturalism was presented, obvious differences in the approach and focus of inquiry are apparent between the discourses. Both bodies of literature are concerned with the educational value of international experience. However, the institutional discourse tends to approach intercultural immersion as learning about culture through international experience and often questions whether this objective is being met. The multicultural approach, on the other hand, seems to focus more on learning how to learn (Greene, 2001) through culture and to develop cross cultural understanding through experience, dialogue and multiple perspectives.

The main concern that this insight raises is in relation to the separation of these discourses. I question whether the concerns warranted by the multicultural education discourse is considered relevant by those who administer and participate in cross cultural education programs, or if its influence is limited to critical pedagogy in education discourse. It appears to me that meaning making resulting from institutional cross cultural education experiences would benefit greatly by incorporating the wisdom of the

multicultural education discourse into the practicality of institutional cultural immersion experiences.

Part 2: Aesthetics & Education

The purpose of this section is to present a review of relevant literature that will firmly tie this research to the field of curriculum studies. The literature addressed will focus primarily on providing a subject-based theoretical grounding from which to investigate the topics of culture, aesthetics and intercultural immersion and identify their significance to the field of education; art education in particular.

As was pointed out in the previous chapter, trends in education influence the way individuals in the respective society perceive the meanings and norms of the concepts composing this inquiry. Trends in education not only influence, but are also reflective of societal norms. Therefore, an investigation of the scholarly literature on aesthetics and the way aesthetics are perceived in the field of education will shed light on the meanings and norms that situate this concept.

The issue of aesthetics in curriculum studies and art education is addressed in an assortment of ways by a handful of theorists; it is by no means a saturated topic. The discussion in this chapter will focus on how aesthetics relate to the advancement of curriculum theory and practice. It will begin with an historical overview of the concept of aesthetics in relation to learning. The idea of aesthetics in the literature of several contemporary curriculum theorists will be explored, considering aesthetic issues in current educational theory and practice. How aesthetics are perceived in curriculum

specific to the field of art education will be a matter of lingering focus. Finally, additional approaches to incorporating aesthetics into education will be addressed.

What is Aesthetics?

The meaning of *aesthetics*, depending on the contextual use of the term, can take several different forms. As a philosophical branch in general, aesthetics pertains to the axiological concerns of what is valued as good, beautiful or sublime (Burke, 1958). “Aesthetics...deal with conceptions of beauty, but inasmuch as the grotesque may also play an active role...aesthetics is not solely a theory of beauty” (Anderson, 2004, p. 5). The term can also pertain specifically to the philosophy of art (Graham, 1997). “This definition is of course logically contingent upon a definition of *art*, a thorny matter that reflective people in the West have failed to satisfactorily resolve after 2,500 years of continual debate” (Anderson, 2004, p. 4). Also, Herbert Grabes proposes the concept of aesthetics pertaining to what is alluring in terms of strangeness.

What distinguishes the aesthetic of the strange from the aesthetic of the beautiful on the one hand and the aesthetic of the sublime on the other is the specific process of aesthetic experience it enables...when this endeavor is successful, this process ends in a feeling of delight that partly rests on satisfaction with one’s own ability at problem-solving, yet also on the respect for the work that has motivated this activity. (Grabes, 2005, p. 125)

Or, “aesthetics” can be used to simply refer to how much pleasure is derived from an object or experience (Santayana, 2003), as in the phrase: The flowers are arranged in an aesthetically pleasing manner. All uses have a thread of similarity in that they imply

some positively affective form of sensually derived experience involving some degree of heightened awareness.

Aesthetics are an all too often forsaken consideration in the realm of education (Greene, 1995; Eisner, 2002; Pinar et al, 2002). The meaning of the term *aesthetics* in education tends to be associated with artistic study. In the United States, this could be a legacy of John Dewey's philosophical work in the field of education which focused on the arts. In the tradition of Dewey aesthetics is a broad concept meant to be incorporated beyond the confines of the art classroom, to facilitate a spirit of creativity and imagination throughout the entire curriculum. In *Art as Experience* (1938), Dewey presents his ideas about aesthetics as a philosophy of art. However, he added another dimension to aesthetic thought with his assertion that there was no sense in an aesthetic philosophy of art without considering experience. Dewey states, "Philosophy of art is sterilized unless it makes us aware of the function of art in relation to other modes of experience..." (Dewey, 1934, p. 12). His belief that "art is a strain in experience rather than an entity in itself" (Dewey, 1934, p. 330) indicates that the aesthetic component is the human experience of an art object, rather than a characteristic inherent within the object. But in most contemporary academic literature the term *aesthetics* has been reduced to a topic of study perceived as being addressed within the folds of the art curriculum. This perception minimizes the capacity of aesthetic possibility in education in general.

Aesthetics dwell in the axiological realm of philosophical thought. Delores Liston focuses on the philosophical rather than artistic aspect of aesthetics in her book *Joy as a Metaphor Convergence*, "Aesthetics is simply what we consider beautiful. Philosophers

have observed that there is a strong connection between what a person considers to be beautiful and what that person considers to be good. Thus, we have a category, ‘axiology,’ which encompasses both ‘good’/ethics and ‘beauty’/aesthetics” (Liston, 2001, p. 3). Liston’s *Joy* is an example of aesthetic philosophy that is not a philosophy of art.

A term not coined until the eighteenth century (Lankford, 1992), the word “aesthetics” comes from the Greek word *aesthesis*, meaning sense perception or feeling. The idea of aesthesis was being pondered in Western philosophy as early as 300 B.C. by Aristotle. For Aristotle, aesthetic pleasure was optimized by imitation of the ideal to evoke emotional response. This aesthetic theory is referred to as mimesis. Aristotle’s words indicate his aesthetic perspective in the following quote:

A tragedy [sic], then, is the imitation of an action that is serious and also, as having magnitude, complete in itself; in language with pleasurable accessories, each kind brought in separately in the parts of the work; in a dramatic, not a narrative form; with incidents arousing pity and fear, wherewith to accomplish its catharsis of such emotions. (Aristotle, 1932, p. 24)

Mimetic aesthetic theory, universally accepted from Aristotelian times until approximately the 19th century (Dickie, 1997), is still in use today. Also, it is an especially popular aesthetic perspective among elementary-aged art students who have a tendency to appreciate art more if it looks realistic (Eisner, 2002). The idea behind mimetic aesthetics is that “art mimics the visible world [and]...artworks should represent or reflect objects and organisms in the physical environment. Artistic imitations of worldly reality may take literal or idealized forms” (Lankford, 1992, p. 8). Art is simply

an imitation of experience. Mimetic theory is also referred to as an “object centered theory of art” (Dickie, G., 1997, p.44).

If the idea of mimesis is directed at the essence of things, it comes to be a medium of knowledge on a par with science or philosophy, or even superior to these, according to some aesthetic theories which maintain that it plumbs the *haecceitas* of objects, people and events, capturing as well the basic meaning of historical processes....Mimesis as the representation of the essential features implies a substantial modification of our way of talking about the relationship of art to reality, the idea having undergone a shift of meaning which makes it more apt to talk of the *transmutation* rather than the reproduction of reality. Mimesis in the Aristotelian version surely postulates an active process of perception in the sense of a highly selective attitude which generalized through particulars, compressing complex processes into concrete situations and a multiplicity of social types into a single exemplar (Morawski, 1974, p. 221).

Although aesthetics have moved beyond the idea of mimesis, this perspective is still relevant to current aesthetic discourse. Greek culture is now glorified and studied through the aesthetic of its art forms; as the quintessential pinnacle of mimetic achievement. Also reflective of the longstanding tradition of Aristotle’s mimetic aesthetics, “the use of the word ‘aesthetics’ commonly refers to the philosophy of art and beauty” (Bredin & Santoro-Brienza, 2000, p. 3) in contemporary times.

Mimetic aesthetics is an example of an essentialist philosophical perspective, meaning that a single essence characterizes the objects of all judgments of goodness (Dickie, 1997). Essentialist aesthetics value art based on fundamental properties. “Art is

to be made, viewed, and valued for intrinsic, self-contained, and self-explanatory purposes. The artist who says ‘the work should speak for itself’ is speaking from an essentialist point of view” (Anderson, T., 2004, p. 31). Mimetic aesthetic theory is only one example of an essentialist aesthetic perspective. There are many other essentialist aesthetic theories that attempt to develop universal rules in order to define the concept of art. “Theories of this kind have been proposed by aestheticians and philosophers for centuries. Not one theory, however, has emerged that satisfies everyone. Yet they are all alike in one way—each theory tries to define art according to certain necessary and sufficient qualities found in works of art.” (Mittler & Howze, 1995, p. 22).

Essentialist theories stem from a modernist philosophical framework and tend to shift in order to explain, justify or incorporate the changes in society as reflected in the art world. As is the case with all paradigm shifts resulting from important societal philosophical movements, these aesthetic theories find their way into the formal education curriculum and have an especially profound and sustaining impact on art education practice. Additional examples of essentialist aesthetic theories that have influenced educational practice are instrumentalism, formalism and expressivism. The next few paragraphs provide a brief description of each of these essentialist aesthetic theories.

“Instrumentalism emphasizes the use of art as an instrument for furthering moral, religious, social or political points of view” (Lankford, 1992, p. 8). *Instrumentalism* “locates the goodness of an artwork in its capacity to serve an institution, an institution that is more important than art” (Feldman, 1994, p. 40). Using this theory, artworks are judged by their effectiveness in influencing the thought and actions of individuals and

society. Diego Rivera's statement from "*The Revolutionary Spirit in Modern Art*," as quoted in Feldman, provides a good example of aesthetic instrumentalism: "I want my art to be a weapon... In order to be good art, art in this country [America] must be revolutionary art, art of the proletariat, or it will not be good art at all" (Feldman, 1994, p. 40). Aesthetic instrumentalism is rampant, but can serve very different purposes. It characterizes the aesthetics of religious artifacts, objects of political propaganda and also all kinds of commercial arts and advertising often relying on semiotic understandings to communicate to the viewer through aesthetic means.

Another way that art communicates is through formal elements and principles of design. Formalist aesthetic perspectives arose in order to justify modern abstract art (Eaton, 1988). This theory, developed in the 20th century, could be considered the antithesis of mimetic theory. Formalism denied that "representation was in any way essential to painting [for example] as an art form, and it affirm[ed] that [representation] could in various ways actually be detrimental to the true aims of painting." (Manns, 1998, p.54). Corresponding to the requirement of beauty or harmony, "an artwork is good to the extent that its parts cooperate, reinforce each other, and join to form a perfect unity" (Feldman, 1994, p. 38). Creative use of the formal properties of the artwork, like the elements and principles of design in visual art, are exclusively important in considering the quality of aesthetic experience (Eaton, 1988). "When we look at a work of art, we should not attend to *what it represents* but to *how it presents*.... Paintings of apples are meant to make us think about *paintings* of apples rather than apples themselves" (Eaton, 1988, p. 79).

Expressivist aesthetics is derived from the complex 20th century expressivist art movement. This movement was characterized by “the urge to express moods accurately even if the descriptive content had to be distorted to do so.” (Bredin & Santoro-Brienza, 2000, p. 151). Accordingly, the aesthetic properties of art are in its capacity to convincingly communicate feelings and ideas (Feldman, 1994, p. 39).

So far only four essentialist positions on aesthetics have been discussed. There are other, non-essentialist aesthetic theories as well. The essentialist theories were selected for discussion based on their widespread influence over art education practice. Those who have taken art courses within the past 20 years may be able to indicate specific ways that one or more of these aesthetic theories have impacted what they know about the concept of art. Those who study to become art educators may find the diversity and rate of change of aesthetic assertions confusing as they develop their own aesthetic awareness. Understanding aesthetics through the philosophical assertions they represent situates the arts academically as intellectually charged manifestations of knowledge. Thus, art education practice is the facilitation of discovery and dissemination of this form of social knowledge discourse. The pluralism of aesthetic theories is a reflection of the multiplicity of worldviews relating between and within societies.

Even if confined to one society, no one aesthetic theory has emerged to serve as a universal philosophy for all art due to the constant shifting of styles, content, values and purposes that characterizes *art*. Thus the aesthetic theory of art as an open concept was brought forward by Morris Weitz (1956). Works of art are incredibly varied. Art includes everything from paintings to symphonies and poems to cathedrals. Therefore it seems quite impossible that there could be a set of essential properties shared by all forms.

Additionally, art is in a constant state of change over time and in relation to technology. New kinds of visual arts, music, theater, photography, film, etc., appear and destabilize the essentialities of all previous aesthetic conceptions. “Artists are constantly rebelling against the assumptions and practices of their predecessors, so that just when we think we know what art is we find that some unforeseen artistic novelty comes along and pulls the rug from under us” (Bredin, & Santoro-Brienza, 2000, p. 7).

Postmodern theoretical standpoints are incredulous to universal assertions, referred to as metanarratives (Lyotard, 2002). More aligned with the open concept theory of aesthetics than with the essentialist theories previously discussed, postmodern aesthetics are derived from a wide range of political perspectives which often focus on disrupting or subverting existing power structures through critical exposure (Elkins, 2005). Even if all art works have only two characteristics in common: “One is that they are artifacts. The other is that the status of art has been conferred upon them by the artworld” (Bredin & Santoro-Brienza, 2000, p. 7), this position illuminates how status is bestowed upon certain art objects over others. It represents a shift to seeing art as something with importance bestowed upon it by a social institution, rather than something existing as a result of essential properties, exposes art as a form of “text” in a system of elitist power structures called the “artworld.”

Furthermore, the aesthetic theory of art within traditions, acknowledges that certain people have the capacity to create art objects within this institution by simply talking about an object as art. “...Artifacts not talked about are only ‘potential’ works of art; they do not count as art until they are talked or written about within ‘aesthetic traditions’ that is, within the traditions of history, criticism, and theory” (Brand, 2000,

p.188). Focusing on the institution as producer of art, rather than the artist's principal intent for the work has had implications in art educational curricula and practice (Herberholz & Herberholz, 1997) which will be discussed further later.

Aesthetics in Education

In an amalgamative discussion of educational researchers who have looked to the arts to understand curriculum and/or to bring awareness to the aesthetic dimensions of curriculum, Pinar et al (2002) uncovers a dynamic, yet highly marginalized field. "Considerable scholarship supports the notion that curriculum is aesthetic text. In the school, however, the aesthetic dimensions of curriculum tend to be underemphasized. This has been the case historically" (Pinar et al, 2002, p. 567). The discourse on aesthetics in curriculum studies is more commonly addressed in the context of particular scholars, rather than the philosophical and aesthetic dimensions of the perspective.

Reflective of scholar driven discourse, the study of aesthetics in education has advanced curriculum research and practice in a wide range of directions for many decades, even centuries. This discussion could date back to before the common school era, but will be limited to the context of more recent developments. For example, in the 1980s, Harry Broudy established the arts as a significant component of the general curriculum in reaction to marginalization caused by the compartmentalization of curriculum (Broudy, 1988). From the 1990s to present day, arts-based research initiatives and aesthetic ways of knowing have been the focus of curriculum researchers such as Elizabeth Vallance (1991), Elliot Eisner (1985) and Tom Barone (2000). Eisner (1998a) and Vallance (1974) have also explored how aspects unique to the arts could be utilized

conceptually for better curriculum development and teaching practice. Furthermore, Landon Beyer (1988) has inquired into the relationship of art to society to expose the politics of art and to present an aesthetic agenda for curriculum. Researchers such as Foster (2002), Habermas (2002), Hamblen (1990), Jameson (2002), and Baudrillard (2002), concerned with postmodernism, have examined the curriculum as aesthetic text. Marginalized by their association with the arts during an era obsessed with technological science, these and additional theorists have proposed to advance education by expanding the focus of curriculum to include more aesthetic forms of knowledge.

As long as education in the United States has been developing into public schools as we know them today, there has been a struggle to include knowledge in aesthetic forms in the curriculum. Concern that learning in the basic academic subjects of reading, writing and arithmetic would somehow be diminished by the addition of education pertaining to the arts, has been a point of contention, according to curriculum historians (Tanner & Tanner, 1990). Regardless of sound research contradicting this notion, the arts continue to be marginalized and underemphasized in educational settings (Pinar et al, 2002; Egan, 1985; Eisner, 1985, 1994a, 1998b, 2002; Greene, 1975, 1988b, 1991a, 1991b, 1995, 2001). The case for aesthetics in education stresses the importance of nurturing the imaginative processes in learners. Imagination, which is consequential to all modes of literacy, is a fundamental aspect of aesthetic experience (Egan, 1985; Eisner, 1985, 1994a, 1994b, 1998a, 1998b, 2002; Greene, 1973, 1975, 1988a, 1988b, 1991a, 1991b, 1995, 2001). “Those children without a rich store of images are less able to decode concepts and articulate perceptions. In this way aesthetic literacies can be regarded as essential to linguistic literacies...[and] social intelligence” (Pinar et al, 2002, p. 569-70).

As previously discussed, aesthetic knowledge is most prevalently taught within the art (or music, drama, etc.) education curricula. However, it would be a misconception to consider all art curricula as aesthetic knowledge. Art curricula may contain aesthetic knowledge by the nature of its subject, but unless involving students in an aesthetic experience is the intention, aesthetic knowledge will not be effectively absorbed (Eisner, 1985, 1994a, 1994b, 1998a, 1998b, 2002; Greene, 1973, 1975, 1988a, 1988b, 1991a, 1991b, 1995, 2001).

Theorists of Aesthetic Education

Three theorists who are highly regarded for their work in aesthetics in education are John Dewey, Maxine Greene and Elliot Eisner. As previously mentioned, Dewey's work is regarded as highly influential to the topic of aesthetics in education. "Strongly influenced by the philosophy of John Dewey, art education from 1948-1962 moved strongly in the direction of art as a means to an end rather than an end in itself" (Dorn, 1994, p. 4). Dewey's influence continues to permeate the field as the writings presented by both Greene and Eisner indicate a strong Deweyan influence. There are many similar themes presented by all three theorist but each develops their arguments in light of different concerns and in the case of Dewey, a different historical context.

John Dewey on aesthetics.

John Dewey's prolific writings are extensively broad. He covered a wide range of philosophically inspired topics such as ethics, logic, psychology, pragmatism, democracy, education and aesthetics. His work is highly regarded in the field of education. Although

it is not as widely known as his educational philosophy, he is also highly revered for his work in the arts and aesthetics (Beardsley, 1966) that he pursued late in his life.

Dewey's aesthetics characterized an essentialist perspective; however, it was not restrictive in nature. His theory of aesthetic value focused on the essence of the aesthetic object as the basis for evaluating art through the experience it evokes within an individual. As summarized by J. Hospers:

The greater the capacity [of an object to produce aesthetic experience], the greater the aesthetic value. The capacity [to produce aesthetic experience] is in the object, not the observer....The extent of the capacity is determined only over a period of time...and only under circumstances in which one is aesthetically receptive.

(Hospers, 1969, p. 12)

Dewey's work in aesthetics attempted to restore continuity between art and the lived-experience of the day to day (Dewey, 1934). He thought it was important to pay attention to "experience of the common or mill run of things to discover the esthetic quality such experiences possess" (Dewey, 1934, p. 11). For this reason aesthetic considerations were integral to the structure of his general philosophy which emphasized experience (Smith, 1971). In his pragmatic writings he reexamined the ties between philosophy and day to day experience, at the same time inquiring into the aesthetics of that experience, essentially promoting an aesthetic way of experiencing life—the good and beautiful quality of everyday life. An aesthetic experience for Dewey evokes a sense of intrinsic meaning that is expressive and involves imagination (Jackson, 1998).

Dewey's perspectives on education were put into practice at the laboratory school in Chicago where he asserted that the educational curriculum should be made up of

experiences from life to promote social progress. To incorporating aesthetic experience, learning activities were developed through the arts. His work demonstrated that, “learning can be in large measure a by-product of social activity; that the main test of learning is the ability of individuals to meet new social situations with habits of considered action” (Efland, 1990, p. 121).

Dewey’s ideas about incorporating the aesthetic into the general curriculum carried over into the 20th and 21st centuries. Over the years, his views have been taken in misguided directions almost as often as they have been the basis for the beneficial advancement of aesthetics in education. “He wanted schools to be transformed into places where children make things...Drawing for Dewey, taps the social instinct and is a vehicle for expressing, reflecting upon, and developing dialogue with others on any subject” (Brown & Korzenik, 1993). Dewey’s desire to have student’s “make things” was to call upon their creative energies to promote intellectual forms of learning, not a call for students to learn factory skills as was misconceived by Franklin Bobbitt (Bobbitt, 1912).

Dewey believed that art makes aesthetic forms of human experience possible. But since exposure to works of art do not ensure that aesthetic experience will ensue (Dewey, 1934), students must be taught to understand the nature of art and to perceive life in an aesthetic manner. He was an original advocate of the rigorous intellectual value of art in the American educational curriculum. Even though Dewey makes no connection between aesthetic experience and education in his 1934 book, *Art and Experience*, it is a testament to the status of art as a form of experience that is different from, but as valid as scientific experience.

Any idea that ignores the necessary role of intelligence in the 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.’ (Dewey, 1934, p. 46).

Dewey has been interpreted in many different ways by numerous theorists. He has been criticized for his own practice as an educator, for being somewhat absent as a university lecturer (Jackson, 1998). Yet half a century later, Jim Garrison’s book, *Dewey and Eros: Wisdom and Desire in the Art of Teaching* (1997), considers how John Dewey developed philosophy *as* education rather than a philosophy of education, and how Dewey’s thought is a philosophy of love. This philosophy regards teaching as a passion and a creative outlet, rewarded by the personal connections made with students and the satisfaction of assisting others in their own pursuit of self-transcendence. “Teachers are practicing an art, whether they know it or not, and the transformations in their students are the artifacts of their artifice” (Garrison, 1997, p. 62).

For Dewey, aesthetics were more philosophically oriented, than arts oriented. The aesthetics of experience were the focal point of his thought. His work in the arts focused on understanding the aesthetic experience that arts induced. His work in education offered an aesthetic balance—educational experience characterized by artistic ways of knowing to provide intrinsic meaning (Jackson, 1998).

Maxine Greene on aesthetics in education.

Maxine Greene discusses the role of aesthetics in education as a means to be fully present in our experience of the world, allowing our emotions to inform our knowledge through the experience of art (Greene, 1995). Greene's work in aesthetic education (1973, 1975, 1988a, 1988b, 1991a, 1991b, 1995, 2001) is a testament to how "the arts challenge empty formalism, didacticism, and elitism. Those shocks of awareness to which encounters with the arts can provoke persons leave us less submerged in the everyday, and more likely to wonder and to question" (Pinar et al, 2002, p. 568). Greene defines "aesthetic education" as "the deliberate efforts to foster increasingly informed and involved encounters with art. The point of enabling our student to both engage in art as a maker and experience existing artworks is to release them to be more fully present" (Greene, 1995, p. 138).

Acknowledging reality as an infinite multiplicity of perspectives, Greene encourages learning through personal inquiry and exploring meaning through multiple ways of knowing (Greene, 1995). Influenced by Hannah Arendt, Greene asserts that aesthetic experience calls upon imagination to invoke meaning beyond, "the heedless recklessness or hopeless confusion or complacent repetition of 'truths' which have become trivial or empty" (Arendt, 1958, p. 5). To experience learning aesthetically requires a conscious effort to participate more fully and energetically, to be more aware of ourselves in the process (Greene, 1995). "Knowing 'about,' even in the most formal academic manner, is entirely different from constituting an [sic] fictive world imaginatively and entering it perceptually, affectively, and cognitively" (Greene, 1995, p. 125).

Greene's voice serves as an inspirational call for awareness and change in regards to the societal consequences of education lacking the dynamism of aesthetics experience. She states, "If the uniqueness of the artistic-aesthetic can be reaffirmed...we may make possible a pluralism of vision, a multiplicity of realities. We may enable those we teach to rebel" (Greene, 1988b, p. 295). Drawing again on Arendt, she also contests the opinion that arts are not an intellectually demanding component of the curriculum. She counters the argument that imagination has no place in education's mission to teach factual "truths" with the dull, passive and apathetic product resulting from such an uninspired mission. "The passive, apathetic person is all too likely to be unresponsive to ideas of the unreal, the as-if, the merely possible. And it is this passive person who bars the arts as frivolous, a mere frill, irrelevant to learning in the post-industrial world" (Greene, 1995, p. 125).

Elliot Eisner on aesthetics in education.

Elliot Eisner has been presenting research in art education and aesthetics since the 1960s. His influential work has developed in different directions over time, leading the curriculum field through innovative turns that incorporate aesthetic insight. Much of Eisner's writing on aesthetics has been geared toward inquiry specific to the arts. His past research considered the effects of art experience on academic achievement (Eisner, 1998a). His more recent work has applied aesthetic inquiry to more diverse projects outside of the arts. Since aesthetic education seeks to develop multiple literacy in the student (Eisner, 1994a), Eisner believes that the arts and humanities should be used as resources with which to think about and conduct educational research (Eisner, 1998b). In

his book, *Cognition and Curriculum Reconsidered* (1994a), he developed aesthetic inquiry to explore how aesthetic education seeks to develop multiple literacy. And in *Educational Imagination* (1994b), first published in 1979, he elaborated on the process of education and how it expands and deepens the kinds of meaning people have in their lives.

In his recent book, *The Arts and the Creation of Mind* (2002), he argues the cognitive dimensions of aesthetic education, providing five principles to guide art education practice with regard to aesthetics: Concentrate on the distinctive qualities of the arts, foster growth of artistic intelligence, understand how aesthetic aspects relate to the culture, facilitate the creation of personal vision and enable students to experience life aesthetically (Eisner, 2002).

For Eisner, aesthetics “pertain to the justification of claims about the value and function of art” (Eisner, 2002, p. 26). Aesthetic inquiries consider aspects of intention, interactions, relationships and vitality, and primarily take the form of artistic expressions (Eisner, 2002). “Addressing questions related to aesthetic theory is believed to help students become a part of a deep and enduring philosophical conversation” (Eisner, 2002, p. 27).

In learning to develop the aesthetic domain of intelligence, “perception is refined, imagination stimulated, judgment fostered, and technical skills developed” (Eisner, 2002, p.15). Students strengthen their ability to really perceive things through their senses and intellect rather than to merely recognize and memorize them through their intellect alone (Eisner, 2002). Perceiving the world aesthetically involves treasuring experiences for their intrinsic value. (Eisner, 2002). Thus, the pleasure invoked in the learning process by

aesthetic education makes students much more likely to continue their own intrinsically motivated learning beyond the classroom (Eisner, 2002).

Normally we try to see the world and act upon it with the least amount of energy that will satisfy the realization of our purposes. Put another way, we typically see things in order to classify and use them. We try to do things efficiently to avoid wasting time, effort, energy. What we do not typically seek are the expressive features or the emotional tone of what we pay attention to. We speed up perception to get on with our work. One of the large lessons the arts teach is how to secure the feelingful experience that slowed perception makes possible; the arts help students to learn how to savor qualities by taking the time to really look so that they can see. (Eisner, 2002, p. 24)

The limited definition of aesthetics is a factor contributing to the underestimation of the aesthetic role in knowledge creation. Eisner refers to the “aesthetic modes of knowing” as “the relationship between form and content,” that goes beyond our traditional understanding of both aesthetics as “a matter of the heart” and knowing as a scientific matter (Eisner, 1985, p. 23-24). Eisner would be critical of Descartes’ suggestion that the mind is separate from the emotional body. He views aesthetics as “both a subject matter and a criterion for appraising the process used to create works of science as well as art” (Eisner, 1985, p. 29). Knowledge is created, rather than discovered in Eisner’s view, and therefore has a vastly overlooked aesthetic component. He warns that with the limited application of the term *aesthetics*: “The aesthetic aspects of human experience are considered luxuries. And luxuries, as we all know, can be rather easily forgone in hard times” (Eisner, 1985, p. 32).

Eisner also points out that the implications caused by traditional views of cognition have marginalized the arts in education (Eisner, 2002, p. xi). Views on cognition present a problem because they direct the content of school curricula and inevitably, “the kinds of mental skills and modes of thinking that students have an opportunity to develop. In this sense, the school’s curriculum can be considered a mind-altering device. And it should be” (Eisner, 2002, p. 9). Therefore, by arguing the cognitive value of the arts Eisner invalidates the idea that the arts are not as intellectually demanding as other academic forms of knowledge in the act of perception.

He regards teaching as an art form. “Teaching is artistic in character...it provides a deep sense of aesthetic experience to both perceiver and actor when it is well done. It requires the teacher to pay attention to qualitative nuance...It often requires flexibility in aims and the ability to exploit unforeseen opportunities in order to achieve aims that could not have been conceptualized beforehand” (Eisner, 1998b, p. 65-66). He contrasts teaching perceived of as an art to teaching perceived of as a science.

To argue as I will that teaching is an art is something of a paradox. We live at a time when virtually the entire effort of those who have attempted to study teaching has been devoted to the creation of a science of teaching...Yet, most of those who teach—indeed, even those who study teaching scientifically—often regard their own teaching as an artistic activity (Eisner, 1998b, p. 154).

Eisner offers four ways in which he proposes teaching to be considered an art form (Eisner, 1998b). First, it can be performed with so much skill and grace that the experience for both teacher and student can be aesthetically pleasing. Second, teachers, like all kind of other artists, make judgments based on qualitative forms of intelligence

likened to art elements and principals to reach qualitative ends. Third, he states, “Teachers work is not dominated by prescriptions or routines but is influenced by qualities and contingencies that are unpredictable. The teacher must function in an innovative way in order to cope with these contingencies” (Eisner, 1998b, p. 155). And finally, the ends achieved are often the result of process.

He suggests recontextualizing education practice as a more “artful undertaking” (Eisner, 2002, p. xii). “Good art teaching makes [a contribution] to the child’s ability to perceive subtleties and to recognize complexities among the qualitative relationships encountered in the phenomenal world” (Eisner, 2002, p. 21). When taught well, the arts actually involve “the most complex and subtle forms of thinking” (Eisner, 2002, p. xii). The complexities involved in aesthetic ways of thinking are highly demanding of the intellect since the capacity to perceive aesthetic experience requires imagination and “emotionally pervaded experience” (Eisner, 2002, p. xii). “Perception is, in the end, a cognitive event. What we see is not simply a function of what we take from the world, but what we make of it” (Eisner, 2002, p. xii).

Also, Eisner asserts that the arts transform consciousness. By refining the senses and imaginative capabilities, the arts allow us to experience the world differently, extend our artistic problem solving abilities and provide new forums through which meaning can be experienced and expressed (Eisner, 2002). Through the arts students engage in personal transformation, “a process through which the self is remade” (Eisner, 2002, p. 12). “Education is a process of learning how to become the architect of your own experience and therefore learning how to create yourself. The arts have distinctive contributions to make to that end” (Eisner, 2002, p. 24).

Eisner is credited with the development of aesthetic inquiry as a tool for understanding curriculum. His entire educational philosophy seems encapsulated within aesthetic inquiry. In *The Kind of Schools We Need: Personal Essays* (1998b), he discusses ways in which the arts have influenced his way of thinking about education. His view of the curriculum is holistic. He compares curriculum to a work of art:

As a painter I grappled with the problem of trying to make a picture ‘work’—often unsuccessfully....Matters of visualization, technique, composition, sensibility, and inventiveness were required. And all of these skills and abilities were employed on a dynamic configuration; things were always changing, and the most subtle alteration of a passage in one section of an image required attention to a variety of others as well. (Eisner, 1998b, p. 61)

Aesthetic inquiry was formulated as an inquiry to examine how educators and students respond to educational experiences by employing methods similar to art criticism to look deeper into the curriculum. Eisner’s notion of “connoisseurship” (Eisner, 1977) plays a role. “Connoisseurship” refers to learning how to see and appreciate qualities of the curriculum in a refined way. “Connoisseurship, generally defined, is the art of appreciation. It is essential to criticism because without the ability to perceive what is subtle and important, criticism is likely to be superficial or even empty” (Eisner, 1994b, p. 215).

Art Education

According to art educator Kerry Freedman, past conceptualizing of the field of art education has determined how teaching practice in the field is conducted. “Although

theories of art and education are usually thought of as intending to describe reality, they often function in ways that construct reality by categorizing, organizing, and providing a discourse for art education that can limit, as well as enable, possibilities” (Freedman, 2003, p. 9). As previously discussed, changes in history have impacted aesthetic perspectives, which have in turn directly impacted the way that aesthetics have been addressed in the art education curriculum. And, since aesthetic assertions vary based on the diverse experiences of those who hold them, they take on different forms when developed into curricula. In *The Arts and the Creation of Mind* (2002), Eisner notes the following distinctions in the contemporary art education field: “Discipline-based art education (DBAE),” a “visual culture” approach, a “creative problem solving” approach, a “creative self-expression” approach, an “art education as preparation for the world of work” approach, an “arts to promote academic performance” approach, an “integrated arts” approach and his own “cognitive developmental” approach (Eisner, 2002, p. 25-39).

Each of the approaches to art education listed above has a different aesthetic framework. They will each be discussed in present tense since, at least in part, all are curricular approaches currently in use by practitioners. Each approach stems from an aesthetic tradition rooted in historical events. For example, the aesthetic framework of the creative problem solving approach values the creation of objects that are as beautiful as they are functional. This approach stems from the design focus and historical developments of the Bauhaus school (Eisner, 2002).

The Bauhaus school in Germany was closed by the Nazi regime in 1932. This resulted in many important Bauhaus educators (Albers, Gropius, Maholy-Nagy, etc.) immigrating to North America to teach at universities (White, 2004). “The Bauhaus

curriculum, which placed a priority on materials and design, became so pervasive that art educators came to see the Bauhaus as the origin of a design-based curriculum. The effects of this influence could be seen in art education periodicals from the mid 1930s through the 1970s” (White, 2004, p. 64). The influence of historical events surrounding the Bauhaus extended far beyond the original Bauhaus school and developed, through the inherent aesthetic perspective, into the creative problem solving approach to art education curriculum in the United States.

Creative self-expression, on the other hand, values nurturing of the creative impulse. This perspective is based in the belief that “the child who uses creative activity as an emotional outlet will gain freedom and flexibility as a result of the release of unnecessary tensions” (Lowenfeld & Brittain, 1987, p. 7). Psychologist Viktor Lowenfeld’s aesthetic focus was on the development of creative growth and personality development through art (Dobbs, 2004, p. 705). Franz Cizek, an advocate of child art from Vienna who taught in the early 1900s, was also a proponent of this view though his approach was less psychology based. Cizek believed that teachers should let children teach themselves about art and not try to influence them. Children should be allowed to create their own identity through art (Brown & Korzenik, 1993). From Cizek’s perspective, artistic growth could only be developed through the natural unfolding of an intrinsic creative energy, not through formal instruction (Wilson, 2004). More recently, creative self-expression via art education has been promoted as a vital source for finding meaning in life. In *Creativity: Flow and the Psychology of Discovery and Invention* (1996) Csikszentmihalyi came to the conclusion that creativity can not be taught, nor is it simply inherent. He studied how and why people who dedicated their time to certain

activities found enjoyment in those activities in order to understand how to achieve the optimal experience in life. For Csikszentmihalyi, “Creativity arises from a synergy, an interaction, produced by deep knowledge of a symbolic domain, personal gifts, dispositions, and insights...He argues that creativity is a fundamental capacity without which human culture would not have emerged and without which it will not survive” (Burton, 2004, p. 557-558). Csikszentmihalyi refers to creativity as a result of the ‘flow’ experience. “The concept of *flow* [is] the state in which people are so involved in an activity that nothing else seems to matter; the experience itself is so enjoyable that people will do it even at great cost, for the sheer sake of doing it” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1991, p. 4). Creative self-expression has also developed along the lines of an art therapy curriculum.

Contrary to creative self-expression, a different approach to curriculum is to focus on preparing students for the world of work. This can be considered a “pragmatic” approach (Eisner, 2002), although it is the most superficial use of this philosophically derived term, it is also referred to as a social efficiency approach (Kliebard, 2004). This perspective indicates an aesthetic focused on teaching technical skills. Those who hold this aesthetic perspective may believe that a technical skill building curricula will make students more marketable to assume fulfilling, creative vocations. This approach can be traced to Horace Mann, the first Secretary of Education in the state of Massachusetts and considered the father of the American common school. Mann thought that drawing should not be play. Students in the common schools were to be disciplined with activity needed in their future lives as working class adults. Mann therefore, suggested art instruction methods that would prepare students for an occupation in the arts (Brown & Korzenik, 1993). He also instituted drawing into the common school curriculum because

he held the popular 19th century rationale that “drawing was beneficial because it aided writing” (Wood and Soucy, 1990, p. 52).

Maintaining aspects of the 19th century perspective, the promotion of academic performance and integrated arts approaches both value art as part of a bigger, academically focused, whole. These perspectives often imply that other aspects of the curriculum are more important than art itself (Eisner, 2002). Unfortunately, academic performance gains made through study that is focused on the arts cannot be validated as any stronger than gains made through concentration on any other facet of the curriculum (Eisner, 2002).

The Disciplined-Based Art Education approach to art education exhibits an aesthetic perspective requiring a certain degree of literacy of the formal and expressive qualities of art forms. “It requires the ability to slow down perception so that visual qualities can be inspected and savored. It requires one to search for qualitative relationships and to note the quality of experience they engender” (Eisner, 2002, p. 26). DBAE seeks to approach art instruction in a way that equips students with conceptual tools to have meaningful experiences with art outside of the classroom. “The discipline-based initiatives shared a reasonable premise: Start with what society wants children to become, determine its attributes, and then figure out how to teach it” (White, 2004, p. 69). DBAE focused lessons on art works, rather than on the students’ production of works (although this is also a component). This presents a direct challenge to the creative self-expression perspective (Dobbs, 2004) of Lowenfeld and Cizek.

The cognitive development approach to art education is the approach most currently advocated by Eisner. Eisner is also well known for his earlier work that

precluded and influenced the DBAE approach (Dobbs, 2004). The cognitive development approach to art education values the development of complex and subtle forms of thinking, flexibility, creative risk taking and tolerance for ambiguity (Eisner, 2002). “A persistent tradition pictures the aesthetic attitude as passive contemplation of the immediately given, direct apprehension of what is presented...On the contrary...the aesthetic experience is dynamic rather than static...less an attitude than action: creation and recreation” (Goodman, 1972, p. 307). This approach to curriculum involves the student in the decision making process regarding the direction of his or her own work. The teacher’s role is more as facilitator or guide (Eisner, 2002).

A multicultural approach to art education was not included in Eisner’s categorization. However, it is an approach that warrants mention. There has been an on-going movement in the field to make art education curriculum in the United States more culturally diverse, or multicultural, for many decades (McFee, 1998; Young, 1990). According to theorists of postmodern art education, multiculturalism is considered a postmodern issue which is approached in a manner of consciousness that rejects the universal modernist perspective of formalism (Efland, Freeman & Stuhr, 1996). “A number of contemporary educational researchers have turned away from the pursuit of knowledge as an end in itself and have turned instead to activities that might serve to empower socially and economically oppressed groups” (Efland, Freeman & Stuhr, 1996, p. 12). The goal of multicultural education is to promote positive social change. “Increased consciousness of minority groups and their emergence are challenging stereotypes and prejudice” (McFee, 1998, p. 1). Additionally, significant research in art education is being approached from an international perspective. Robert W. Ott and Al

Hurwitz argue that there is a common bond between art educators from all over the globe, but that the teaching of art is not universal for all cultures. “Although the impulse to create or respond to art is universal, art itself is not an international or universal language since perceptions and actions can clearly be shaped by culture and the environment” (Ott & Hurwitz, 1984, p. 3).

The visual culture approach to art education is a current trend that reflects the aesthetics of a postmodern philosophical perspective (Freedman, 2003). The foundations of visual culture curriculum shifts the focus from art works to the relational contexts of visual art. Visual culture presents art as a cultural mediator (Freedman, 2003). According to Deborah Smith-Shank, the “visual culture education [perspective] argue[s] that ordinary objects, places, and events are visually loaded with aesthetic signifiers, and they have the power to inform, modify desires, and educate, at least as well as high art, and in some cases, maybe better” (Smith-Shank, 2004, p.vii).

Visual culture aesthetics focus on exposing the power structures that influence the art world by teaching students “how to decode the values and ideas that are embedded in what might be called popular culture as well as what is called the fine arts” (Eisner, 2002, p. 28). The aesthetic goal of this perspective is to bring about change in awareness and worldviews in order to protect personal rights from the manipulation of the media and powerful elite. Visual culture aesthetics can also be concerned with improving understanding within multicultural societies. “Any understanding of the role of arts education in the public schools requires that we examine the values and beliefs of society and its changing institutions, communities, and group relationships, as well as the patterns of small groups or ‘tribes’ within the schools” (Chalmers, 1981, p. 7).

Finally, the cognitive development approach to art education is the approach most currently advocated by Eisner. Eisner is also well known for his earlier work that precluded and influenced the DBAE approach (Dobbs, 2004). The cognitive development approach to art education values the development of complex and subtle forms of thinking, flexibility, creative risk taking and tolerance for ambiguity (Eisner, 2002). “A persistent tradition pictures the aesthetic attitude as passive contemplation of the immediately given, direct apprehension of what is presented...On the contrary...the aesthetic experience is dynamic rather than static...less an attitude than action: creation and recreation” (Goodman, 1972, p. 307). This approach to curriculum involves the student in the decision making process regarding the direction of his or her own work. The teacher’s role is more as facilitator or guide (Eisner, 2002).

Conclusion

This section has by no means offered an exhaustive list of curriculum theorists or curricular approaches to art education that are driven by differing aesthetic notions. However, this is a sufficient sampling to make the point that aesthetics in education have advanced the curriculum in a multitude of different ways. As is the case with things philosophically based, all curricula have an aesthetic component. “The curriculum comes to form as art does, as a complex mediation and reconstruction of experience. In this regard curriculum can be likened to any art form” (Pinar et al, 2002, p. 567-68). The question is how to focus on the aesthetic aspect and allow it to flourish.

Aesthetics relate to our imagination and offer an enhanced experience of life. Aesthetics in education should relate to the advancement of education of the whole

person through an aesthetic lived experience. The aesthetic component of curriculum is wasted, or even abused, when used as a means for economic advancement to benefit a few select members of society. Enhancing the aesthetic facets of curriculum education can exercise the imaginative facilities of the intellect. “Imagination gives us images of the possible that provide a platform for seeing the actual, and by seeing the actual freshly, we can do something about creating what lies beyond it” (Eisner, 2002, p. 4).

Part 3: Cultural Aesthetic Experience

This section will compile literature addressing the themes of culture and aesthetics as they are deemed relevant to this study. Due to the abstract nature of the concepts addressed, both a theoretical review and research review will be conducted. Analysis will result in workable definitions for the purposes of this research. This review will present a standpoint from which to relate the concepts of culture and aesthetics to the topics of intercultural immersion and education.

The title of this dissertation refers to *cultural aesthetic experience*. What is *cultural aesthetic experience*? Such a loaded phrase needs some unpacking. It contains several concepts that are slippery to define. First, in order to decode this phrase one requires knowledge of what is being referred to as an *aesthetic experience*. Next, the concept of culture is in need of clarity since *cultural* is serving as an adjective to describe the type of aesthetic experience. Finally, how do these concepts relate to one another in terms of a *cultural aesthetic experience*? What are the guidelines for such an experience to occur—where would it be had, how would it come about and unfold? Who would have it and why?

These questions will be addressed through an exploration of the literature from theorists whose perspectives are relevant to my study. First, to compose a comprehensive understanding of the concept of aesthetic experience a review of literature representative of the current research relating to aesthetic experience in educational settings will be summarized to provide a more contemporary look at this topic. Classic works such as that of John Dewey and Roman Ingarden will be consulted. Scholars such as Elliot Eisner and Maxine Greene are noteworthy contemporaries who address the question of how aesthetic experience is significant to curriculum studies. Their perspectives will inform the discussion regarding significance of aesthetic experience to learning. Second, views regarding the concept of culture will be discussed. Dewey's and Eisner's work will again be consulted, as well as anthropological and historiography theorist's perspectives. Relevant themes and theorists from contemporary cultural studies will also be discussed, including visual culture and consumerism. Third, I will present a review of literature on the topic of cultural aesthetic theories. This will include a discussion of post-colonialism and several questions about the concept of culture and identity that have arisen as a result of this review. Finally, this section will conclude with a synthesis of perspectives and concepts, resulting in a working definition of the term *cultural aesthetic experience*, considering this concept in relation to the overall significance to learning.

Aesthetic Experience

As previously discussed, aesthetics is a term pertaining to what is valued as good, beautiful or sublime (Burke, 1958). Aesthetics are a facet of philosophical discourse.

There is no universally agreed upon understanding of the term aesthetics. The way one experiences the aesthetic is dependent upon one's aesthetic perspective which correlates to some extent with an individual's ontological and epistemological point of view. There have been many aesthetic theoretical assertions made. Some pertain directly and exclusively to philosophical worldviews, others pertain specifically to a philosophy of art. It logically follows that an aesthetic experience would be as varied as is the aesthetic discourse. This section will provide a look at some of the discourse relating to aesthetic experience in order to develop a working concept description of this concept for the purpose of continued inquiry. The resulting concept description will not be based in the perspective of any one theory or theorists. It will be eclectically informed by various assertions in the writings included within this section.

John Dewey on aesthetic experience.

This conversation on aesthetic experience begins with Dewey for several reasons. Within the curriculum studies field, his work is considered a philosophical classic for bringing together the areas of aesthetics and education, even though, as Jackson (1998) notes, he did not refer to aesthetic education per se. Dewey spoke of aesthetics in regards to experience and education in regards to experience, thus linking the two through experience. Aesthetic experience permeated much of Dewey's philosophical thought and his educational practice. His thoughts on the subject are mostly summarized in the book *Art as Experience* (1934), which was written late in his career (Jackson, 1998). Dewey's influence in the field of aesthetics is foundational for many important contemporary educational researchers, including Elliot Eisner and Maxine Greene. Deweyan

pragmatism and his aesthetic theory are also foundational to this research inquiry into cultural aesthetic experience.

Here is a brief summary of Dewey's perspective on aesthetic experience: He rejected essentialist positions on aesthetics and art. He also rejected the idea of dualism between emotion and intellect, believing that the act of awareness and conscious realization relied upon imagination in order to break through the perfunctory "inertia of habit" (Dewey, 1934, p. 272). The imagination's involvement in active thought was especially germane in regards to cognition of aesthetic experience. Aesthetic experience was part of—not detached from or out of reach of—everyday lived experience. Furthermore, an aspect of the intellect, aesthetic experience was not something that naturally developed without being attended to through education and therefore was in need of intellectual guidance to refine (Dewey, 1934).

The process of an aesthetic experience for Dewey, began with exposure to an object or action taken in through the senses that provoked the individual's attention. "In order to understand the esthetic in its ultimate and approved forms, one must begin with it in the raw; in the events and scenes that hold the attentive eye and ear of man [sic], arousing his interest and affording him enjoyment as he looks and listens" (Dewey, 1998b, p. 392). This individual becomes actively involved and interested in the process of perceiving as a result of sensing for reasons connected to the creative imagination. Dewey offers an example of how aesthetic experience materializes in the following analogy: "The man who poked the sticks of burning wood would say he did it to make the fire burn better; but he is none the less fascinated by the colorful drama of change

enacted before his eyes and imaginatively partakes in it. He does not remain a cold spectator” (Dewey, 1998b, p. 392).

Dewey’s theory denied a divergence between aesthetic experience of fine arts in high culture and the aesthetic in everyday experiences. Aesthetic experience was not an occurrence secluded to museums and concert halls, even though it was portrayed as such in the literature of the day, to which Dewey was reacting.

So extensive and subtly pervasive are the ideas that set art upon a remote pedestal, that many a person would be repelled rather than pleased if told that he enjoyed his casual recreations, in part at least, because of their esthetic quality. The arts which today have most vitality for the average person are things he does not take to be arts....For, when what he knows as art is relegated to the museum and gallery, the unconquerable impulse towards experiences enjoyable in themselves finds such outlet as the daily environment provides. (Dewey, 1998b, p. 392)

He based this argument on denial of legitimacy to the traditionally accepted divide between the individual and the environment. The environment is the catalyst to aesthetic expressions and aesthetic experience. The environment is inclusive of but not exclusive to fine art. Summarizing Dewey’s stance on the subject, the editors of *The Essential Dewey, Volumes 1 & 2*, stated: “It is as the organism attends to its own struggles and achievements, and then seeks to express those experiences in ways that consolidate and enrich them, that art enters into the world” (Hickman & Alexander, 1998, p. xiii). Dewey also named the consequences of an exclusive and haughty view of aesthetic experience, in terms of a resulting aesthetic hunger. “When, because of their remoteness, the objects acknowledged by the cultivated to be works of fine art seem anemic to the mass of

people, esthetic hunger is likely to seek the cheap and the vulgar” (Dewey, 1998b, p. 393).

Dewey’s work is included in this section as an important influence to this study because of the way he approached the concept of aesthetic experience. He argued for an aesthetic against essentialism and without intellectual and emotional dualism. He made a legitimate case for educating aesthetics through the imagination and exposed aesthetic knowledge as an important, yet marginalized aspect of human development. Dewey’s arguments are foundational to the theoretical framework from which the importance of this study is conceived.

Roman Ingarden on aesthetic experience.

Ingarden is not regularly included in the discourse on aesthetic experience in the United States, but seems to be well known in parts of Europe. Regardless, his theory of aesthetic experience provides components of interest and import to the discussion. The parallels found in his perspective, to that of Dewey’s, are a point of interest. He was a prolific contemporary of Dewey and a student of Edmund Husserl. Although he wrote on a variety of other philosophical topics in German and Polish, he was best known for his writings on aesthetics which were translated into English (mostly after his death in 1970). Among his important writings on aesthetics are *Studia z estetyki* (Studies of Esthetics) (1958), which is Volume 2 of the *Philosophical Works of Roman Ingarden*; *The Cognition of the Literary Work of Art*, (1973); *Man and Value*, (1983); *The Ontology of the Work of Art*, (1989); and *Selected Papers in Aesthetics*, (1985).

Ingarden's perspective is comparable to Dewey's in regard to approach and explanation on a number of levels. Ingarden's approach to explaining the aesthetic experience is similar to Dewey's in the sense that there is departure from the mundane involved. But, Ingarden, whose interest was in the aesthetic experience of literary art rather than primarily visual art, is more intent on questioning the requirement of a real object as a starting point for the experience, "...we *begin* with the perception of a real object. But the question is, first, whether, when starting from a real object, we remain within its limits while an aesthetic perception is taking place in ourselves, and, secondly, whether the starting from a real object is indispensable in every case of aesthetic perception" (Ingarden, 1961, p. 290). This perspective more clearly provides for an aesthetic experience to originate from exposure to an idea, a story or a song, as well as a material object such as a painting.

Although Ingarden does not use the word *imagination* in reference to the aesthetic as Dewey does, he implies the use of imagination in the process of aesthetic experience since he asserts that an aesthetic experience moves the individual beyond the straightforward perception of the real world. "The essential mistake of the views about an aesthetic experience consists in the opinion that the object of such an experience is *identical* with an element of the real world and the object of our activities or cognition" (Ingarden, 1961, p. 289). Ingarden's perspective is derived more directly from the ontological than from a separate axiological angle.

The thought process involved in Ingarden's aesthetic experience is similar to the thought process explained by Dewey in *How We Think* (Dewey, 1910), Ingarden's process of aesthetic experience involves a circular process of consideration involving

prior experience and the situational elements of the present experience. In Ingarden's words, "...a steady taking into consideration of the objective and subjective conditions in which the perception has been accomplished...These conditions are taken into account with the aim of considering their influence on the data of our perceptions" (Ingarden, 1961, p. 292). Furthermore, he states:

"Aesthetic experience" is no *single* composite experience but a certain number of experiences connected with one another....then one has to grasp the qualities aesthetically valuable and to bind them synthetically with one another in order to succeed, in this way, in grasping the *whole* of the harmony of those qualities, and, at the same time only—in a peculiar emotional contemplation—to *give oneself up to the charm* of the beauty of the constituted "aesthetic object." (Ingarden, 1961, p. 294)

In Ingarden's work the thought process involved in aesthetic experience is differentiated from the thought process of simple sense perception, since they involve different attitudes. "In its very beginning it is a state of an excitement with the quality which has imposed itself on us in the object perceived...we feel only that it has allured us to itself, impelled us to give attention to it, to possess it in a direct, intuitive contact" (Ingarden, 1961, p. 296). An aesthetic experience may be initialized by an investigative sense perception experience, but aesthetic experience moves beyond the strictly sensual in that we react on an emotional level (Ingarden, 1961).

Among other insights, Ingarden's approach to explaining the process of aesthetic experience in relation to ontological concerns is particularly noteworthy to this inquiry. His presentation of the aesthetic impact on ontological aspects of cognition essentially

exposes a resulting break with reality. The break with reality caused by an aesthetic experience informs perceptions of reality as much as it is informed by the perception of reality, through experiential means (Ingarden, 1961). For example, referring to his own aesthetic experience of looking at the Venus de Milo, Ingarden makes a point about the aesthetic experience breaking with reality and moving beyond straightforward perception of what is really there. As part of the aesthetic experiential process, his mind allows the emotional desire for a more perfect sensual experience to dismiss significant notice of the imperfections in the material status of the object itself; such as the missing appendages, of the representative female form. In other words, a real woman with missing appendages may not provoke the same satisfying aesthetic experience as this particular sculpture of the like. “We *supplement* ‘in thought,’ or even in a peculiar perceptive representation, such details of the object as play a positive role in the attainment of the *optimum* of aesthetic ‘impression’ possible in the given case” (Ingarden, 1961, p. 293). The aesthetic experience incorporates imagination to create an experience beyond what reality has to offer. “The reason for overlooking some details in an aesthetic perception is...the details to be overlooked ‘shock’ us; if they were perceived, they would introduce a *disharmonious* factor in the field of what is in perception *given* to us, they would bring *discordance* into the totality of an aesthetic object” (Ingarden, 1961, p. 293). Ingarden stresses the point that an aesthetic experience is not a simple taking in of the scenery or an otherwise passive mode of perception, “...it is a phase of very *active*, intensive, and creative life of an individual...the whole process of aesthetic experience includes, on the one hand, *active phases*, on the other hand...the moments of turning motionless and contemplative” (Ingarden, 1961, p. 300).

The main feature of an aesthetic experience for Ingarden is that it is “a *composite process having various phases and a characteristic development* which contains many heterogeneous elements” (Ingarden, 1961, p. 295). This process causes a change of attitude involving, “an intuitive intercourse with qualitative essences” (Ingarden, 1961, p. 299), or in other words, “a transition from a natural attitude of practical life into a specifically aesthetic one.” (Ingarden, 1961, p. 299). According to Ingarden, aesthetic experiences vary depending on the situation, the object encountered and the individual involved, but the phases of an aesthetic experience are as follows: First the individual undergoes a change of attitude in cognition from practical to aesthetic, referred to as “an intuitive grasp” (Ingarden, 1961, p. 301). “While perceiving a real object we are *struck* with a peculiar quality... This initial quality evokes in us a special emotion... it is only this emotion which opens the proper process of aesthetic experience... we receive the impression of it, we experience it rather than perceive it” (Ingarden, 1961, p. 296). Next, the excitement of the experience is transformed similarly to, “a form of falling in love (of ‘eros’) with the quality, which imposes itself on us... Hence, though the preliminary emotion undoubtedly includes an emotional element, there also distinctly occur in it some moments whose nature is rather that of desire” (Ingarden, 1961, p. 296). This transformation invokes “a change of psychic attitude” (Ingarden, 1961, p. 298).

Contemporary discourse on aesthetic experience.

The contemporary discourse on aesthetic experience is wide-ranging. Aesthetics is referred to as a dynamic concept; always changing with the changes of society (Vandenabeele, 2004). Much of the discourse from U.S. scholars in particular, draws on

or refers to Dewey's aesthetic philosophy specifically—either to support or refute arguments. Additional important theorists of aesthetic concerns, who appear to have fundamentally influenced the contemporary field are (in no particular order): Margaret Boden (e.g., 1994), Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi & Rick E. Robinson (e.g., 1990), Jerome Bruner (e.g., 1986), Ernst Gombrich (e.g., 1960), Monroe Beardsley (e.g., 1982), David Best (e.g., 1985), Ludwig Wittgenstein (e.g., 1989), G. W. F. Hegel (e.g., 1975), Leo Tolstoy (e.g., 1995), Cynthia Freeland (e.g., 2001), Marcia Eaton (e.g., 2001), Plato (e.g., 1997), Aristotle (e.g., 1958), Francis Hutcheson (e.g., 1971), David Hume (e.g., 1965), Immanuel Kant (e.g., 1987), Noel Carroll (e.g., 2001), George Santayana (e.g., 1961), Friedrich Schiller (e.g. 1967), and others.

The contemporary literature reviewed seemed to address many reoccurring themes, revealing a seemingly prevalent tendency in research on aesthetic experience to build upon or intersect existing theories in order to create new possibilities. The inclination seemed to breach traditional disciplinary borders in order to create new discourse. My understanding of the contemporary literature encouraged the inquiry developed in this study—a conglomeration of influences that pertain to the needs of the inquiry, without strict adherence to particular models or theories that prove hindering with pre-established ruts. Views in the contemporary discourse on aesthetic experience seemed also to diversify, by utilizing perspectives from multiple disciplines beyond philosophy and art.

For example, psychological models often formulate a basis for explaining the process of aesthetic experience. One psychologically inspired model, “The Model of Aesthetic Understanding as Informed Experience” (Lachepelle, Murray & Neim, 2003),

explores the intellectual dimensions of the aesthetic process that take place when viewing art, through experiential and theoretical knowledge standpoints. Drawing on the work of Csikszentmihalyi & Robinson (1990) as well as Kolb (1984), this model aims at increasing aesthetic understanding and producing aesthetic development through the unison of experiential and theoretical aesthetic learning (Lachapelle, Murray & Neim, 2003).

Another theorist, Michael Parsons, presents a five stage psychological model to explain how people respond to aesthetic experience. His book, *How We Understand Art* (1989), takes a cognitive developmental approach based on research by Kohlberg, Piaget and Habermas to question how individuals understand art. “People respond to paintings differently because they understand them differently. They have different expectations about what paintings in general should be like, what kinds of qualities can be found in them, and how they can be judged; and these expectations deeply affect their response” (Parsons, 1989, p. 2). Parsons perceives art as an expression of the self and understanding art as a reflection of the self (Parsons, 1989).

Other possibilities are offered by focusing on the somatic dimensions of aesthetic experience. Somatic aesthetic experience incorporates the entire body rather than focusing on the cognitive and imaginative processes in the mind alone. Annamma Joy and John Sherry (2003) identify embodiment of aesthetics both phenomenologically and within the cognitive unconscious. By examining what associations exist between embodiment, movement, and multi-sensory experience, they attended to how the body informs logic about art in museum settings (Joy & Sherry, 2003). Somaesthetics is a fairly new term in aesthetic theory, “but an example of its very embodiment” (Arnold,

2005, p. 48). Drawing on Dewey, Peter Arnold asserts in his research about the role of dance in education that, “somaesthetics help establish and restore that the body in the form of its skills, senses, and pleasures is an important part of aesthetic life” (Arnold, 2005, p. 52).

Although it is not a wholly new consideration, the emotional aspects of aesthetic experience are stressed as a focal point of discussion in much of the contemporary literature. Through the aesthetic process we undergo feelings of love (Maleuvre, 2005). We take delight in learning through beauty (Cannatella, 2006). We also respond aesthetically to emotional tension (Radford, 2004).

In an essay explaining the role of emotion in the *creative process*, Mike Radford makes many parallels to the process of aesthetic experience. He draws primarily on the works of Boden and Antonio Damasio, referring to creativity as “a complex process of informational processing within a given framework” through which “we can generate multiple possibilities in terms of meaningful articulations” (Radford, 2004, p. 53). According to Radford, through creative thought we can push at the boundaries of rationality and make changes to our human experience of the world. “Such changes might be minor but at other times dramatic, constituting major transitions in human thought and expression....dramatic transformations that we observe in the history of intellectual and cultural development” (Radford, 2004, p. 53). The emotional component of the creative process is conceived of as an emotional tension that must be reconciled by feelings of internal appropriateness. “We rely on our intuitive sense of the harmony, of the consonances and dissonances implicit in the whole. This sense of harmony might be

perceived as both a positive and negative factor in the development of understanding and expression” (Radford, 2004, p. 55).

Exposing a link between the creative process and culture, Radford claims that emotions are central to cognitive behavior and culturally derived. He explains how the arts may have communicative properties through empathetic means.

Having been acquired through our acculturation, it might be suggested that [emotions] are also shared. While [emotions] are in one sense at the root of individual subjectivity, they are also part of the objective public response, a shared propensity to seeing things in a similar way. Creative activity...might be a result of the realization of consonance between such representations, that the creative act of one person “speaks” to the emotional informational representations of others. In this way we feel effective surprise or more powerfully, a shock of recognition as we recognize the representations that lie in our own semi- or sub-consciousness. (Radford, 2004, p. 62).

Radford’s work sheds light on some important considerations. The terms he uses—*creative activity* or the *creative process*—correspond to the concept of (or process of creating) an *aesthetic expression*. They relate in this way: *aesthetic experience* is the process one undergoes in relation to experiencing an *aesthetic expression*. Therefore, the product of *creative activity* is the mechanism for triggering the *aesthetic experience*.

Aesthetic Experience: Significance to Learning

To answer the question of how aesthetic experience is significant to learning, the discussion will turn to two prominent theorists currently working on this particular

inquiry: Elliot Eisner and Maxine Greene. Also in this section, the concept of culture will be addressed and related to aesthetic experience by revisiting the perspectives of both Dewey and Eisner. Finally, through a synthesis of insights gathered throughout this study, meaning will be derived which concludes the discussion of what is meant by the phrase, *cultural aesthetic experience*.

Elliot Eisner's perspective.

Eisner's work is important to include in this conversation since his theoretical perspective rests on the premise that art makes aesthetic forms of human experience possible (Eisner, 2002). Eisner is a strong advocate for learning via aesthetic experience through school art programs (Eisner, 1985, 1994a, 1994b, 1998a, 1998b, 2002). He approaches aesthetics as a perspective. The aesthetic perspective savors experience by relying on the capacity to forego the utilitarian and qualitatively attend to the formal and expressive properties of form (Eisner, 2002).

Like Dewey, Eisner believes that mere exposure to works of art does not ensure that an aesthetic experience will ensue. His work endeavors to help educators use aesthetic knowledge effectively to promote learning and refine the senses as well as broaden the imaginations of learners (Eisner, 2002).

Also, Eisner argues that aesthetic experience is not simply a natural, emotional impulse, but an important component of learning involving the intellect in higher order thought process. This too is reminiscent of Dewey's similar assertion in 1934. That fact that this argument is still necessary to make given the current education situation, in U.S. schools in particular, is a telling statement about the society's political views regarding

the goals of the education system. It is also reflective of a schism of camps and tensions caused by a perceived knowledge hierarchy between science and arts based knowledge, stemming from outdated traditions in Greek thought and enlightenment era philosophy, still in need of being confronted and resolved.

Eisner expresses the need for incorporation of aesthetic forms of knowledge in schools in terms of cultural priorities. “The culture provides the options in the various fields of study...and various communities make the selections through choices reflected in graduation requirements, state educational codes, college admission requirements, and the like...Such decisions help influence how we think” (Eisner, 2002, p. 9). He goes further to discuss the consequence to U. S. society of continued marginalization to aesthetic modes of knowledge. “A culture populated by a people whose imagination is impoverished has a static future. In such a culture there will be little change because there will be little sense of possibility” (Eisner, 2002, p. 5). He continues, referring to the mind as a cultural creation, “...which aptitudes are cultivated and which are left to atrophy...are all influenced by the culture” (Eisner, 2002, p. 23).

Of further relevance to cultural influence is the creative act of aesthetic expression. In his latest book, *The Arts and the Creation of Mind* (2002), Eisner describes the cognitive dimension of the creative process. The creative process is what brings an idea from cognition to material form as an aesthetic expression. His view of this process involves the concept of *representation*, which is made up of the acts of inscription, editing and communication (Eisner, 2002, p. 6-7). Representation is the transforming of the idea into a material form. “Forms of representation are the means through which the contents of consciousness are made public. The process of making the contents of

consciousness public is...a way of discovering it, stabilizing it, editing it, and sharing it” (Eisner, 2002, p. 8). The part of the representation process that involves preserving the thought in a material form so that it can be shared with others is called inscription (Eisner, 2002). Editing is the practice in which “transitions are made graceful, colors harmonized, intensities modulated...Editing is paying attention to relationships and attending to details; it is the process of making the work, work” (Eisner, 2002, p. 6). The whole purpose of representation is for communication via artistic expression (Eisner, 2002).

Aesthetic expressions represented through the creative process show us what individuals are looking for and what they are accustomed to looking at and perhaps how they feel about their perceptions (Eisner, 2002). “The arts go well beyond making visible the visible; they also tell us something about how places and relationships feel. They speak to us...through the emotions” (Eisner, 2002, p. 12). Therefore, through the aesthetic experience of both creating and viewing aesthetic expressions we can not only add to our own creative facilities but also communicate and learn about how others view and make sense of the world, including others from different cultures. We may learn also to sincerely care about the other cultures’ concerns, rather than just to classify them and get on with our own isolated concerns (Eisner, 2002).

Maxine Greene’s perspective.

Maxine Greene’s belief in the power of aesthetic experience in education to transform individuals through imagination and increased social awareness is inspirational. Like Dewey, Greene’s perspective challenges formalism, didacticism and

elitism in relation to the arts. She also views the concept of the arts in broad terms and aims to strike a balance between an understanding of art that is too narrow and one that is so passively relative that it absolves the meaning and appreciation of excellence (Greene, 1995). Greene argues for aesthetic education which seeks to “enable...students to live within the arts, making clearings and spaces for themselves” (Greene, 1995, p. 135) so that they may enjoy the excitement of personal inquiry and “ ‘read’ their own worlds” (Greene, 1988, p. 117). Aesthetic education for Greene is characterized by inquiry, “...to include the posing of the kinds of questions—*aesthetic questions*—that arise in the course of art experiences...To pose aesthetic questions is to make the aesthetic experience itself more reflective, more critical, more resonant” (Greene, 1995, p. 137).

Greene points out some of the ways in which aesthetic experience is significant to learning. She asserts that aesthetic experience in education raises our awareness to a state of being “fully present” (Greene, 1984) or “wide-awake” (Greene, 1995, 2001). Being wide-awake, for Greene, refers to awareness as well as freedom to make informed choices (Greene, 2001).

Moreover, because the world that the arts illuminate is a shared world, because the realities to which the arts give rise emerge through acts of communication, the encounters we are enabling student to seek are never wholly autonomous or private....Communities of the wide-awake may take shape, even in the corridors of schools. (Greene, 1995, p. 150)

Through the arts, “We can envision other ways of being and ponder what it might signify to realize them” (Greene, 1995, p. 135). Additionally, the arts allow learners opportunities to explore alternative possibilities for perceiving the world (Greene, 1995,

2001). Arts can raise our consciousness about things that may be unsettling but nonetheless important to think about, “the shocks of awareness to which the arts give rise leave us (*should* leave us) less immersed in the everyday and more impelled to wonder and to question” (Greene, 1995, p. 135). Greene sees the importance in learning about marginalized ideas as well as the darker side of human nature and experience through the safe environment that art education provides. She states that when viewing work that deals with violent or distressing issues, students,

...must learn that these works are not to be equated with actualities...[they] confirm that we must not evade, deny, or take for granted these actualities, that we must not be willing to remain passive, to coincide forever with ourselves. We must, instead, seek more shocks of awareness as the time goes on, more explorations, more adventures into meaning, more active and uneasy participation in the human community’s unending quest. (Greene, 1995, p. 151)

Greene is fundamentally influential to my inquiry and the theoretical perspectives underlying this research. Her work aims to pull together independently significant theoretical trends that currently raise relevant questions for the field of aesthetics. Greene argues for “a pedagogy that integrates art education and aesthetic education” (Greene, 1995, p. 147). With this statement she is calling for an art education that is more broadly inspired to foster critical awareness as well as enlighten student’s imaginative faculties. “...It should be education for a more informed and imaginative awareness, but it should also be education in the kinds of critical transactions that empower students to resist both elitism and objectivism, that allow them to read and to name, to write and to rewrite their own lived worlds” (Greene, 1995, p. 147). Greene continues on this point, stating that

she, "...would like to see one pedagogy feeding into the other: the pedagogy that empowers students to create informing the pedagogy that empowers them to attend (and, perhaps, to appreciate) and vice versa" (Greene, 1995, p. 138).

Greene agrees with previously discussed theorists that the imaginative aspects of art education lie in the creative process and in aesthetic experience. She also agrees that there is the need for an educational practice that is focused on growth of imaginative ability. "A powerful way of educating [imagination, emotions, taste and sensibility] is through initiation into the artistic-aesthetic domains" (Greene, 1995, p. 140).

Additionally, she attributes our understanding of reality to imaginative facilities, proposing imagination as the "very texture of our experience" (Greene, 1995, p. 140).

"None of our encounters can happen...without the release of imagination, the capacity to look *through* the windows of the actual, to bring as-ifs into being in experience" (Greene, 1995, p. 139-140).

Drawing on Michel Foucault and Herbert Marcuse in her discussion of artistic-aesthetic education, Greene suggests that at the same time that it is serving the imagination, aesthetic experience in education can also raise student's awareness of hegemonic social power structures. Normalizing systems and practices in society, "enclose us in molds, define us in accord with extrinsic demands, [and] discourage us from going beyond ourselves and from acting on possibility" (Greene, 1995, p. 135). Greene believes that everyone in our society has a right to develop social savvy through critical education practice and that the arts are an appropriate vehicle for this increased awareness. (Greene, 1995). "At the heart of what I am asking for in the domains of the teaching of art and aesthetics is a sense of agency, even of power. Painting, literature,

theater, film—all can open doors and move persons to transform” (Greene, 1995, p. 150). Through aesthetic experience in art education Greene seeks to empower students to understand how the arts can be a tool for inquiring into community norms. She wants students to become more aware of how norms operate, through exposure to the arts. Students should be able to use their own experience to make autonomous judgments, “to break through some of the crusts of convention, the distortions of fetishism, the sour tastes of narrow faiths” (Greene, 1995, p. 146).

Summarizing the concept of aesthetic experience.

In summary, many key points regarding the concept of aesthetic experience were derived from the literature reviewed in the preceding section. An aesthetic experience results in an attitudinal change that creates an experience beyond the existing world (Ingarden, 1961). The process can be understood on both an individual and a cultural level (Radford, 2004). It involves reflection of the self (Parsons, 1989) while incorporating theoretical, as well as experiential knowledge (Lachapelle, Murray & Neim, 2003). An aesthetic experience involves the entire body in terms of intellectual, emotional and sensual experience (Joy & Sherry, 2003; Arnold, 2005). Furthermore, aesthetic understanding via this process is not a passive act and is conceived as a break from the ordinary within everyday experience (Dewey, 1934; Ingarden, 1961). An aesthetic experience is not restricted to or guaranteed by an exposure to art or any specific forms of art, although it can result from interaction with an artistic form of expression (Dewey, 1934), either material or immaterial (Ingarden, 1961). An aesthetic experience is an important component of learning involving higher order thought process

and it should be a societal priority to incorporate aesthetic forms of knowledge more fully into formal education practice (Eisner, 2002). Aesthetic experience in education is a transformative means of growth through imagination and social awareness (Greene, 1995). To conclude, for the purposes of this inquiry, an *aesthetic experience* is understood broadly as a cognitive and emotional responsive process involving the imagination, senses and body, which stimulates some semblance of experiential growth and/or enhanced awareness through sensual interaction with the world.

The Concept of Culture

What is culture? The concept of culture has been touched upon previously in this study, but it is essential to discuss culture independently in order to better understand it in relation to aesthetic experience and learning. To have culture, to be cultured, to be part of a culture, to experience culture, to immerse oneself in a culture: What is *culture*? My exploration of how the question of culture has been addressed in the literature made the concept even more complex and raised many additional questions: Does culture imply ethnicity, nationality, personality or physical traits? Is it a set of social rules, a biogeographical evolutionary process, an ideology or an expression of political identity? Is it communal, individual or both? Is culture a choice? Does it truly exist beyond hegemony or stereotype? Is everything we do an act of culture?

Furthermore, if I claim to be an American—what does that mean? Does it mean something different to other citizens of the United States than it does to say, a German? And does my statement mean something completely different to an Iraqi? Does it mean something different today than it did 20 years ago? How does my identification as

‘American’ resonate in the mind of Canadians, Mexicans and others from this hemisphere that incorporate the word America into their continental identifying discourse? Furthermore, if I don’t fit the stereotype or the expectations of others in my American-ness, does that make me culturally marginalized in their eyes or dislocated in confidence of my own identity? These are just some of the expansive issues that make up the discourse relating to culture in the literature. They are far too many questions to comprehensively address within the limitations of one dissertation.

Culture has become further problematized in contemporary times as a result of rapid paradigm shifts in thought and material conditions. Complicating matters even more, the anthropologic and ethnographic study of culture has tended to change very little in response to the transformations (Eisenhart, 2001) and this may offer a less than adequate understanding of the complexities of contemporary culture. As a means of addressing the multifaceted issue of culture without becoming bogged down in the process, educational ethnographer, Margaret Eisenhart suggested an alternative way of broaching the subject: “When culture is used as an idea ‘to think with,’ this variety is provocative and can move research forward” (Eisenhart, 2001, p. 16). This literature review is enlightened by the spirit of thinking with culture, rather than simply thinking about it. This approach will also be adapted for my proceeding review of the literature regarding the concepts of aesthetics and art.

Culture as a modern means of universal categorization is an extremely outdated view that is hardly existent today in the prevalent scholarly literature of any discipline; except as a model to oppose. Essentialist positions, or *consensus gentium*—ideas about universal truths that apply to all human beings everywhere, stem from Enlightenment

thought (Geertz, 1973). These became a problematic theoretical hindrance as the social milieu noticeably shifted in ways that have come to be known as *postmodern* (Eisenhart, 2001). Definitions of culture that were satisfying in the past, such as “the view of culture as a relatively enduring, coherent and bounded ‘way of living’” (Eisenhart, 2001, p. 17) were judged limited in their use when confronted with the complexities of real world’s multiplicities.

Another anthropologist, Mary Catherine Bateson takes a narrative approach to understanding culture. In *Peripheral Visions: Learning Along the Way* (1994), Bateson reflects on experiences with culture without ever attempting to define the concept. She does this by allowing the meaning of culture to emerge through stories. At one point she writes about the process:

I found that I had to untangle two different reactions, writing a description of the conversation and, carefully separated, an expression of my feelings as a member of another culture. Each person is calibrated by experience, almost like a measuring instrument for difference, so discomfort is informative and offers a starting point for new understanding. Indeed, what I had seen and heard would not have pushed me to reflection and generalization were it not for the urgency produced by the sense of difference. (Bateson, 1994, p. 17)

This study, as a narrative inquiry into the meaning of culture and aesthetics will be informed by Bateson’s approach and the work of other authors who use narrative inquiry in this way.

Dewey on culture.

To begin with, it has been noted that: “Dewey was above all a philosopher of culture” (Hickman & Alexander, 1998, p. xii). His focus in philosophy was on how theoretical perspectives were interpretive of the culture they represented (Hickman & Alexander, 1998). Dewey’s perspective emphasized the roles of language and environment on cultural formation and induction. He speaks of *language* as a significant aspect in the conception of culture. Language in this sense, is a term used more broadly than the spoken or written word alone. It is the vehicle of communication, thus language for Dewey can take the form of gesture, rites, ceremony, monuments, industrial and fine arts, as well as speech and writing (Dewey, 1998a). Dewey calls language, “the agency by which other institutions and acquired habits are *transmitted*, and...it *permeates* both the forms and the contents of all other cultural activities” (Dewey, 1998a, p. 80). Additionally, language is what distinguishes culture from nature and is necessary in the passing of cultural information.

“Culture” and all that culture involves, as distinguished from “nature,” is both a condition and a product of language. Since language is the only means of retaining and transmitting to subsequent generations acquired skills, acquired information and acquired habits, it is the latter. Since, however, meanings and the significance of events differ in different cultural groups, it is also the former.

(Dewey, 1998a, p. 86)

Dewey also considered the environment an aspect of culture. The environment is not understood as just the physical embodiment of nature, it contributes to our experience of the world and is thus incorporated into the concept of culture (Dewey, 1998a).

Referring to human experience he said, "...the strictly physical environment is so incorporated in a cultural environment that our interactions with the former, the problems that arise with reference to it, and our ways of dealing with these problems, are profoundly affected by incorporation of the physical environment in the cultural" (Dewey, 1998a, p.79). And since, according to Dewey, all of what we do and see, and the way we interact with one another and the environment is culturally transmitted, everything we perceive, believe, sense, feel, think and do, "...is determined not by organic structure and physical heredity alone but by the influence of cultural heredity, embedded in traditions, institutions, customs and the purposes and beliefs they both carry and inspire" (Dewey, 1998a, p. 79). By factoring into the determination of meaning, culture influences the way we approach problem solving and has a significant role in determining the problems we acknowledge and confront. Dewey stated:

Problems which induce inquiry grow out of the relations of fellow beings to one another, and the organs for dealing with these relations are not only the eye and ear, but the meanings which have developed in the course of living, together with the ways of forming and transmitting culture with all its constituents of tools, arts, institutions, traditions and customary beliefs. (Dewey, 1998a, p. 78).

For Dewey, culture acts as a formative energy, consequential of experience and interaction in the world. Culture cannot be rejected or denied. It is inherent in every thought and action of every individual. The evidence of cultural influence is an especially extant element in the arts (Dewey, 1934).

Eisner on culture.

In Eisner's view, culture is a tool by which we learn (Eisner, 2002). Eisner's work establishes a direct connection between culture and aesthetic experience. In his view, aesthetic experiences are influenced by culture and personal experience. Human beings develop in association with one another in culture and cultures depend upon aesthetic forms of communication (Eisner, 2002).

We learn to see, to hear, to discern the qualitative complexities of what we taste and touch. We learn to differentiate and discriminate, to recognize and to recall...Our sensory system becomes a means through which we pursue our own development. But the sensory system does not work alone; it requires for its development the tools of culture...With the aid of culture we learn to create ourselves. (Eisner, 2002, p. 2)

The kind of thinking that is characteristic of a culture is communicated and passed on through education. This is of deep concern to Eisner, since he argues that American culture is currently emphasizing priorities which tend to marginalize aesthetic experience in schools, at the expense of the child and society. He thinks that, "...the features of the culture to which the child will be exposed and the manner in which the child will address that culture are the most powerful indicators of the kind of thinking and therefore the kind of mind a child is likely to develop during the course of childhood" (Eisner, 2002, p. 23). The arts are vital to the education/enculturation process. "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 meaning, establishing contact with others, and sharing a culture" (Eisner, 2002, p. 3).

Eisner believes that the arts in particular help us learn to notice the world. Arts enable us to show our ideas to others and expand our personal capabilities beyond our own mind (Eisner, 2002). Arts promote awareness of aspects which may extend our consciousness and help us to explore new possibilities (Eisner, 2002). “The arts liberate us from the literal; they enable us to step into the shoes of others and to experience vicariously what we have not experienced directly. Cultural development depends upon such capacities, and the arts play an extraordinarily important role” (Eisner, 2002, p. 10).

Contemporary cultural studies.

The concept of culture is further examined via what is considered *cultural studies* literature. This body of literature, which has become an area of study in its own right, often takes a unique approach to examining culture through a lens that can be considered more post-structural than pragmatic. The term “cultural studies” is defined by John A. Weaver as “a multidisciplinary approach to the understanding of all dimensions of culture, from traditional notions to popular culture” (Weaver, 2005, p. 19-20). Cultural studies, as a research discipline, considers all forms of culture within their historical, political and geographical contexts (Weaver, 2005). There is a wide array of theorists working in different disciplines from which to draw and conduct a literature review on cultural studies. The disciplines that will be drawn from in this discussion are primarily concerned with the fields of cultural anthropology, visual arts, performance arts, communication and media studies, education and philosophy.

Anthropology and historiography of culture.

The work of Clifford Geertz is considered classic research in the field of cultural anthropology and cultural studies and is often cited in educational research. In *The Interpretation of Cultures* (1973), Geertz's perspective on the concept of culture highlights the complexities of *cultural discourse*, not the complexity of the concept of *culture* itself. Taking a semiotic approach, he describes culture as a web of interpretive contexts (Geertz, 1973). The goal of anthropology for Geertz is not to define culture or make predictions on cultural grounds, but to open channels of cross-cultural dialogue, "the enlargement of the universe of human discourse" (Geertz, 1973, p. 14). The best way to do this is by exploring the "symbolic dimensions of social action—art, religion, ideology, science, law, morality, common sense" (Geertz, 1973, p. 30).

Geertz points out that how culture is situated theoretically forms an important basis from which to conduct research. From a semiotic concept of culture the point of anthropology is not to study the predictive psychology of the individuals or to attribute certain behaviors to culture, but to explore the meanings of cultural behaviors, gestures, artifacts, etc. within cultural and historical contexts. "Understanding a people's culture exposes their normalness without reducing their particularity" (Geertz, 1973, p. 14).

Geertz perceived culture as, "...interworked systems of construable signs...culture is not a power, something to which social events, behaviors, institutions, or processes can be causally attributed; it is a context, something within which they can be intelligibly—that is, thickly—described" (Geertz, 1973, p. 14). Geertz moved away from essentializing culture. For him, the study of culture—anthropology—was, "...not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretive one in search of meaning"

(Geertz, 1973, p. 5). The study of culture was important because: “Understanding a people’s culture exposes their normalness without reducing their particularity....It renders them accessible: setting them in the frame of their own banalities, it dissolves their opacity” (Geertz, 1973, p. 14).

The purpose of studying culture in the manner of Geertz is to interpret social discourse, then inscribe the discourse in order to reflect upon it, about it and with it to develop insight on human issues (Geertz, 1973). Even when interpretations are taken from ethnographic experience in small, remote villages they are worthy of inscription and interpretation. “...Social actions are comments on more than themselves...where an interpretation comes from does not determine where it can go” (Geertz, 1973, p. 23). Geertz warns against, “turning culture into folklore and collecting it, turning it into traits and counting it, turning it into institutions and classifying it, turning it into structures and toying with it” (Geertz, 1973, p. 29).

An analysis of the concept of collecting culture, in terms of objects is discussed in depth in *Unpacking Culture: Art and Commodity in Colonial and Postcolonial Worlds* by Ruth B. Phillips and Christopher B. Steiner. These authors argue that both anthropology and art history have ignored the importance of how collecting cultural objects since the late 1700s has impacted societies. They place significance on the study of how cultural objects operate “as commodities circulating in the discursive space of an emergent capitalist society” (Phillips & Steiner, 1999, p. 3).

Regardless of the lack in focus on the collection of cultural objects or not, the anthropological perspective of Geertz has become a classic read on the topic of culture. Geertz’s work is embraced by Catherine Gallagher and Stephen Greenblatt in their

discussion of new historicism. In a chapter entitled, “The Touch of the Real” they link anthropological analysis of living culture to literary criticism, and thus to forms of aesthetic expression through the use of anecdote (Gallagher & Greenblatt, 1997).

“...Poetry, drama, and prose fiction play themselves out in the everyday world, since men and women repeatedly find themselves in effect speaking the language of the literary not only in their public performances, but also in their most intimate or passionate moments” (Gallagher & Greenblatt, 1997, p. 30).

Additionally, Gallagher and Greenblatt’s new historicism creates spaces in the traditional canon of curriculum (in their case, literary curriculum) for the study of lesser known works. Or, in the case of works marginalized due to class-based prejudices, the approach is referred to as moving “toward a historiography of the popular” (Savran, 2004, p. 211) by David Savran (in his work of the same title). The trend involves conducting research of traditionally marginalized literary and dramatic works to further explore and piece together history through works that have been excluded from the canon and create a dialogue that includes the marginalized with the existing canon. This dialogue helps to expand our understanding of history by providing an enlarged context via the diversity in cultural, political, religious, etc. perspectives that had been previously marginalized by the canon (Gallagher & Greenblatt, 1997).

Like Gallagher and Greenblatt, Peter Burke links aesthetic expressions with lived culture through his discussion of history in terms of performance. In “Performing History: The Importance of Occasions,” Burke analyzes “the role played by the concept of performance in recent studies of ritual, festivals, identity, gender, and even emotions, architecture and knowledge” (Burke, 2005, p. 35). He refers to a trend toward studying

culture in terms of performance as “the performative turn” (Burke, 2005, p. 38) and makes his point about performance being inherent in the daily interactions of people by stating that, “on different occasions (moments, locales) or in different situations (in the presence of different people) the same person behaves in different ways...[the] implications [of which] have not yet been explored by historians in the detail they deserve” (Burke, 2005, p. 36). In an earlier work Burke explored the realm of folklore in order to piece together disregarded historical accounts of the prominent popular culture of Europe from the 1500s to the 1800s (Burke, 1978).

Arjun Appadurai looks at cultural meanings as they have been impacted by modernity. The word *culture*, used to express a thing that is possessed by an individual or group, is rejected in favor of the terms used as a descriptor as in the term “cultural” (Appadurai, 1996, p. 12). The focus of cultural dimension is on difference, situated as a significant, local, embodied phenomenon which mobilizes group identity (Appadurai, 1996). “...Culture is a pervasive dimension of human discourse that exploits difference to generate diverse conceptions of group identity” (Appadurai, 1996, p. 13).

Cultural forms are distinguished into two types in Appadurai’s argument. There are “hard cultural forms,” which are significantly linked to values and embodiment that are rooted in meaning deeply in the culture. Conversely, there are “soft cultural forms,” which are not so engrained in depth of cultural meaning and are easily changed (Appadurai, 1996). A hard cultural form is likely to be or become an indigenized facet of the cultural discourse regardless of the result of its origins. The impact of modernity has greatly influenced Non-Western societies in this manner. Appadurai states, “...indigenization is often the product of collective and spectacular experiments with

modernity, and not necessarily of the subsurface affinity of new cultural forms with existing patterns in the cultural repertoire” (Appadurai, 1996, p. 90). He provides the example of Indian cricket to illustrate this point, regarding it as an indigenous aspect of Indian culture regardless of its rooted origins in British colonialism.

As was mentioned previously, the performative origin of many cultural traditions that are considered historically-based is exposed by Hobsbawm & Ranger in *The Invention of Tradition* (1983). Hobsbawm & Ranger illuminate how, “‘Traditions’ which appear or claim to be old are often quite recent in origin and sometimes invented” (Hobsbawm & Ranger, 1983, p. 1). Tradition is often invented to create a cultural sense of unity for the purpose of inculcating a set of values and norms, such as in the case of nationalism. The ritualistic behavior inherent in these traditions indoctrinates through the implication of continuity with a prestigious past (Hobsbawm & Ranger, 1983). “...Modern nations and all their impedimenta generally claim to be the opposite of novel, namely rooted in the remotest antiquity...human communities so ‘natural’ as to require no definition other than self-assertion” (Hobsbawm & Ranger, 1983, p. 14). Traditions, in this sense, are forms of strategic manipulation which serve the aims of modernist capitalist systems.

As can be seen from the diverse perspectives in the culture studies literature, shifts in viewing the concept of culture have moved from essentialist to a more culturally relative position. Cultural relativity, according to Richard L. Anderson, is the perspective in which, “efforts at understating other lifeways are most successful if we view those customs in their own traditional context and avoid judging them according to the values of Western culture” (Anderson, R. L., 1989, p. 6). More enlightened perspectives on

culture have changed the ways that research is conducted in fields of study such as anthropology and art (Anderson, R. L., 1989, 2004).

Through a postmodernist perspective, the concept of culture has even been declared an intellectually moribund concept for continued study (Abu-Lughod, 1991). But, regardless of the pitfalls involved in categorizing people by essential characteristics or ways of life, there remain aspects of human life that draw peoples together (both within their own minds or the minds of others) as unified groups, or cultures. What Geertz referred to as the, “informal logic of actual life” (Geertz, 1973, p. 17) and an important facet of human experience and meaning. “Culture is public because meaning is” (Geertz, 1973, p. 12).

Charlotte M. Otten, Robert Layton and F. Graeme Chalmers also contribute to the discussion in opposition of a universal aesthetic. Otten and Layton both approach the issue from an anthropological perspective (Otten, 1971; Layton, 1991). Chalmers promotes a “culturally based” understanding of art in an effort to promote democracy in education (Chalmers, 1987, p. 4).

Visual culture.

Visual culture has been previously discussed in regards to art education curriculum, however the study of visual culture extends beyond its use in art classrooms and warrants further discussion here. Visual culture takes a critical stance on visual media, delving into the cultural contexts, functions and meanings inherent in imagery, rather than concentrating on the formal properties of the image itself. In *The Visual Culture Reader* (1998), Nicholas Mirzoeff discusses the contemporary trend toward

looking at images in this way. “The constituent element of visual culture’s practice is the visual event. The event is the effect of a network in which subjects operate and which in turn conditions their freedom of action” (Mirzoeff, 1998, p. 6). Visual culture is criticized by some art historians as delegitimizing imagery for its own sake. This criticism is addressed by W. M. T. Mitchell as one which is driven purely by suspicion and anxiety in his article, “Showing Seeing: A Critique of Visual Culture” (2002), in which Mitchell discusses how he approaches teaching students to be aware of their vision and the politics of vision.

Part of the importance of taking the visual culture stance lies in the analysis of what Mirzoeff describes as *intervisuality*. He states, “the simultaneous display and interaction of a variety of modes of visuality” (Mirzoeff, 1998, p. 3). *Intervisuality* may be considered as a symptom of media over-stimulation, characteristic of contemporary times.

Richard Leppert takes a visual culture approach to art in *Art and the Committed Eye: The Cultural Functions of Imagery* (1996). “To talk about an image is not to decode it...[it is] an attempt to relate oneself to it and to the sight it represents” (Leppert, 1996, p. 8). Images, according to Leppert, are “constructed for the purpose of performing some function within a given sociocultural matrix” (Leppert, 1996, p. 3). Meaning is not fixed, it is socially constructed and fluid, under a constant state of challenge from groups whose interests are often conflicting (Leppert, 1996). Meanings which become accepted as norm due to the exertion of power behind them become conventions.

Conventions are a means by which to make and keep the social order; they function to regularize and regulate. Yet the effectiveness of conventions to some

extent lies in the degree to which they manifest themselves as being ‘natural,’ thus seeming ‘universal’ and not imposed or serving only certain social or cultural interests. And the greater the extent to which social practices have become naturalized, the more they are explicit responses to social pressure and specific definitions of culture...conventions are operative principles of order, just as order is the expression of power. In a social context, conventions are the rendered-unconscious expressions of ideology....Conventions, put more radically, are fundamentally ways of telling highly selective truths. (Leppert, 1996, p. 8-9)

In Leppert’s view, art in both its creation and consumption, is entwined in the social, political and historical process of culture. “Images show us *a* world but not *the* world itself” (Leppert, 1996, p. 3). Thus, what is left out of an image can be as telling as what is included. “That which is made visual is not intended only as the mirror of that which *is* but also as the indicator of that which *was* or *is to be*...[the] purpose is to engage a particular way of life, whether real or imagined....It works either to stabilize or to change what *is* by marking what *might be*” (Leppert, 1996, p. 9). Furthermore, the images that are selected over others—as canonical of cultural histories—remain in the canon to serve contemporary social and political aims. “Images exist within the context of a larger historical process in which all that is in the past is either being forgotten or, if remembered, is recollected in the light of current interests” (Leppert, 1996, p. 12).

Leppert discusses the role of the sense of sight in developing our ability to negotiate relationships and navigate spatially. He points out that the sense of sight, however, does not develop these relationships without cognitive processing, which filters what is seen through our respective cultural lens. “Restricting ourselves to the sense of

sight, what we make of it depends in part on thought, just as thought depends on language: again, representation. We cannot ‘escape’ the web of representational devices—they are what allows us to make our way in the world” (Leppert, 1996, p. 5).

The artistic image, which generally depends upon the sense of sight opposed to communication via spoken or written language, offers a different dimensionality of expression. “Images do not so much *tell* us anything, as make available—by making visible *in a certain way*—a realm of possibilities and probabilities, some of which are difficult to state in words” (Leppert, 1996, p. 6). However, visual communication in the form of the artistic image is not a neutral site of sensual information since, “...each image embodies historically, socially, and culturally specific competing, and contradictory, ways of seeing....artistic consciousness itself is formed within the boundaries of history, society and culture” (Leppert, 1996, p. 7).

The embodiment of historical, social and cultural meaning is precisely the point in the work of many contemporary artists. In *Art on the Edge and Over* by Linda Weintraub, Arthur Danto and Thomas McEvelley, a discussion is presented on how artists create both aural language and visual language in response to historical, social and cultural experiences that impact them in new ways. Artists, “...respond to change by inventing new art syntax and grammar that are capable of conveying their experiences” (Weintraub, Danto & McEvelley, 1996, p. 10-11).

The artwork included in *Art on the Edge and Over* is not geared toward depicting a traditional sense of beauty. An artist may not be interested in pushing the boundaries of conventionality in directions that draw attention to the work’s situated experience, but instead be creating objects of visual beauty. However, even a work of art that may appear

as simply a neutral expression of beauty is not created outside of the influences of culture. The concept of beauty is itself culturally derived and thus a political manifestation of power relations:

If... beauty is truth and truth, beauty, the truth embedded in beauty that must be ascertained and acknowledged is beauty's dialectical relation to human beings. Such beauty is understood not as a 'universal' ideal, disembodied and abstract, but as it is embodied, in the form of actual people who struggle, suffer, and desire, seeking pleasure and happiness—people who are invariably social and political. (Leppert, 1996, p. 14)

In some respects, Leppert's approach to visual culture would be supported by W. J. T. Mitchell. Mitchell asserts in his essay, "What do Pictures *Really* Want?" that visual media is a form of communication on par with spoken or written language. "Vision is as important as language in mediating social relations, and it is not reducible to language, to the 'sign,' or to discourse. Pictures want equal rights as language, not to be turned into language" (Mitchell, 1996, p. 82).

On the other hand, Leppert may be challenged by Mitchell on the argument that visual media should not be treated as though it is a separate category of media. Mitchell states, "I do object to the confident assertion that the visual media are really a distinct class of things, or that there is such a thing as an exclusively, purely visual medium" (Mitchell, 2002, p174). Furthermore, for Mitchell, the specific aim of visual culture does not center around setting imagery into the context of social and political critique, although that is part.

An additional interest of Mitchell's is in analyzing the "pictorial turn" by which "pictures form a point of peculiar friction and discomfort across a broad range of intellectual inquiry" (Mitchell, 1992, p. 90). He asserts that the pictorial turn is not exclusive to contemporary experience, but is, "a repeated narrative figure that takes on a very specific form in our time, but which seems to be available in its schematic form in an innumerable variety of circumstances" (Mitchell, 2002, p. 173). Mitchell's main objective in studying and teaching visual culture is, "to rend the veil of familiarity and awaken the sense of wonder, so that many of the things that are taken for granted about the visual arts and media...are put into question" (Mitchell, 2002, p. 179).

Consumer culture.

Consumerism is a force within cultures that should not be ignored in this contemporary discussion of culture. Much of what is presented as *culture* is done so for the benefit of consumers, especially in regards to tourism. Consumer culture constitutes a form of perception, which incorporates visual perception and psychology. The perception derived from consumer culture is that of social and economic value. This perception creates a perpetuating cyclic force which drives industry and in turn feeds the perception of the consumer need further (Veblen, 2004).

In *The Theory of the Leisure Class: An Economic Study of Institutions* (2004), Thorstein Veblen discusses an historical view of consumption and the exercise of consumption in relation to society. He refers to "conspicuous consumption" as an historically derived practice of affirming social status through an aesthetics of living, in order to "live a life of ostensible leisure in a becoming way" (Veblen, 2004, p. 57). This

form of social communication has changed with society. In contemporary times, especially in larger urban societies, Veblen argues that social status is displayed through consumerism. “The means of communication and the mobility of the population now expose the individual to the observation of many persons who have no other means of judging of his reputability than the display of goods...which he is able to make while he is under their direct observation” (Veblen, 2004, p. 65). Standards of compliance to communicate social status and financial worth require conformity to social norms for the status group one aspires to be recognized as a part of, in terms of dress, behavior and gadgetry. The perceived need for consuming goods and services in order to maintain status, feeds industry and perpetuates the process through the introduction of new goods and services to consume. This cycle is perhaps most apparent in terms of clothing fashion. However, the consumer trend is not limited to fashion, it includes keeping up with the latest in technology in the form of electronic gadgetry such as cellular phones, computers, computer games/software and digital entertainment systems. Thus, conspicuous consumerism also drives the technological industry. In contemporary times advancements in technology, digital technology in particular, has had the greatest, most obvious impact in altering all forms of culture (Manovich, 2002).

According to Julie McGuire, advertising plays a huge role in cultural consumerism. “The perception of reality, as reflected in advertisements, reinforces the values, beliefs, and intentions of American culture” (McGuire, 2004, p.35). A great deal can be learned about the character of a culture through attention to the semiotics of its advertising (McGuire, 2004). McGuire analyzes how works of art are incorporated into the popular culture of consumerism, and thus the cultural psyche in America, bridging the

gap between the institutional representation of high art and the everyday culture of consumerism (McGuire, 2004).

Technology and media culture.

Live consumerism, it would be remiss to not consider the impact of technology and media in a thorough discussion of culture in today's world. Technology and media have altered the ways people interact with one another, as well as the interchange of influence and ideas between cultures. In many respects, technologies like the internet may have created new sub-cultures or perhaps a new level of culture all together (Manovich, 2002). On the topic of technology, a scholar whose point of view captures my interest is Lev Manovich. Manovich's ideas come from the perspective of a former Soviet citizen who has lived through the collapse of his nation and its ideology. He attributes a great deal of the technological advancements that have transformed society into computer culture, to the tensions that had historically existed between East and the West. "What came in their place? A triumph of consumerism, commercial culture (based on stereotypes and limited clichés), mega-corporations which laid claims on such basic categories as space, time and the future" (Manovich, 2002, p. 31). He hones in on the Internet, referring to it as, "the most material and visible sign of globalization" (Manovich, 2002, p. 31) and analyzes it from a semiotic standpoint to make his point about how it alters cultural interchanges:

...The computer interface acts as a code which carries cultural messages in a variety of media. When you use the Internet, everything you access — texts, music, video, navigable spaces — passes through the interface...In cultural

communication, a code is rarely simply a neutral transport mechanism; usually it affects the messages transmitted with its help. For instance, it may make some messages easy to conceive and render others unthinkable. A code may also provide its own model of the world, its own logical system, or ideology; subsequent cultural messages or whole languages created using this code will be limited by this model, system or ideology. (Manovich, 2002, p. 76)

Thus global use of the internet alters modes of thought from a cultural standpoint by providing access to some cultural forms of thinking and denying others by limiting interactive choices.

New forms of media created through use of computers have also impacted our aesthetic sense. According to Manovich, modern media and art have worked together to push techniques that develop an interactive experience between the art work and the viewer further, “putting new cognitive and physical demands on the viewer” (Manovich, 2002, p. 71). He provides an abbreviated history of film to demonstrate this point:

Beginning in the 1920s new narrative techniques such as film montage forced the audiences to quickly bridge mental gaps between unrelated images. New representational style of semiabstraction which, along with photography, became the “international style” of modern visual culture, required the viewer to reconstruct the represented objects from the bare minimum -- a contour, few patches of color, shadows cast by the objects not represented directly. Finally, in the 1960s, continuing where Futurism and Dada left off, new forms of art such as happenings, performance and installation turned art explicitly participational.

This, according to some new media theorists, prepared the ground for interactive computer installations which appeared in the 1980s. (Manovich, 2002, p. 71).

These trends are seen by Manovich as a modernist move to “externalize the mind...related to the demand of modern mass society for standardization” (Manovich, 2002, p. 71). By rendering internal processes public, via visual form in terms of modern art, private thought processes became public and evolved toward regulating and standardization through mass production and distribution.

What before was a mental process, a uniquely individual state, now became part of a public sphere. Unobservable and interior processes and representations were taken out of individual heads and put outside—as drawings, photographs and other visual forms. Now they could be discussed in public, employed in teaching and propaganda, standardized, and mass-distributed. Externalization and objectification of the mind’s operations is the resulting trend of interactive computer media. (Manovich, 2002, p. 74)

Manovich sees this trend as “interpellation,” a concept brought forth by French philosopher Louis Althusser in “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses” (1971), whereby “we are asked to mistake the structure of somebody's else [sic] mind for our own” (Manovich, 2002, p. 74).

The very principle of hyperlinking, which forms the basis of much of interactive media, objectifies the process of association often taken to be central to human thinking. Mental processes of reflection, problem solving, recall and association are externalized, equated with following a link, moving to a new page, choosing a new image, or a new scene. Before we would look at an image and mentally

follow our own private associations to other images. Now interactive computer media asks us instead to click on an image in order to go to another image. Before we would read a sentence of a story or a line of a poem and think of other lines, images, memories. Now interactive media asks us to click on a highlighted sentence to go to another sentence. In short, we are asked to follow pre-programmed, objectively existing associations. (Manovich, 2002, p. 74)

Cultural archives of schema have been passed from generation to generation over time (Barthes, 1977; Jay, 1994; Leppert, 1996). On this topic Martin Jay refers to “visual metaphors” which are culturally embedded in our process of perception (Jay, 1994). Roland Barthes takes this concept in the direction of artistic production, considering it a form of text which is, "a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centers of culture" (Barthes, 1977, p. 142). Manovich argues that these schema once involved the artist in an imaginative selection and creation process filtered through a set of socially developed conventions. They have now become externalized and reduced to a more limited formula as a result of computer culture. “...Now anybody can become a creator by simply providing a new menu, i.e. by making a new selection from the total corpus available” (Manovich, 2002, p. 123). The “guise of objectivity” (Manovich, 2002, p. 148) created by computer culture has saturated our cultural aesthetic expression in all forms, from graphics to fashion to interior design. “Paradoxically, by following [sic] an interactive path one does not construct a unique self but instead adopts already pre-established identities [sic]...mapped out and coded into software by the companies....The result is a new form of control, soft but powerful.” (Manovich, 2002, p. 124-125). He refers to the new media approach as “cut and paste logic” (Manovich, 2002,

p. 126) that legitimizes selection and combination creation over other imaginative strategies by default.

The recycling and resituating of past cultural archival content, or cultural text is characteristic of the postmodern aesthetic. The term postmodern was first defined by Jean-Francois Lyotard as, “incredulity toward metanarratives” (Lyotard, 2002, p. xxiv). In the foreword to *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (2002b), Fredric Jameson discusses the concept in terms of “aesthetics and economics, since postmodernism ...involves a radical break, both with dominant culture and aesthetic, and with a rather different moment of socioeconomic organization against which its structural novelties and innovation are measured: a new social and economic moment...which has variously been called media society...” (Jameson, 2002b, p. vii). “Rather than assembling more media recordings of reality, culture is now busy re-working, recombining and analyzing the already accumulated media material” (Manovich, 2002, p. 126). A connection was made by Manovich between the cultural condition characteristic of post-modernism and the emergence of computer software programs which “privileged the selection from already existing media elements over creating them from scratch. And at the same time, to large extent it is this software which made post-modernism possible” (Manovich, 2002, p. 126).

Manovich questions whether current aesthetic theories, specifically modernist aesthetics are adequately expansive to include new forms of media. He compares the contemporary computer artist, creating special effects for Hollywood to the architects of Medieval cathedrals:

But if Medieval masters left after themselves the material wonders of stone and glass inspired by religious faith, today our craftsmen leave just the pixel sets to be projected on movie theater screens or played on computer monitors. These are immaterial cathedrals made of light; and appropriately, they often still have religious references...in the grandeur and transcendence of virtual sets.

(Manovich, 2002, p. 181).

He asserts that any move toward developing aesthetics of new media “should pay as much attention to the cultural history as to computer’s new unique possibilities to generate, organize, manipulate and distribute data” (Manovich, 2002, p. 264). The culture of new media represents an “aesthetics of density” (Manovich, 2002, p. 274) that relates to our otherwise media saturated lives.

The arguments made by Manovich regarding computer culture tie back into the discussion of historical culture and aesthetics as the domain of anthropology earlier in this paper. Anthropologists tend to take a traditional view of culture, studying culture in the context of place. Place is “characterized by stability, and it supports stable identity, relations and history” (Manovich, 2002, p. 239). An aesthetics and sociological culture in the context of place can thus be established.

Through computer culture and media, Manovich explores a new space, one which is not a traditional anthropological space. Drawing on the work of French anthropologist, Marc Auge, Manovich states, “...we can understand place as a product of cultural producers, while non-places are created by users...in supermodernity, traditional places are replaced by equally institutionalized non-places, a new architecture of transit and impermanence” (Manovich, 2002, p. 239). This is in agreement with Auge’s statement

that “as anthropological places create the organically social, so non-places create solitary contractuality” (Auge, 1995, p. 103), to which he applies the example of the contractual nature of cultural interaction for the contemporary airline passenger. Thus, it appears that the contemporary anthropological view of culture is adapting in response to paradigm shifts in cultural behaviors themselves.

In *Culture, Media, Language* (1980), Stuart Hall discusses the process of encoding and decoding messages that takes place in the media, specifically in television. Hall refers to the media’s process of encoding, and the viewer’s process of decoding, as two separate “moments” (Hall, 1980, p. 130). In these moments, the media’s desired message relies upon a culturally naturalized code of hegemonic “dominant cultural order” (Hall, 1980, p. 134) to communicate the desired message. Thus the media can appropriate a universalizing framework of meaning that is hegemonically derived and transmitted through word and image selection.

According to Hall, it is in the process of decoding the message that the viewer may take one of three positions of operation. These include: the *dominant-hegemonic operation*, which is desired by the media; a *negotiated code* of operation, which acknowledges the dominant code as legitimate but negotiates the code to “local conditions;” and an *oppositional code*, which recognizes the dominant code inherent in the message, but processes the message in a contrary manner (Hall, 1980). “He/she detotalizes the message in the preferred code in order to retotalize the message within some alternative framework” (Hall, 1980, p. 138). Current research conducted in the field of visual culture often exposes the dominant code, allowing viewers an informed lens through which to process information through an alternative framework.

Cultural Aesthetic Theories

Several of the theorists that I consulted for insight into the role of art and aesthetics in different cultures set up their arguments about aesthetic beliefs in art comparatively (Anderson, 2004; Leuthold, 1998; Semali & Kincheloe, 1999). As previously touched upon, Geertz considered culture in terms of aesthetic expression, but asserted that cultural forms are articulated mainly through social action, and only slightly through artifacts, which "...draw their meaning from the role they play [their use] in an ongoing pattern of life, not from any intrinsic relationships they bear to one another" (Geertz, 1973, p. 17). To this I am inclined to disagree. Art, as an aesthetic expression, is a social action. It is a form of social discourse; especially if we look to it for its meaning within social contexts rather than simply its formal qualities. Although Geertz may have rejected this opinion in the 1970s, more contemporary scholars taking a cultural anthropological approach, like R. L. Anderson (2004), find it inappropriate to present a thorough anthropological study of culture without including discussion about its cultural art forms and cultural aesthetic. According to Anderson, a comparative approach to art and aesthetics allows for a more sophisticated appreciation of cultural achievements within the respective culture's own terms, "making them not mere curiosities but sophisticated manifestations of metaphysical, cultural, and emotional meaning" (Anderson, 2004, p. 8). Cultural aesthetic expressions are one facet of culture that can be explored to add significantly to our understanding of cultural discourse.

Furthermore, according to Steven Leuthold: "Aspects of culture that have been especially important in collective identification are aesthetic expressions in all forms...some of these expressive forms may be considered traditional, others

contemporary, but all contribute to forming native identities” (Leuthold, 1998, p. 5). Leuthold considers cultural aesthetics from an indigenous perspective. “Aesthetic systems are focal points for intercultural communication on a global scale; members of varied cultures negotiate differing value structures through aesthetic expression” (Leuthold, 1998, p. 8). His perspective takes political considerations of identity in mind, especially as it relates to postcolonialism in his view that “aesthetic experiences inform, enrich, and challenge members of non-native cultures” (Leuthold, 1998, p. ix). He refers to the “...stated goals of contemporary indigenous peoples: self-determination, cultural continuity, cultural distinctiveness from the larger ‘dominant’ culture, and so on” (Leuthold, 1998, p. 3).

In the book, *Indigenous Aesthetics* (1998), Leuthold asks question like: “what impact has the adaptation of new media had upon [the Native American] sense of themselves as a distinct people: what is the role of art and media in contemporary natives’ collective identification? And how are aesthetic concepts and traditions represented within native cultures?” (Leuthold, 1998, p. ix). Leuthold is also interested in “analyzing concepts about aesthetic experience that have developed independently of the Western tradition” (Leuthold, 1998, p. ix) in Native American forms of aesthetic expression.

As has been previously discussed, the historical dynamic of modernist theorizing has developed universalizing tendencies of thought that derive the definitions of art (Leuthold, 1998). The universalized concept of art thus drives formal educational programs and reifies the concept. “Westerners have to acknowledge having a definition

of art that they use for comparative purposes, while at the same time questioning whether any definition of art is applicable across cultures” (Leuthold, 1998, p. 9).

There really is no need to develop a conclusive definition of “art” in order to proceed in my study of aesthetic expressions. In fact, presenting “art” as an open concept (Weitz, 1956) is beneficial to a study like the one that I am proposing because it alleviates some of the restriction that viewing one cultural situation through the lens of another culture’s context presents. The term “cultural arts” is used as a suggestive mechanism, to allude to art without presenting the limitations inherent in the term. Art is included, but does not present a restriction to narrow understanding of the term. The more that one questions what is meant by the term ‘cultural arts,’ the more the term gains in possibilities to develop a broader and more useful application in the context of intercultural immersion.

Aesthetic theories, on the other hand, are applicable far beyond a strict axiological discussion of considerations of beauty in art. Aesthetics are encompassed within and cannot be disconnected from ontological perspectives. Via aesthetics, the material world is linked to the abstract world of ideas and visa versa. Political, economic, social, ethical and metaphysical aspects of cultural life are all encapsulated within an aesthetic and expressed through multiple forms of symbolism. “Not simply a logical construct or link in a philosophical system, the term ‘aesthetic’ refers to real aspects of lived experience that have a social dimension. Linking ethics, religion, or politics and aesthetics reveals how value systems are embedded in our physical and emotional relationships to the world in which we live” (Leuthold, 1998, p. 6).

Post-colonialism: The Western vs. Eastern dichotomy.

The approaches to argument made by cultural scholars refer often to the limitations posed by “Western” beliefs about art and aesthetics. The “Western” aesthetic characteristics mentioned seemed to emphasize outdated aesthetic theories, referring as far back as Aristotle in one instance, in order to provide an oppositional stance from which to critically differentiate what they referred to and defined as “native,” “indigenous” or “non-Western” art and aesthetics, from what they referred to and defined as “Western” art and aesthetics. For example, R. L. Anderson states: “Clearly, if we tacitly accept the Western belief that art is limited to what is on display in galleries and museums, to what one hears in concert halls, or to what is performed on the ballet stage, then the quest for art in non-Western settings can yield only meager results” (Anderson, 2004, p. 7). This argument has been made since at least John Dewey’s *Art and Experience* in 1934. Surely what is considered art has broadened over the past 60+ years.

The discourse has certainly changed in art education. Globalization and internationalization are common catch phrases that push efforts for multiculturalism and pluralism. Perhaps the academic scholars in higher education are in need of furthered awareness of the practice in the field, since the reaction I have to some of the arguments made do not lead me to think of change for the future. Instead I become more aware of problems in the past. For example, statements like this:

...Our common assumption that all art derives from a single source, that it is possessed of a unitary nature and purpose, and that it can be evaluated by a single principle of criticism. Of course, on closer reflection, most Westerners concede...that things may not be so simple; and even a passing acquaintance with non-Western art

complicates the picture even further. But despite such problems, this assumption continues to inform much of our thinking about art. (Anderson, 2004, p. 1)

This argument was written in 2004. It is being read by a generation of Americans who are now becoming scholars and were never taught to assume that art is derived from a single source. Certainly, art history survey courses are still focused primarily on Western European artists, but today's college-level art student is not expected to graduate with a university degree without having been repeatedly exposed to pluralistic thoughts on art. Such a student would be the exception, rather than the rule. However, the academic literature is still focused on opposing "Western" essentialist and autonomist views of art.

R. L. Anderson makes an argument in opposition to the "Western" idea of art in *Calliope's Sisters*. He provides a definition of art in order to study cultures through their art forms.

...When we use the term 'art,' we usually have something in mind that is valued beyond its practical contribution to such instrumentalities as subsistence, that is made so as to have some sort of sensuous appeal, and the production of which reflects skill that are more highly developed in the maker than among other members of society. Then, having in this very broad and tentative way demarcated the area of our concern, we can go to other societies and look for things and activities that generally fall into this domain, asking How do people here think about their 'art'? (Anderson, 2004, p. 8)

Anderson notes that, "...most languages do not have a word that means the same thing as the English word 'art'" (Anderson, 2004, p. 7). He is concerned about how indigenous aesthetics are perceived when translated through "Western" discourse, "...aesthetic

systems are by their nature highly malleable intellectual entities, easily twisted and distorted by the heavy-handed treatment of non-natives, especially in efforts at cross-cultural comparison” (Anderson, 2004, p. 6).

An aesthetic view is autonomist, according to Leuthold’s definition, if it asserts that artwork must be unique, non-utilitarian, identified with the artist’s intention and is considered a commodity. Autonomist views of aesthetics, according to Leuthold, developed in Western thought during the Enlightenment period. He equates this framework with a societal value emphasis on individuality, materialism and capitalistic practices and asserts that these values are contradictory to those held by indigenous cultures (Leuthold, 1998). “The meanings of concepts such as ‘art’ and ‘aesthetic’ may be extended, challenged, and even subverted through the study of indigenous ideas and expressions” (Leuthold, 1998, p. x). He stands in opposition to the term of “primitive art” in reference to the art of indigenous culture as viewed through a “Western” standard, stating that: “‘The aesthetics of primitive art’ implies that there is no indigenous tradition of thought about art, only a Western theory of art that seeks to account for art in primitive cultures” (Leuthold, 1998, p. 3).

Whether the dichotomy of values presented by Leuthold is an historic distinction of cultural aesthetics that accurately differentiates non-European, indigenous or “Eastern-minded” from European or “Western-minded” peoples (and if so, how and where is the distinguishing line drawn), or has developed in theory as a result of efforts by specific groups to distinguish a contradictory post-colonial identity, it presents an effective means of aesthetically politicizing cultural identity that must be addressed. He states:

... Since the 1970's, the term "indigenous" has acquired a political meaning; it reflects a growing awareness of the role of ethnicity in national cultures and acts as an organizational focal point for anticolonialism. Thus many of the peoples of Europe are indigenous to their current homelands, but are not often referred to in the context of indigenous activism. Currently, 'indigenous' refers to people who are minorities in their own homeland, who have suffered oppression in the context of colonial conquest, and who view their political situation in the context of neocolonialism. (Leuthold, 1998, p. 3)

Leuthold, on the other hand, explores how native artists frame the social meaning of their own aesthetic practices. His is a semiotic concept of aesthetics.

Semiotic theories run parallel with systems aesthetics by focusing on how patterns of relationships between parts create a system of meaning for the whole. "In a systems view, aesthetic expression is performative; by doing something, aesthetic expression reestablishes equilibriums so that the order established in the culture may continue to exist" (Leuthold, 1998, p. 8). Leuthold's system's approach to aesthetics considers the link between aesthetic expression and collective identity, the role of religion, generational relations, intercultural contact and conflict, relations to place and to the land in general (Leuthold, 1998). "A systems approach shifts the focus from the private intention of an artist to an environment of information and experience: the entire environment as ready to become a work of art" (Leuthold, 1998, p. 7). Leuthold describes his approach to aesthetics as a "systems approach." He explains, "In such a performative, pragmatic conception, the multiple meanings attached to aesthetic expression are not necessarily

contradictory. The idea that a single expression can have multiple meanings is an important ingredient of a systems approach to aesthetics” (Leuthold, 1998, p. 8).

An “aesthetics of place” are inherent in the term indigenous (Leuthold, 1998). “The origins of art may lie in humans’ perceptions of their relationship with nature and the spiritual. In representing nature, through both the portrayal of collective symbols and the creation of a visual poetry.....a profound ‘sense of place’ which grows out of the linkage between the spiritual and the natural” (Leuthold, 1998, p. 13). Thus cultural aesthetics have a relation to the environment within which they develop.

Luethold claims in his discussion of the aesthetic of indigenous societies, that they differ from Western societies because there are “social rules or guidelines for expression that must be followed and guarded; expressive objects and events are community-oriented” (Leuthold, 1998, p. 7). Although I believe this to be true in context, I find this account of aesthetics of both Western and indigenous societies simplified, since any society may have strict communal guidelines for certain types of aesthetic expression aimed at unifying—like ceremonial or traditional expressions—but may not adhere so strictly to rules of aesthetic expressions in everyday life. Furthermore, societal groups may not adhere strictly to such rules of expression over time if there were not a political motivation for the society to do so.

I must point out, however, that the aim of my argument is not to discredit Leuthold’s point of view or the post-colonial theoretical framework in all contexts. I find a great deal of insight in this work that is relevant to my study. It is the essentialism of the dichotomy with which I take issue. I find that the limitations caused by reliance on neocolonial and postcolonial discourses focus too much on the political aspects of

aesthetic expression which Leuthold (in this case) suggested are part of a “struggle for cultural self-determination” (Leuthold, 1998, p. 11). Thus, a complex analysis of the role that aesthetic expressions play *outside* of political dimensions of cultural identification, such as spiritual aspects or a broader focus on humanity as a whole, becomes an ancillary discussion, if it is had at all. Points of view that always see things in terms of East and West seem restricted by a normative, comparative classification system of art and aesthetics that attempts to unify groups through cultural identity while defining and differentiating one culture in a somewhat romantic way from another. Also, this approach may not take into account certain elements of popular culture or of an aesthetic of everyday living which may serve individuals within a culture to stand out amongst their own cultural group. However, neocolonial and postcolonial perspectives are prevalent contemporary frameworks for viewing cultural aesthetic. These positions cannot be avoided and are in many contexts an appropriate perspective to take. Additionally, these critical viewpoints may be held by participants in my study and therefore must be taken into consideration in my analysis.

Richard Rorty’s views on the East/West dichotomy, as written in correspondence to the author in *Cultural Otherness: Correspondence with Richard Rorty*, add insight and a pragmatic point of view to conclude this discussion. “There is a tendency in contemporary political discussion to treat “the West” as a name for the source of every imaginable oppression...The West did not invent oppression, and it is, like very other culture, a polychrome tangle of institutions and traditions” (Balslev, 1991, p. 101).

How do cultural aesthetics work within societies?

There are numerous societal systems, societal forces and/or power struggles, if you will, constantly at work within societies and cultures at any point in time. These forces contribute to the fluidity of the concept of culture as understood in this study. Cultural aesthetics play a huge role in the interplay of cultural identity and change. Aesthetics are susceptible to the forces of societal systems and are also quite often a tool in a perpetual system of ideological manipulation.

Hegemony, the influence of social power, plays a major role in determining the *reality* of cultural aesthetics. “It’s not a matter of emancipating truth from every system of power (which would be a chimera, for truth is already power) but of detaching the power of truth from the forms of hegemony, social, economic and cultural, within which it operates at the present time” (Foucault, 1980, p. 133). Hegemony, a concept formulated by Antonio Gramsci (1971), is frequently used in Marxist texts and is based on the idea that societal classes within cultures differ in ideology. The elite classes exert power to influence the identity and perspectives of the other classes and thus, the elite ideology is projected upon and adopted by those in the dominated classes within the culture and is often understood as *common sense*. For example, in *Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory* (1977), Ernesto Laclau states that “A class is hegemonic...to the extent that it can articulate different visions of the world in such a way that their potential antagonism is neutralized” (Laclau, 1977, p. 161). In *Cultural Politics and Education*, Michael Apple refers to hegemony as, “a process in which dominant groups in society come together to form a bloc and sustain leadership over subordinate groups” (Apple, 1996, p. 14). Apple looks at hegemonic influence in the education system and on the social construction of

knowledge and institutions. Another theorist describes hegemonic influence in culture this way:

Culture is a historical phenomenon that evolves at the same level as society, and that is the problem we are facing today. To establish its empire over nature, it has been necessary for man to dominate other men, and to treat part of humanity like objects....I think that we all know that there are two cultures within this culture. One is the culture in which the ruling class...pushes to paralyze the social development of man in an effort to have all society identify with, and serve their own interests. They banalize, mix, distort, and simplify life. They have no use for anything pure or real. They call this stylizing.... And so, authentic cultural traditions and manifestations in the arts denounce the falsehood of the civilizing mission of the ruling class...The risk that real culture is running today is that if the cultural institutions are governed by people who are part of the ruling class, then art can become invisible because they will refuse to assimilate it. (Mendieta, 2003, p. 1065)

Counteracting hegemonic influence is the power of revolution. Revolution can be a violent and grand event such as an upheaval in society or overthrow of a government, but it can also be conducted in a steady, continuous manner by individuals working toward change on a grass roots level. "...There is another culture aside from ruling class culture...the greatest comfort that great works of art give to me is not only my experience of them, but also the fact that they were created and that they exist...we who are artists will continue making our work. We will be ignored, but we will be here" (Mendieta, 2003, p. 1065).

Frances Rains writes about hegemonic influence, along with the role of other societal influences in understanding indigenous cultures. "...To begin to understand indigenous knowledge it is imperative to...understand...how hegemony, status quo, intellectual authority, and historical amnesia have combined to create an atmosphere that so readily refuses to consider knowledge not derived from within a closed system" (Rains, 1999. p. 317). The additional consideration of hegemony along with the concepts of other societal forces at work on cultural identities and norms provides insight into how complex the workings of these social systems are on our understanding of ourselves and the world around us.

Furthermore, besides hegemonic aspects of cultural aesthetics, there is also insight to be found in Lev Vygotsky's thinking on culture, which is profoundly influenced by Marxist theory. This theory states that shifts in the core of human nature result from changes in material and societal aspects of life. Vygotsky's psychological use of this theory and experimentation with children extends into the semiotics of culture in the forms of language, gestures and drawings (Vygotsky, 1978).

Semiotics approaches the concept of culture through the social meanings communicated to the individual by all manner of signs (Smith-Shank, 2004). The semiotic nature of signs changes over time and collects significance as part of the cultural archive (Broudy, 1987; Lotman, 2000). Artistic expressions represent semiotic communication in a materialized form (Chanda, 2004). Semiotic analysis will be employed in this study to provide insight into the tributaries of meaning inherent in cultural aesthetic expressions.

How does the outsider relate to cultural aesthetic expressions?

Aesthetic expression can be a form of intentional intercultural communication. For example, one artist states: “To know oneself is to know the world, and it is also paradoxically a form of exile from the world. I know that it is this presence of myself, this self-knowledge which causes me to dialogue with the world around me by making art” (Mendieta, 2003, p. 1065). Other forms of aesthetic expression can be better described as peripheral inclusion into the insight of another culture. Travel films and ethnographic documentaries that are produced by non-natives are examples of a peripheral discourse on culture to theorist such as Leuthold. “Exotic, frequently stereotyped images in more widely distributed fiction films also shape public perceptions of other cultures” (Leuthold, 1998, p. 11).

Access and limitations to access must also be considered in how an individual approaches understanding of cultural aesthetics. Access of aesthetic experience develops at both conscious and subconscious levels. Those who go into a cross-cultural experience with motivated access will demonstrate a different level and focus of awareness, dependent upon their motive and other aspects such as social status.

A relatively new form of access to culture that should be considered is virtual experience (Zizek, 1997). Virtual experience gives rise to the issue of “interpassivity” (Zizek, 1997). Interpassivity is described as a problem characteristic of the information age. Since individuals are exposed to more information than it is possible to view or absorb, they allow others and objects to “experience” things for them in compensation for time constraints (Zizek, 1997). An example of virtual cultural experience, or virtual travel might be obtained through real-time web-cams available on the internet.

Can we actually know another culture's aesthetics?

“Viewers are active participants in determining meaning” (Leppert, 1996, p. 6) in the context of viewing artistic expressions. Can this be applied to cultural aesthetics in general? Leuthold asserts, and I agree, that there is a sense of recognition of other cultures with which we tend to become familiarized. “The collective function of the aesthetic is so well recognized by ‘outsiders’ that non-native courts may look at aesthetic traditions as ‘evidence’ of the historical continuity of native peoples” (Leuthold, 1998, p. 1). However, according to Anderson, we cannot digest cultural aesthetics by simply observing them in art works:

...Useful information about aesthetics cannot safely be deduced simply by looking at another society's art works...since there is no simple, one-to-one correspondence between art work and conceptual motivation, and since aesthetic systems are often complex intellectual constructs, aesthetic values and metaphysical assumptions about art cannot be reconstructed in depth and with certainty based on, say, a carving's appearance or a song's melody. (Anderson, 2004, p. 5)

This point is especially important if we consider how the “Western” art world works—a model that has become rather widely spread throughout the world in relation to art. In *Aesthetics of Power*, Carol Duncan explains how high art becomes recognized by an elite group of insiders that form the art world critics (Duncan, 1993). “Criticism is the mediating veil in all art world transaction. It is the alchemy, the invisible, seemingly magic wand that converts potential art into the real thing” (Duncan, 1993, p. 174). Thus, if much of what is considered art is a matter of hegemonic selection by an elite class of

people within a society, then what we are interpreting as a cultural aesthetic is based on the decisions of a small fraction of people representative of the respective culture. This contributes to the limitations of our understanding. “For Euro-American scholars [or anyone seeking to understand another culture] there are linguistic, cultural, and philosophical barriers to studying the intellectual traditions of cultures other than one’s own” (Leuthold, 1998, p. 2).

Furthermore, the exposure to artistic expression that is accessed—both what is presented and what is acknowledged—by individuals interacting cross-culturally, can be impacted by the interaction itself. In terms of tourism and trade, artistic production is influenced largely by market influence. “The makers of objects have frequently manipulated commodity production in order to serve economic needs as well as new demands for self-representation and self-identification made urgent by the establishment of colonial hegemonies” (Phillips & Steiner, 1999, p. 4). John Urry refers to *The Tourist Gaze*, in his book so titled, as “socially organized and systematized” (Urry, 2005, p. 1). Tourism is a societal system in which there are “many professional experts who help to construct and develop our gaze as tourists” (Urry, 2005, p. 1).

So, whether we can really ever know the aesthetics of another culture is a question that will be continually considered. Insofar as culture is not a static, definable object, maybe we cannot really *know* anything about any given culture that isn’t in a constant state of adaptation. Even our understanding of our own culture and the aesthetics of our own culture does not lay claim to universality but takes on a personal meaning, an aspect of our individual identity. Thus, the aim here is in fact, not to attempt to *know* the aesthetics of the cultures in which the study is hosted at all, but to explore the role that

the individual participants claim their cultural aesthetic experiences to have had on their learning while immersed within these host cultures. This pursuit must take into consideration all that has been theorized in the literature and included in this dissertation in terms of further analysis.

In addition to the lack of accepted universals existing across cultures, the assertion that one might be hard pressed to find an actual person who fits perfectly into the role designated by cultural norms within ones own culture is also lacking in complexity. Expecting individuals to act or think in a particular manner based on any physical trait or geographical origin is unfounded. “Identities differ; we need analytical frameworks within aesthetic theory that acknowledge culturally based differences” (Leuthold, 1998, p. 4). An essentialist manner of thinking can often lead to a romantic notion of culture that is not only misled, but can also be condescending (Semali & Kincheloe, 1999). Cultural norms imposed upon an individual by the stereotyping gaze of cultural outsiders was posited as a modernist, Western tactic aimed at marginalizing other groups in order to assert dominance. “Stereotypes of the Other have always been connected to political actualities of one sort or another, just as the truth of lived communal (or personal) experience has often been totally sublimated in official narratives, institutions, and ideologies” (Said, 2003, p. 1059).

Conclusion: Cultural Aesthetic Experience

The concept of culture is problematized by many complex social and historical factors (Geertz, 1973). Interpretations of culture that view it as a conceptual mechanism for categorization or simply a description of a particular way of life, are outdated and

ineffective (Anderson, R. L, 1989; Chalmers, 1987; Layton, 1991; Otten, 1971; Semali & Kincheloe, 1999). The goal of cultural research is to open channels of cross-cultural dialogue, to develop insight into human issues (Geertz, 1973). Thinking with culture, rather than about culture, is a possible means for gaining better understanding of this vast and fluid concept (Eisenhart, 2001).

The concept of culture was understood similarly by Dewey and Eisner in terms of being a continual process. It is not viewed as a trait that is possessed; it is a fluid and dynamic concept that is in a state of constant interaction with the world through experience. As a process, culture is informed by the environment and by language (Dewey, 1998a). As a tool, culture informs language and our concept of reality (Eisner, 2002). Culture forms the way we think and interact with one another and the world. The arts are a culturally saturated medium through which cross-cultural understandings can begin to take place (Dewey, 1934; Eisner, 2002).

Contemporary cultural studies takes a multi-disciplinary, multi-dimensional approach to culture research (Weaver, 2005). This field gathers influence from previous work in cultural anthropology and historiography. Cultural studies discourse is important to this research because it not only looks at how societies have impacted one another, but most often exposes the complexities of how cultures have been impacted from within by their own societal forces reacting to cultural interchange. This invokes discussion on topics such as: Consumerism (Phillips & Steiner, 1999; Veblen, 2004), reinterpretations of historical knowledge (Burke, 1978; Gallagher & Greenblatt, 1997; Hobsbawm & Ranger, 1983; Savran, 2004), identity politics (Appadurai, 1996; Burke, 2005; Leuthold, 1998), etc. The politics of vision itself are analyzed (Leppert, 1996; Mirzoeff, 1998;

Mitchell, 2002), as well as visual media and technology (Barthes, 1977; Hall, 1980; Jameson, 2002b; Jay, 1994; Leppert, 1996; Manovich, 2002). This is certainly not a complete list of the topics of study that fall under the cultural studies discourse, but this is a broad enough review of the cultural studies literature for the needs of this research at this time.

Cultural anthropologists have begun to look more seriously at the aesthetics of culture as a means to gain a more sophisticated understanding of culture (Anderson, 2004; Leuthold, 1998). Understanding the concepts of cultural arts and aesthetic expressions as open-concepts (Weitz, 1956), is believed to be beneficial to this research. This perspective may allow new and previously unforeseen insights to foster enlightened views regarding the role of cultural aesthetics in the learning process by entering into discussion—rather than possibly marginalizing these possibilities from the outset by imposing rigid definitions and attempting to force what is unknown to fit or be discarded. Post-colonial views, which create an East/West dichotomy (Leuthold, 1998; Said, 2003) are prevalent in the scholarly discourse, but are under scrutiny in this study because such viewpoints seem dangerously essentializing and tend to discredit the self-empowering ability and the vast influence of those categorized as the “Eastern” cultures on contemporary cultural practice. It is also important to realize that hegemonic influences act within societies as well as between them (Duncan, 1993; Mendieta, 2003; Phillips & Steiner, 1999).

Culture is linked with aesthetic experience in the way that it informs our problem solving approach through our imagination and creative endeavors (Eisner, 2002). Aesthetic expressions are a form of language, communicating not only interpersonally,

but cross-culturally (Dewey, 1998a). Cross-cultural communication, via *cultural aesthetic expressions*, takes place as an exchange between parties, as well as within them, in the forms of inner dialogue and absorption of experience (Dewey, 1998a). When immersed in a culture that is not our own, our response to cultural aesthetic expressions is cultural aesthetic experience. Cultural aesthetic experiences involve us in a dialogue that aims to make meaning from the unfamiliar. This dialogue incorporates, but also takes us beyond, practical forms of language; involving us in empathetic and intuitive forms of communication.

A cultural aesthetic experience is an act of learning which is directed by a desire to build upon what is known about the world through intellectual, imaginative and sensual means. Through the interpretation of cultural aesthetic expressions we decipher meanings from diverse representations of culture. Through artists' work in museums, orchestra halls and theaters, we see a different representation than we do from popular culture. Furthermore, we see a multitude of other representations through the aesthetic features of everyday life. All of these forms of aesthetic expression are considered possible starting points from which individuals may perceive cultural aesthetic experience.

To understand what constitutes a *cultural aesthetic experience* we must consider the questions that pertain to any form of cross-cultural experience. What do we want to know when we attempt to learn about another culture? We may want to know how they, as a historically unified group, have learned to overcome the problems of history and environment, inclusive of: how they interact with one another, what they value, what they despise, what they know, what they aspire to, what problems they acknowledge and are

capable of solving is reflective of what has been experienced and indoctrinated by the collective group. We also may want to know how they differ from us as well as how they are similar and how they see themselves in relation to us. The answers to these questions may provide further insight into determining the probable character from which a cultural aesthetic experience could develop and the resulting learning experience. The quest of my inquiry is to explore the characteristics that situate a cultural aesthetic experience in the eyes of those who are undergoing cultural immersion situations. Through their narratives I will gather insight regarding the significance of cultural aesthetic experience specific to their learning experiences.

Part 4: Summary of Review and Significance of Study

This section will summarize the thematic literature reviews in the previous three parts of this chapter. It will provide a synoptical view of the research and description of the field. The significance of this study to the field will also be presented in relation to my theoretical framework.

Overview

There has been no research found that directly explores the role of cultural aesthetic expressions in relation to the cultural immersion process. Thus, literature was thematically reviewed on the topics of cultural immersion, aesthetics and education and cultural aesthetic experience. The preceding review revealed the following synoptical overview of the field:

The research pertaining to cultural immersion in Part 1, discussed cultural immersion from a multicultural education point of view after branching the field in three main directions: 1) Institutional program concerns with aims to internationalize the curriculum through study abroad and establishing cultural immersion components to teacher training. 2) Studies that are concerned with promoting the benefits of cultural immersion through focusing on specific study abroad experiences for students and/or teachers. 3) Cultural immersion in the form of expatriate experience or artistic immersion. Research in this field was representative of both quantitative and qualitative research, with quantitative emphasis on studies relating to institutional program concerns. The literature reviewed in regards to cultural immersion was important for two reasons. It demonstrated that educational institutions, higher education in particular, have a profound influence on societal perceptions of cultural immersion. It also exposed through the lack of literature exploring aesthetic concerns in relation to cultural immersion that institutional cultural immersion represents either a significant oversight of, or an attempt to marginalize, aesthetic concerns. The existing trend separates the wisdom of multicultural education discourse from institutional concerns regarding cultural immersion objectives and pushes perceptions of cultural immersion in superficial directions.

In Part 2, the literature representing the themes of aesthetics and education was primarily theoretical in nature. The literature dealing specifically with aesthetics could be characterized into two major areas of concern: philosophical/axiological aesthetics and aesthetics as a philosophy of art. The literature concerned with aesthetics in direct relation to education drew influence from the work of Dewey. The focus on aesthetic

knowledge promoted the importance of art education curricula in the case of Eisner, and was more broadly applied to developing the imaginative curricula in all disciplines, with emphasis on the humanities, in the case of Greene. The theoretical traditions of this field, as covered in the literature review, are especially important to this study. The various theoretical aesthetic positions will be used in the analysis of data for this study to determine the perceived role of aesthetic perspectives in the participant's experience.

Finally, in Part 3 the literature was examined with the purpose of developing an understanding of the concept: cultural aesthetic experience. This body of literature was primarily theoretical, beginning with the classic works on aesthetic experience by Dewey and Ingarden. Contemporary research trends on aesthetic experience, influenced by postmodern thought, crossed traditional disciplinary borders in an effort to converge theoretical discourse. There was a discussion of how the concept of culture is viewed in relation to aesthetic experience by Dewey and Eisner and in relation to the contemporary cultural studies field. Aspects of visual culture, consumer culture and technology and the media were also briefly explored. This body of literature provided an important range of discourse from which selected aspects of a variety of perspectives were considered and culminated into the concept of cultural aesthetic experience that informs this study.

Significance

My inquiry has gained insight from all of the previously discussed research. Through the review process I have been better able to formulate working descriptions of key concepts. The meaning of cultural aesthetic experience has been clarified. For the purposes of this study, a cultural aesthetic experience is an act of learning which is

directed by the desire to build upon what is known about the world through intellectual, imaginative and sensual means.

My study will be based on the collective theoretical insight gathered from the previous research in the fields discussed. I will use this insight as a foundation from which to build my study. Working within a pragmatic theoretical framework, I will apply theory as appropriate in the analysis of the data gathered through interviews and the auto-ethnographic process.

CHAPTER III

Methodology

As previously discussed, this research was conducted within the theoretical framework of interpretivistic, pragmatic-eclecticism based in Deweyan naturalism and informed by postmodern assertions and critique. Thus multiple modes of data collection and data representation strategies were incorporated and converged: interviews, participant-observation and open-ended surveys. Narrative inquiry was selected as the most effective approach for exploring the previously introduced research questions: What can we learn from studying how arts and aesthetic expressions affect the cultural immersion process?

- a) What are participants' understandings of cultural arts/aesthetic cultural expressions in their own and other cultures?
- b) What is the nature of participants' exposure and access to cultural arts/aesthetic cultural expressions while undergoing a cultural immersion process?
- c) What are participants' understandings of the role of the cultural arts/aesthetic cultural expressions in their learning process through intercultural immersion?
- d) Given the experience of cultural immersion, what are participants' understandings of the role of cultural arts in the process of learning?

The study focused on the narratives collected from seven expatriate educators and students undergoing the process of intercultural immersion in Germany, Slovenia and the United States. Through the lens of narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; He, Phillion & Connelly, 2005) and through open-ended interviews (Fontana & Frey, 2000), the researcher sought to access the lived experience (Van Manen, 1990) of participants

through stories concerning individual exposure to cultural arts to evaluate the meaning, value and purpose of aesthetic expressions in their cultural immersion processes. The researcher also incorporated ethnographic inquiry (Anderson, 2004; Chalmers, 1981; Eisenhart, 2001; Erickson, 2006; Geertz, 1973, 1988; Wolcott, 1988) methods to inform the analysis of the interview data by means of participant-observation.

Working toward opening up dialogs with others is an important consideration in education and curriculum; therefore the focus should be on the experience of all participants. This research included the narratives from expatriate participants and gained insight through discussion with host-country nationals, the researcher's narrative was included as both researcher and participant. Realizing a pragmatic theoretical framework allowed me to acknowledge the restrictions of subjectivity and the benefits of interdisciplinary influence in order to work through and around the limitations of any one inquiry method and to synthesize and adapt narrative and ethnographic inquiry into one effective form of inquiry. My research methodology was informed by collaborative approaches to inquiry in the social sciences and tailored for exploring the role that cultural aesthetic expressions play in the learning process individuals undergo during the course of a cultural immersion experience.

The researcher's own experiential narrative was included as a voice in the study, written from the point of view of cultural outsider, through the eyes of an American researcher also undergoing the process of cultural immersion at the time of research. A perception of accessibility to the cultural arts in the countries of study has been included. Also, the researcher engaged with members of the international community who are associated with schools or other educational settings and acted on their input in exploring

and revising the research questions as the study progressed. The synthesis of these approaches to data collection and data representation allow the reader to obtain first-hand insight gained through the narratives of all participants, including the researcher's.

Design of Study

The following section will discuss the study design in two sections: 1) Narrative Interviews and 2) Personal Narrative: Ethnography/Participant-observation. Each of these sections will be directly followed by further description of the respective population, data collection methods, instrumentation, etc.

Narrative Interviews

Narratives, or stories, stimulate our thoughts and affect us emotionally. Stories speak to us of time, place and identity. They reveal the metaphoric manner through which we think and learn (Bateson, 2004). Narratives are the form our lives take when we share our experience with each other (Benhabib, 1990) and are an expressive medium through which we know and are known to others (Witherell & Noddings, 1991).

As the subject of inquiry, narratives offer insight into the dimensions of character, setting, plot, style, etc., and in this way, "...narrative as object is the point of a communication" (Barthes, 1977, p. 109). Stories present a dynamic means of inquiry to seek alternative routes of understanding through the significant tales of lived experience (Van Manen, 1990). Storytelling appeals to our imagination both in practice as the storyteller, and as the listener. Both participants play an active roll in the narrative through imagined images and empathetic understandings.

A narrative approach to aesthetic inquiry provides a forum for alternative perspectives and experiences to be heard, especially those most often excluded from scholarly discourse. In *Art on My Mind* (1995), bell hooks confronted the issue of visual politics and marginalization of certain groups in art and aesthetics discourse. Narratives contribute to filling in large gaps in the discourse, providing insight into multiple aspects and layers of reality by means of engaging us in lived experience through the eyes of others.

Authors of narratives in the context of academia do not “give voice” to others, as Catherine Kohler Riessman points out, “. . .but we do hear voices that we record and interpret” (Riessman, 1993, p. 8). Riessman explains, “Investigators do not have direct access to another’s experience. We deal with ambiguous representations of it—talk, text, interaction, and interpretation. It is not possible to be neutral and objective, to merely represent (as opposed to interpret) the world” (Riessman, 1993, p. 8).

“Narrative is both phenomenon and method” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1991, p. 121). Narrative inquiry allows researchers to “join the lives of the people and situations studied” (He, Phillion & Connelly, 2005, p. 300). The nature of narrative inquiry is beneficial to this study which aims to treat participants as co-operative members of the research. However, narrative inquiry can present difficulties because it seemingly renders the researcher less in control of the study and vulnerable through the researcher /participant relationship. Narrative research has also been criticized within the academic community for these unscientific characteristics (He, Phillion & Connelly, 2005).

Narrative interviews provide for a less structured conversation between the participant and researcher (Connelly & Clandinin, 1991). Narrative format is desirable

for the interviews of participants in this study because it allows for an exchange of ideas between the participant and researcher in which both affect and influence the other in order to derive meaning toward the questions being researched. Furthermore, through the process of providing the researcher insight into their experience in the form of narratives, "...a person is both living their stories in an ongoing experiential text and telling their stories in words as they reflect upon life and explain themselves to others...this is a portion of the complexity of narrative since a life is also a matter of growth toward an imagined future..." (Connelly & Clandinin, 1991, p. 128).

The narratives collected for this research provided a variety of situational perspectives, as well as diverse interpretive perspectives from which to subjectively explore the phenomenon in question in different contexts. This practice indicated an interpretivist framework underlying the construction of this portion of the study. Data collection methods for narratives consisted of interview and participant-observation.

The interview design was modeled after the pilot study. Data collection for the pilot study took place from September 2006 to December 2006. Two international students and one international faculty at GSU participated in the pilot study. Participants were selected during the researcher's attendance at the International Conversation Hour on campus, where approximately 100 international students attended each week. Participants volunteered as a result of casual conversations regarding their interest in participating in this study. Since the aim of the study required a diverse pool of participants, most of the individuals with whom conversations were initiated were selected based on information gained through GSU staff members, regarding the nationality of the students in attendance at the event over the span of three weeks. All

participants signed informed consent document (see Appendix 3) to allow the data from the pilot study to be used in the dissertation study.

Participants for the study in Germany and Slovenia were selected through networking. More participants were initially interviewed than were able to be included in the study, due to the limitations imposed by the dissertation format and process. Two narratives from participants in Germany and two narratives from participants in Slovenia were selected on the basis that these were the first two participants to complete the second interview in each location.

Personal Narrative: Ethnography/Participant-observation

In *Crazy Visitation: A Chronicle of Illness and Recovery*, Sandra Nettles presented a personal narrative of her own lived experience dealing with the trials of having a brain tumor (Nettles, 2001). While writing her personal story, Nettles comprehended narrative inquiry as “a root metaphor for emerging paradigms that sought to understand the individual in context” (Nettles, 2005, p. 18). The use of personal narrative as an ethnographic method of interpretation served this study in the same contextual manner.

The personal narrative portion of this research served the purpose of providing triangulation via additional data gained through ethnographic and participant-observation modes of data collection on the same research topic. The research data presented from my own experience—which was influenced by interaction with participants thus making it also co-operative to some extent—was obtained through ethnographic inquiry methods.

An auto-ethnographic approach self-consciously focuses on culture through the researcher/author's own experiences in that culture. The researcher attends to interactions with those being observed in a reflexive manner (Ellis, 2004). "First they look through an ethnographic wide angle lens, focusing outward on social and cultural aspects of their personal experience; then, they look inward, exposing a vulnerable self that is moved by and may move through, refract, and resist cultural interpretations" (Ellis, 2004, p. 37). This approach to ethnographic inquiry attempts to understand a particular way of life through the eyes of one lived experience—the researchers own life (Reed-Danahay, 1997).

Ethnographic inquiry (in general) is a method which involves observation of phenomena in action (Geertz, 1973, 1988; Janesick, 1991; Wolcott, 1988). It is also a form of experiential inquiry. Rooted in anthropology, ethnography involves the researcher's immersion into the culture being studied. Ethnographic inquiry is represented by thick, descriptive accounts that attempt to make meaning regarding what is happening and what it means, through modes such as interview and participant observation (Geertz, 1973; Wolcott, 1988). The goal is "to draw large conclusions from small, but very densely textured facts; to support broad assertions about the role of culture in the construction of collective life by engaging them exactly with complex specifics" (Geertz, 1973, p. 28). William Foote Whyte's book, *Learning from the Field: A Guide from Experience* (1984) and Spradley & McCurdy's book, *The Cultural Experience: Ethnography in Complex Society* (1972), characterize this methodological approach to inquiry. The ethnographic researcher uses methods such as participant observation and interviews to find out how people experience and alter their worldviews.

Taking an ethnological approach to education presents a more holistic perspective by considering the setting in which education takes place and the relationship between groups of people, cultures, or cultures within cultures (Chalmers, 1981).

There is a need for innovative approaches to contemporary ethnographic inquiry. Questions are being asked by contemporary scholars in the field of anthropology about whether the theoretical positions of traditional ethnographic inquiries are relevant to what is being practiced in today's field (Eisenhart, 2001; Hammersley, 1992). Two critical questions prevail: whether ethnographic research has validity as an objective science, and whether research findings have any relevance to social science practice (Hammersley, 1992). Furthermore, according to Margaret Eisenhart, the traditional structure of ethnographic inquiry is in need of innovation on the part of researchers to deal with the issues of the changing world and the shifting concept of culture (Eisenhart, 2001). Collaborative methods have become more common in ethnographic research to gain a better understanding of the complex aspects of contemporary life in a more authentic manner (Eisenhart, 2001). And, since some researchers conclude that "there are lots of academics writing about these things, but few are really grappling with trying to meld *writing* about and *working with*" (Fine, et al, 2000, p. 277) the people they are writing about, collaborative research designs seek to extend beyond traditional approaches to ethnography. Collaborative efforts are advised to "better represent multiple voices, including the author's" (Eisenhart, 2001, p. 19) and to make use of multiple discourse by crossing disciplinary lines (Eisenhart, 2001).

In a recent book called *Innovations in Educational Ethnography* (2006), Fredrick Erickson refers to a collaborative ethnographic inquiry paradigm labeled, "collaborative

action ethnography.” This form of inquiry is influenced by the work of Lewin (1946) and involves researchers “studying side by side” (Erickson, 2006, p. 239) with those they are studying; only this method is generated for use in the discipline of education.

“Collaborative action ethnography, in which researchers, educational professionals, students, and parents inquire together on issues they define mutually, provides an alternative to the elitism of traditional ethnography and to that of the usual ‘hard science’ policy-oriented research in education” (Erickson, 2006, p. 236).

The discussion of a variety of labels for innovative ethnographic inquiry practices serves only to point out the field is undergoing paradigm shifts in order respond to the needs of study in the field. For the purposes of this study, ethnographic methods were not further specified as auto-ethnography, collaborative action ethnography, etc. The term ethnography was used to refer to the method of immersing myself in a non-native culture as a participant-observer, incorporating cross-disciplinary concepts as appropriate for the context of the situation. Furthermore, ethnographic methods were fused with narrative inquiry during data collection and analysis. The two forms of inquiry were complementary since, “field records collected through participant observation in a shared setting is one of the primary tools of narrative inquiry work” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1991, p. 128). Drawing on a constructivist epistemological framework, the ethnographic portion of the research was informed by theoretical literature in the fields of art, aesthetics, art education, international/ intercultural education and post-structural/ critical pedagogies. Data was collected in ethnographic modes in order to extend participatory boundaries beyond the limitations of the interview manageability and to expand upon the cultural understanding of the researcher.

Data Collection and Analysis: Narrative Interviews

Interviews of expatriate participants were conducted in three parts. First, interviews and open-ended background survey forms were used to provide insight into the characteristics of the individual's previous intercultural immersion and theoretical perspectives: background, educational experience, intercultural experience and expectations. The second interview approached the individual's exposure to cultural arts during their immersion and gained insight into their experiential observations. Furthermore, interpretations and perceptions regarding learning were addressed. The final interview, if necessary, served to clarify and discuss any additional issues raised during the first two interviews.

When possible, formal interviews were conducted with host-country nationals involved in the arts and education sectors within the host culture. Five such interviews were conducted in Germany. In this case, only one interview was conducted, accompanied by the same background survey provided to expatriate participants. Due to space limitations in the dissertation, however, it became obvious that these formal interviews would not be included in complete narrative form in the study and so this form of data collection was ceased. On the other hand, formal interviews were not the only source of data provided by host-country nationals. Numerous informal conversations were documented in my ethnographic field notes and contributed to my personal narrative. In this way, the voice of host-country nationals is included in the data.

All formal interviews were audio-taped, transcribed, and progressively analyzed. Audio tapes were developed into written transcripts and were available for participant review. Transcript narratives and ethnographic notes were organized and analyzed to

generate patterns and themes. This analysis involved two processes: 1. Identification of themes in descriptions of cultural arts exposure and attributions of meaning and value in these experiences (thematic analysis); and 2. Re-presentation of participant's stories (narrative analysis) to illuminate understandings of the participants' perceptions regarding the function and value of cultural arts in their own intercultural immersion process. Coding and data analysis involved the formation of analytic generalizations pertaining only to individual participants, which are "applied to wider theory on the basis of how selected cases 'fit' with general constructs" (Curtis et al., 2000, p. 1002), in relation to pre-existing aesthetic theories.

Instrumentation

The instruments for the interviews with expatriate participants consisted of one open-ended background survey and three semi-structured interviews, with the second interview containing a participant-observation component. The participant-observation component involved the participant in "showing" the researcher something of cultural significance that related to what has been discussed in the initial interview. These interviews were recorded both through verbal language and through photographs and researcher field notes, to include impressions and personal aesthetic response. The instruments for host-country national formal interviews consisted of one open-ended background survey and one set of semi-structured interview questions. The background survey and interview questions were presented to all participants for review prior to the interview. The participants were requested to complete the open-ended background survey prior to the first interview, to allow for discussion of survey answers.

Data Collection: Personal Narrative/Ethnography

A systematic approach to data collection consisted of field notes and journal entries to document observations, improvisational conversations and other day to day experiences. Arts-based and photographic methods of data collection were also employed to enhance the depth of experiential documentation (Barone & Eisner,1997; Barone,1995; Eisner,1981; Eisner,1991; Eisner. 1995).

Data Analysis and Synthesis

The individual narratives collected from participants and the personal narrative/auto-ethnography described above were analyzed as individual bodies of data. After individual analysis, all data was synthesized in the data & analysis and findings section of the completed study.

Sample and Population

All participants whose personal narratives were included in this study were assigned pseudonyms for this dissertation. The participants for this study were found through networking. Participants were selected from volunteers who were encountered through education related contacts, such as K-12 schools, colleges/ universities and other educationally affiliated institutions abroad. For example, in the United States, the study will focus on the interviews obtained through the pilot study—with two international exchange students pursuing studies at the university level and one international faculty member. These participants are representative of China, Denmark, and Afghanistan.

Participants in Germany came primarily from contacts acquired through participation in a number of cultural and educational circles: participation as a guest student in the PhD program in Performance and Media Studies at the Johannes Gutenberg University in Mainz, Germany; participation as a student in the Logos language school in Wiesbaden, Germany; affiliation with U.S. military spouses who, although abroad, are pursuing higher education within the military community; and through contacts at an American-based university outlet of the University of Maryland, located on a military base in Wiesbaden, Germany.

Additionally, expatriates educators working on contract in private and public institutions were the networking focus for participants in Slovenia. Efforts were made to diversify participants at all locations based on age, gender, socio-economic class background, occupation, religion, ethnicity and length of time spent in host country. All participants were selected based on availability and willingness to participate.

Table 3.1 on the following page provides background data on all 18 participants with whom initial interviews were conducted and informed consent forms were signed. Only seven of the 18 participants' narratives were included in the dissertation due to limitations presented by the forum. The narratives included in the dissertation were systematically selected; representing all three narratives collected by participants in the United States and the narratives of the first two participants to complete the second interviews in both Germany and Slovenia. All participants have been assigned pseudonyms for the table.

Table 3.1: Participant Data (included narratives)

Number /Name	1. Emma	2. Mung	3. Stephen	4. Pirkka
Country of Participation	USA	USA	USA	Germany
Citizenship	Denmark	China	Afghanistan	Finland
Occupation	Student	Graduate Student	Professor	Lawyer
Age/Sex	23/ F	26/ M	34/ M	34/ M
Ethnicity	N/A	Asian	Tajik	Scandinavian
Social Class	UM	LM	LM	M
Education	High School	BA English Education	PhD Computer Science	MA Law
Languages	Danish English Kiswahili Spanish German	Chinese English	Dari Russian English Dutch	Finnish English Swedish German
Religion	Protestant	Buddhist	Islam	Atheist
Art Demographics	Choir, Piano, Theater Enjoys Painting	Calligraphy Enjoys: Music, Movies, Traditional Poetry, Tai Chi, Karaoke	Poetry Enthusiast	None
Intercultural Experience	Tanzania (6 months) USA (5 months) Travelled throughout Europe, Morrocco	Traveled in: UK, Vietnam, Cambodia, Japan, Korea, USA (4 months)	Afghanistan, USSR (10 years), Europe, USA (4 years)	Traveled throughout Europe, Thailand, Cuba
Informed Consent	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Number of Interviews	3	3	2	3

Number/ Name	5. Lara	6. Anya	7. Heather
Country of Participation	Germany	Slovenia	Slovenia
Citizenship	Brazil	India	USA
Occupation	Student	Housewife/ Tutor	Translator
Age/Sex	42/ F	42/ F	39/ F
Ethnicity	N?A	Dravidian	White
Social Class	UM	M	M
Education	BS Education	BS Biology	MA Music
Languages	Portuguese English German	English Tamil Hindi Slovene	English German Slovene Russian Spanish Czech
Religion	Catholic	Hindu	Christian
Art Demographics	Acting Enjoys: Flute, Guitar	Ceramics Enjoys Piano	Music, Musicology Enjoys: Crafts, pop music, photography
Intercultural Experience	USA (1.5 years) Germany (8 years) Travels extensively	Kuwait (3 years) Lagos, Nigeria (3 years) USA (17 years) Slovenia (6 years)	Slovenia (7 years) Slovakia (1 year) Austria (1 year) Throughout Europe
Informed Consent	Yes	Yes	Yes
Number of Interviews	3	2	2

Table 3.2: Participant Data (narratives not included)

Number/ Name	8. Kerri	9. Thomas	10. Brigitte	11. Maria
Country of Part.	Germany	Germany	Germany	Germany
Citizenship	USA	USA	UK/USA	USA
Occupation	Teacher	Computer Technician	Dept. of Defense	Teacher
Age/Sex	32/ F	32/ M	45/ F	44/ F
Ethnicity	Caucasian	Black	White	Portugeuse
Social Class	M	M	M	M
Education	BS	BS	BS	MS
Languages	English	English	English, French, German	Portuguese, English, Spanish, German
Religion	Buddhist	Buddhist	None	Roman Catholic
Art Demographics	Enjoys folk art, mural painting	Music Education	Art History, Music Appreciation, Enjoys; Interior Design, needlepoint, sewing	Enjoys museums and teaching crafts
Intercultural Experience	Germany (3 years) Throughout Europe	Germany (3 years) Throughout Europe	Germany (2 years) USA (23 years) England (17 years) Extensive world travel	Lived in Germany, USA, Brazil Traveled extensively in Europe, Asia, Americas
Informed Consent	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Number of Interviews	1	1	3	2
Number/ Name	12. Stacie	13. Catherine	14. Maude	15. Donna
Country of Part.	Slovenia	Slovenia	Slovenia	Slovenia
Citizenship	USA	USA	USA	USA
Occupation	Diplomat	Educator	Professor	Student
Age/Sex	47/ F	60/ F	68/ F	22/ F
Ethnicity	White	White	American Human	White
Social Class	M	UM	UM	UM
Education	High School	PhD	PhD	BA French/History
Languages	English, Italian, Turkish, Slovene	English	English, German, Slovene	English, French
Religion	Spiritual	Catholic	None	Presbyterian
Art Demographics	Piano, choir, enjoys collecting arts and crafts, music, dance, performance	Art Appreciation, enjoys museums and galleries	Sketching, painting, music	Piano, Cello, enjoys crafts and pottery
Intercultural Experience	Slovenia (5 mo.) India (3 years) Kenya (2 years) Turkey (2 years) Italy (1 year) Extensive world travel	Slovenia (12 years) Morocco (4 years) Extensive travel in Europe and Americas	Slovenia (repeated visits over 20 years) Caribbean (repeated visits over 34 years) Austria (1 year) Extensive travel	France (1 year) India (1 month) Slovenia (3 months)
Informed Consent	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Number of Interviews	1	1	1	1
Number/ Name	16. Candice	17. Raul	18. Kevin	
Country of Part.	Slovenia	Slovenia	Slovenia	
Citizenship	USA	Belguim	England	
Occupation	English Instructor	Student	Teacher	
Age/Sex	47/ F	23/ M	40/ M	
Ethnicity	White	White	English	
Social Class	M	M	LM	
Education	BA	BS	Graphic Design	
Languages	English, German, Italian	French, English, Dutch, Slovene	English, Slovene, Spanish, French, German	
Religion	Roman Catholic	Catholic	None	
Art Demographics	Silkscreen, weaving, pottery, enjoys performance art, music, costume jewelry	Ceramics, painting	Graphic Design	
Intercultural Experience	Germany (12 years) Slovenia Extensive travel	Slovenia (2 years) Ethiopia (6 months) Romania (4 months)	Slovenia (3 years) Australia (3 years) Hong Kong (1 year) Extensive travel	
Informed Consent	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Number of Interviews	1	1	1	

Table 3.3 Local Participants (not presented in narrative form)

Number/ Name	1. Michael	2. Grace	3. Eva	4. Alex	5. Trevor
Country of Part.	Germany	Germany	Germany	Germany	Germany
Citizenship	German	German	German	German	German
Occupation	Junior Professor	Junior Professor	Scholar	Doctoral Student	Teacher/Translator
Age/Sex	34/ M	35/ F	28/ F	29/ M	49/ M
Ethnicity	N/A	N/A	N/A	White	European
Social Class	UM	UM	N/A	LM	M
Education	PhD	PhD	M.A.	MS/MA	University Graduate
Languages	German, English, French, Latin	German, English, French	German, English, Italian, Spanish, French	German, English, French, Russian	German, English, Spanish, Latin, Greek
Religion	Catholic	Roman Catholic	Christian	Catholic	Protestant
Art Demographics	Theater	Music, Theater/Performance, History of Art	Theater and Film Studies	Theater/Performance, Literature, Film, Enjoys music and painting	Enjoys photography and music
Intercultural Experience	USA Travel in Europe	Austria (1 year) Great Brittan (3 months)	Italy (1 year) USA (1 year)	Extensive travel throughout Europe Cultural coursework in theater studies	Spain (5 years) England (2 years) Traveled extensively in Europe and Americas Teaches international students
Informed Consent	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
No. of Interviews	1	1	1	1	1

Pilot Study

The pilot study was conducted in association with Dr. Dimitriev's, Fall 2006, *Regional Issues in Multicultural Education* course (EDUF 9632). IRB approval from Georgia Southern University (GSU) was obtained prior to making initial contact with any study participants. All interviewing and data collection for the pilot study took place from September 2006 to December 2006. International students at GSU were be my main pool for finding 2 to 3 subjects to participate in this study. Jeffery Palis and Joan Stalcup, Administrative Coordinators for the GSU Center for International Studies, offered to assist in finding participants. I attended the International Conversation Hour on campus, where approximately 100 international students were in attendance each week, in order to find participants. I also recruited from a small pool of international faculty with whom I had made previous contact through an on-campus event. Efforts were made to diversify participants based on gender, occupation, ethnicity by seeking out 3 to 4 individuals from different cultural backgrounds. Three participants were selected based on availability and willingness to participate.

Interviews were audio-taped, transcribed and progressively analyzed. This analysis involved two processes: 1. Identification of themes in descriptions of cultural arts exposure and attributions of meaning and value in these experiences (thematic analysis); and 2. Re-presentation of participants' stories (narrative analysis) to illuminate understanding of their respective perceptions regarding the function and value of the arts in their intercultural immersion process.

Interviews were conducted in three parts. First, interviews and forms were used to determine the characteristics of the individual's intercultural immersion and perspectives:

background, educational experience, intercultural experience and expectations. The second interview approached the topic of the individual's exposure to cultural arts during their immersion to gain insight into their experiential observations. Furthermore, interpretations and perceptions regarding learning were addressed. The final interview served to clarify and discuss any additional issues raised during the first two interviews. Audio tapes were developed into written transcripts for participant review and any necessary revision. Transcript narratives and ethnographic notes were organized and analyzed to generate patterns and themes. The interviews were conversational in nature with a natural flow determining which questions are asked and how follow up questioning was conducted. A list of preliminary questions, as well as the open-ended background questionnaire are included (Appendix 1). The interview questions were slightly refined for use in with additional participants (Appendix 2).

The data collected for the pilot study was only partially analyzed prior to beginning dissertation research. However, I learned through the pilot interview process that the written questions often yielded mechanical responses; these responses could then be better elaborated upon to gain deeper meaning in an improvisational conversational manner. The data collected from participants in the pilot study process was considered very rich and relevant to incorporate in this inquiry. The participant narratives from the pilot study have been included for analysis and discussion in the dissertation to increase the cultural breadth of the study and the cultural diversity of narratives and participants in the study.

Ethical Considerations

Participant confidentiality is held in the highest regard. All participants were requested to sign a release form prior to any release of data. Any information disclosed as “off the record” was not written. Participants were provided full access to their personal data to insure that the researcher did not misrepresented their statements in any way. The researcher is the only person with access to the audio tapes. The tape, notes and corrected drafts of the paper will be destroyed upon completion of the final draft of the dissertation. Any artifacts or documents reviewed by the researcher for the benefit of the project were kept confidential and safe, and promptly returned upon the completion of the study. Participation in this research project was completely voluntary. There was no compensation provided for participation and participants were allowed to end participation at any time by expressing this intent verbally or in writing.

Research Timeline

The pilot study, which has already been conducted in the United States, has been included as part of this dissertation research. All additional interviews, observations and data collections took place from May 2007 to May 2008. Auto-ethnographic research was collected beginning January 2007 in Germany, and throughout the 2007-2008 academic year (beginning in September) in Slovenia. Participant interviews were conducted in three parts, auto-ethnographic narrative was collected continuously. The timeline is shown in the following table (continued on the next page).

Table 3.4: Research Timeline Table

January 2007	Arrival in Germany. Began collection of personal narrative and development of logistics.
May 2007	Began collecting interview data in Germany. Conducted initial interview set, data collection/observation, continued collection of personal narrative, review of cultural arts literature, research of initially accessible cultural art forms.
July 2007	Defended dissertation prospectus in U.S. Returned to Germany, conducted second interview set with participants in Germany.
August 2007	Conduct any necessary third interviews with participants in Germany.
September 1, 2007 October 2007	Arrived in Slovenia. Developed logistics and recorded initial personal narrative in Slovenia.
October to November 2007	Conducted initial interview set in Slovenia, data collection/observation, continued collection of personal narrative, reviewed cultural arts literature, researched initially accessible cultural art forms.
December to April 2008 March to April 2008	Conducted second interview set in Slovenia, continued data collection/observation, continued collection of personal narrative and cultural arts research, sorted and analyzed initial data. Conducted third interview set if necessary, continued data collection/observation, continued collection of personal narrative and cultural arts research; sorting, synthesis and analysis of acquired data. Synthesized, analyzed and evaluated all acquired data. Drafted study into dissertation format.
June 2008	Return to United States for dissertation defense.

CHAPTER IV

Field Data & Analysis

In this section the initial framework inherent in the literature review will guide the purpose of this inquiry, channeling the findings into the following themes and questions:

1) Cultural immersion and the institution is a theme which covers questions like: How is the concept of cultural immersion understood? What role did institutions play in determining the perspectives of participants toward learning?

2) Aesthetics and Education, is concerned with questions such as: What is aesthetic to my participants? How does the aesthetic relate to learning/education? How does it relate to art education specifically?

3) Cultural aesthetic experience is the theme of major importance to this research and includes insight into: How did participants describe their aesthetic experience? What did participants learn? How did participants conceive of culture? How did culture and aesthetic relate? How did dichotomies come into play? What insights developed in terms of aesthetic workings within societies? How did participants react to cultural aesthetic expressions? How did they relate to the aesthetic of the cultural other?

The field data and analysis layout will follow the organization of the thematic structure of the literature review as laid out above and explore the narratives in accordance with the specific research questions posed. Many of the events and concepts that will be discussed may easily slide between themes and will be discussed within multiple categories. I use the term *theme* in an open manner, to suggest an order for the conversation rather than to define events concretely under this heading. Each narrative will be concluded by a discussion of the significant themes emerging within that narrative

in relation to the overarching research questions: How do participants describe their understanding of cultural arts/aesthetic cultural expressions in their own and other cultures? How do participants describe their exposure and access to cultural arts/aesthetic expressions during their intercultural immersion process? How do participants describe the role of the cultural arts/aesthetic cultural expressions in their learning process through intercultural immersion?

The study took place in three distinct geographical locations, in chronological order from the research timeline: the United States, Germany and Slovenia. This chapter will be organized by the country in which the study took place with each section beginning with a brief cultural overview to situate the research setting. Providing a narrative sense of place (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) serves to contextualize the inquiry in a way that allows the reader to participate in the inquiry with a more informed viewpoint (Phillion, 2002).

The setting context will provide an overview of the country and culture in terms of the “official word” drawn from resources such as government literature, academic books, tourism guidebooks and other published sources. The local context for the narratives will include my experiential and ethnographically derived assertions as a compilation and summary of field notes resulting from interviews, exhibitions and events aimed at making meaning from the specific context of culture. Sharing my observations and reflections of place in narrative form within the dissertation also allows me to tap into at least a sliver of the wealth and complexity of cultural knowledge that is important to the framing of the inquiry.

Each country specific section will include narrative vignettes from three individuals. The grammatical English of the narratives has been left in the form of direct transcription with minor exceptions. This is to avoid altering meaning and to preserve authenticity. Most of the participants are not native English speakers. Preserving their unique English dialect and word order lends character to the narratives and allows the reader a better vantage point for appreciating limitations posed on the participant in expressing themselves on complex matters in a foreign language.

In this chapter, analysis in accordance with the above mentioned themes will be conducted and included along with the presentation of the narratives in order to gain insight into the participants' indications of learning while undergoing an immersion process in the non-native culture. Further elaboration on the meaning of terminology used in analysis is available in the appendix section. Each narrative vignette will be preceded by a case study profile which includes insight into the context of the participant as an individual. The narrative vignettes will draw directly from the interviews but rather than following the chronological format of the interview in terms of question and answer, they will be presented thematically in accordance with the research questions, as discussed above. Each narrative vignette section will include a sub-section emphasizing the significant themes that emerged through the research process. A cross-analysis of all nine narratives comprising this study will be conducted and included in the following chapter and findings section.

Part 1: Narratives from Participants in the United States

This part of the field data presentation will include analysis of narrative vignettes

from three participants: Emma, Mung and Stephen. This section will begin with a brief cultural overview of the United States in terms of the “official word,” continued by insight into the localized context of the culture and the setting as it relates to this study. Case study profiles will be provided for the three participants named above, followed by the respective narrative vignette analysis for each. The terms United States, U.S. and America/American will be used interchangeably to refer to the United States of America and the citizens of the United States of American specifically.

Trying to present a vast idea such as the culture of the United States (or any of the other cultures I mention in this text) is a daunting task. Since I have previously discussed my theoretical standpoint regarding the aimlessness of providing a defined caricature of culture in the first place, I will not go into that again here. To provide a workable impression of the culture of the United States in this limited forum I will offer fragments of cultural texts from theorists, official publications and my own cultural archive. I do this with full acknowledgement that these cultural texts represent only a sliver of my experience and impressions with this culture, but it will provide a situated position from which to proceed with further discussion. It is hoped that the readers will participate by incorporating their own knowledge and perspectives along with the very sparse fragments presented throughout this document, to gain significant personal meaning from this text.

The Context of Culture and Setting for this Study

In the early part of the 20th century, John Dewey wrote of the United States of America in “A Critique of American Civilization,” that American civilization is in a constant state of flux, dynamic with contradictions (Dewey, 1998). “So it is possible to

itemize with more or less accuracy certain gains and losses in American life, and yet not know what they import for the prosperity of the social body” (Dewey, 1998, p. 316). For Dewey, cultural dynamism creates the situation where to attempt to evaluate is nothing more than to prophesize (Dewey, 1998). Dewey questions the vital meaning in making definitive statements about American society.

One foreign visitor says a number of nice things about our country, and another one may pass a number of harsh criticisms. We may agree as to the substantial truth of both statements, and experience a glow of pride at one and a sense of irritation at the other. But what do these things mean? Has either of them got below the surface? (Dewey, 1998, p. 316)

Offering a number of examples of contradiction in U.S. society, Dewey’s position on American civilization in the 1920s still has relevance to today’s condition characterized by “inner division and tension” (Dewey, 1998, p. 317).

Considering a diverse point of view on American society also from the 1920s, Antonio Gramsci situated American society in light of the character of intellectualism. Although his views tend to universalize and privilege the European model of civilization, Gramsci’s perspective is relevant to this discussion due to his perception of societal power relations and the impact of hegemony upon cultural tastes. His summarization of U.S. society stems from the assertion that although traditional intellectualism is primarily absent, the moral intellectualism distinctive of Anglo-Saxon immigrants seeking religious freedom imported a basis for “a certain stage of European historical evolution, which when transplanted by such men into the virgin soil of America, continues to develop the forces implicit in its nature but with an incomparably more rapid rhythm than in Old

Europe...” (Gramsci, 2005, p. 20). He goes on to point out that societal factors created by mass immigration in the U.S. have necessitated a different approach to achieving equilibrium than was the case in respective cultures in Europe, where he believes the tradition of intellectualism played a role in the hegemonic influence of elite classes. The legacy of the formation of the U.S. and the absence of traditional intellectualism contributes to a lack in diversity in political parties on the one hand and the abundance of diversity in religious sects on the other (Gramsci, 2005).

More recently, Richard Hofstadter approached the topic of the lack of intellectualism in the U.S. from a different angle in one of his many books that focus on American society. Hofstadter’s arguments serve to bring the two previous points of view together. Hofstadter is concerned that anti-intellectual sentiment may impoverish American cultural life (Hofstadter, 1962). Through his critical look at how American’s exhibit ambivalence toward an intellectual tradition he ties cultural life to education through institutional inculcation. He draws on Dewey’s views on education, arguing that the institution that has developed in the American education system is often based on, but has distorted Dewey’s assertions to serve the institutions means (Hofstadter, 1962). In correspondence with Dewey’s characterization of the contradictory nature of U.S. society, Hofstadter sees a paradox in the situation facing intellectuals in the U.S.; that they are either alienated by their critical views or are troubled by the conformity presented by their acceptance. However, he thinks that the concept of intellect “has taken on a new and more positive meaning” (Hofstadter, 1962, p. 393) in America. His definition of intellectualism may deviate somewhat from Gramsci’s, since he argues that there is a sentiment of anti-intellectualism ingrained in American society which he

locates in the same Anglo-Saxon origins from which Gramsci claims a type of moral, elitist intellectualism sprung.

I do not wish to belabor the topic of intellectualism, since this subject does not significantly embody my view of U.S. culture. The more prominent issues surfacing in the preceding selections in relation not only the culture of the United States, but to the theoretical framework underlying the entire inquiry lie in Dewey's sense of cultural dynamism, contradiction and tension, and Gramsci's matter of hegemonic influence. These concepts raise questions regarding the presentation of an effective characterization of culture. I do not intend to attempt to define nor answer these questions specifically, but I implore the reader to keep these concepts in mind as this chapter proceeds.

Shifting the focus from theoretical assertions toward cultural interaction praxis, the official word on the American way of life takes many forms in reflecting upon the contemporary culture of the United States. Examples of possible references and practical guides include informational encyclopedias, travel guidebooks and tourism literature, an abundance of internet web-pages from numerous organizations, etc. Literature published and distributed by the U.S. government may also contribute some insight to this fragmentary synopsis intended to set the American stage for this study.

In a section of the literature published and distributed abroad by the U.S. Department of State, Educational Information and Resources Branch for internationals who are interested in studying in the United States, characteristics "typical" of American society are discussed. While the section I am referring to states at the beginning and end that there is a vastness of diversity in American culture and all American's may not agree with or fit the characteristics stated, the rest of the section entitled "Adjusting To A New

Environment” attempts to depict a clear national character. I read it to learn about my character as an American, much like I do my horoscope in the back of fashion magazines where I am considered a “Libra” due to my birth date or on the placemat at a Chinese restaurant where I am referred to as a “Rooster” in terms of the year in which I was born. To paraphrase, some major themes describing American mentality are: respect for individuality, valuing equality, independent, self-reliant, honest and frank, direct and somewhat informal, competitive, ambitious, perhaps obsessed with achievement and defining success quantitatively and materialistically, perhaps overbearing and disagreeable, timely and efficient (U.S. Department of State, Educational Information Resources Branch, no date included).

The booklet goes on to provide a few paragraphs summarizing every day American social customs, the meaning of friendships, some bullet points on dating and advice on personal hygiene practices. One reason I include this information to set the stage for my inquiry is because some of what is written in this material had surfaced in the narratives as actual experience from my student participants. I can not say for sure whether these particular impressions were impacted in any way by having read the information materials provided to international students by the U.S. Government, or if they are experiences that proved to be coincidentally similar to those mentioned in the booklet because there is some truth, or at least resemblance of truth, to the genuine behavior and values of the approximately 304 million people with ancestry originating from all over the globe, living within the 3,537,441 square miles of area, essentialized within these ten pages of text.

An additional point of interest included in the booklet is advice about the phases of adjustment to a new environment. The section begins by talking about jet lag and language problems. It then presents four stages of culture shock that students coming to the U.S. from abroad will all experience in varying levels. There is the excitement of “The ‘Honeymoon’ Stage,” the “Irritability and Hostility” stage, followed by “Understanding and Adjustment” and finally “Integration and Acceptance.” The booklet does not disclose the source of research that led to this culture shock model for representing experience. The stages are considered universal, regardless of cultural differences of students from all over the world. However, the model is useful and I mention it here because it offers some generic ways to talk about some of the feelings that participants in this study may be undergoing as part of their immersion experiences. Whether these feelings are neatly ordered as they are represented in this booklet into four linear stages that all people will pass through, is questionable.

Local Context for Narratives: People and Place

All narrative collection for this section of the inquiry took place on the campus of Georgia Southern University in Statesboro, Georgia during the Fall semester of 2006. Many of the interviews for this study took place in the office that was allocated as a space for the doctoral fellows to work. A brief quote from my journal written not for, but at approximately the same time as I was conducting this inquiry depicts a sense of the state of mind that often resulted for me in consideration these surroundings.

I write this from my laptop in the fellow’s office with the big window, on the 2nd floor of the COE. Reflecting on my short time at Georgia Southern University, I look out over the courtyard on another beautiful, clear, sunny day. Students rush past at marked intervals to catch the campus bus. However, one would not be punished to miss the bus at this stop, since this would result in a ten minute treat of downtime; to

take in the fresh temperate air, contemplate ideas in the mirrored, blue pond with its lively fountain and relish a few minutes to reflect upon the day.

Of course, few people made a point of missing the bus. The bustling dynamic of a 675 acre campus with nearly 16,500 students and over 1,700 full time employees results in a lot of people with strict, full schedules and a desire to get things accomplished in the most timely and efficient manner possible. The practice of contemplating the day away in the American South, in my experience, is a vision of romantic stereotype. However, this romantic vision is so strong with mental associations from literature, advertising, movies and other forms of aesthetic cultural rhetoric, that it actually makes my mouth water for the taste of a tall, cool glass of lemonade just to think about it, regardless of my experience to the contrary. Back to reality, I've never actually had a glass of lemonade on my front porch as I relax in a rocking chair in Georgia, but I can locate the source of that very image in my cultural archive from a Country Time Lemonade commercial that aired on television quite frequently around the time that I was six years old. Knowing from the beginning where the romanticism comes from, I never actually expected to see it in reality, however I think it is important to mention that the advertising image that I was repeatedly subjected to, easily over 100 times within a year, retains a powerful reflexivity in my association of place.

The Georgia Southern University campus constitutes a considerable area within the small city of Statesboro, Georgia. The "official word" on Statesboro from the local web-site managed by Statesboro City Hall (<http://www.sboro.net/index/overview.htm>) considers the city of approximately 22,000 people a progressive atmosphere offering southern charm and warm hospitality where locals are friendly to visitors and interact kindly with one another on a first name basis. The population of Statesboro is just over half European descent, followed by a 40% African American population and the median income per household of approximately USD \$34,000. The downtown area, like the campus, offers an appealing

unifying aesthetic with an emphasis on rectangular shaped red brick buildings often adorned with white Doric and Corinthian columns. The city and surrounding region exist on a chiefly flat terrain. The urban sprawl that forms an unbalanced ring of development surrounding the downtown area, residential neighborhoods and the campus is like most U.S. cities with its random, unplanned look with mostly national and regional chain restaurants and hotels, malls



1. *Statesboro Downtown*. Image retrieved July 11, 2008 from: http://admissions.georgiasouthern.edu/images/18-19_Courthouse.gif

and grocery stores, gas stations and other businesses intermingled; some housed in newer facilities and some old and aesthetically outdated. The make up of the town and location of shops which provide necessities to sustain what is considered a normal, contemporary lifestyle are rather spread out over 13 square miles. There is very little effective public transportation available.

Throughout this portion of the inquiry, I commuted an hour and a half by car to Statesboro on a regular basis. I have never resided in Statesboro, I have a home in a different town and in a different county in the State of Georgia. I am not a native of Georgia or the southern region of the United States. I had lived in Georgia for three years at the time of this inquiry.

I do not strongly identify in terms of the state or region in which I was born and raised, perhaps because at this point in my life I have spent just as much time living outside of the place as I had spent living in the place. However, as a result of my experience living in Georgia, and for a short time in Alabama, I have learned that I am perceived as somewhat culturally different from the people here on regional grounds, albeit I still think it is in rather insignificant ways. My awareness has been raised to my cultural differences mainly because they have been pointed out to me on numerous occasions. In this context, the specific

differences in dialect, accent and ways of interacting appear to carry more importance for the local population than they do for me. These differences become important to me only when I feel disrespected or denied some form of access based on these grounds. Complicating matters however, is the realization that both the concept of respect and the understanding of what constitutes appropriate justification for access are contextually relative and culturally derived notions. So, if I am in actuality culturally different from the people in this region then it logically follows that my conception of respect and access may be different as well. A quote taken from my journal offers insight into my feelings of frustration on this issue at one point and attests experientially to the formation of my sense of cultural difference.

At times I've just wanted to throw my hands up and say, "You win, because the oppositional cultural identity you're projecting is definitely stronger than mine!" Maybe then the essentializing meta-conflict could subside and we could make some headway toward working on the more substantial inter-personal one.

Complexities that surround the dynamics of cultural mentality and identity reformation are not distinctive to the evasive U.S. North/South condition. The concept of culture is further complicated in its relations to social class, race and gender issues. These matters are among the multifaceted reasons that culture represents an intriguingly indefinable phenomenon and complex social construct.

The circumstance created by differences in behavior coupled with geographical relocation presents an intriguing dynamic not only for interpersonal relationships and identity reformation, but also for meaning making through interaction with the environment in regards to aesthetics. The aesthetic aspect of their experiences is the focus of my inquiry with the individuals whose narratives follow. Navigating life and learning under the circumstances of cultural immersion involves engaging in a process that I believe is revealed to a substantially enlightening extent in the narrative vignettes presented here. The process of making meaning of a different cultural environment engages us intellectually, emotionally

and physically, as well as inter-personally. Speaking from personal experience, it is a process that can be frustrating as often as it can be joyfully enlivening—and it can be both at the same time. Capturing these individual's thoughts in the form of narrative has offered substantial data for this study of the process and perceptions of learning associated with these individuals' encounters with the aesthetic of non-native cultural environments.

To reiterate, the purpose of my inquiry in this case is not to analyze the individual, since that would prove ineffective on many levels. The learning individual is not inert, but dynamic with growth, and s/he changed moments after these narratives were recorded. The significance of these narratives is that they represent a snapshot of the process of growth and learning. The focus of the investigation is to gain insight through looking specifically at the meaning making process involved in the intermingling of cultural and aesthetic aspects for these individuals.

The narrative vignettes will be presented along with some analysis of significant themes. They will follow the order in which I conducted my initial interviews with the participants. I interviewed three participants total in the United States, all three narratives are represented here. Two of the participants, Emma and Mung, are international students studying at Georgia Southern University for a semester or longer. The third participant is an international professor at Georgia Southern University, who had been living in the U.S. and working at the university for four years.

Emma's Narrative

I just have to feel impressed if it is going to be art. Otherwise I think ok, I could have done that too. There has to be some kind of work behind the art.

-Emma

Background and profile.

Emma is a 23 year old female from Denmark studying for a Bachelors degree in Theater Studies at Georgia Southern University in Statesboro, Georgia. This is her first visit to the United States and she had been in the country for approximately 3 months at the time of our initial meeting. I met her and gained her interest in participating in this study through a colleague who works in the International Studies Department at an International Conversation Hour on the Georgia Southern campus.

Emma's artistic interests included formal coursework in music: singing, choir and playing the piano and informal performance pursuits as well as some exposure to painting through her grandmother. She is now involved in earning a university degree in theater studies, an interest she had developed through acting in and co-directing plays.

Her intercultural experience includes travel with her family and on her own for week long excursions to countries in Europe such as France, Austria, Norway, Sweden and Germany; one month in Morocco and two stays of two to six months each in the Tanzania, where she learned Kiswahili language to a workable degree. Her other languages are Danish, Spanish, German and English. Additional background information about Emma is provided in table 3.1.

Cultural immersion and the institution.

For Emma, especially in terms of her experience with non-European cultures, cultural immersion is understood as a learning process that involves respectful interaction with the people and customs of the native culture.

Immersion is to learn how to act as the natives do, it is very important to understand what is appropriate and what is not and to respect it. When you go

traveling you choose to go there, they don't chose you to come there and you should respect them. I'm debating with myself about whether you should do everything they do in the other culture or whether you should behave differently because you are a foreigner and you should show your own culture also. We had a lot of discussions about this in Morocco. We were always concerned about what clothes to wear and we were two girls and we didn't want to offend. In Tanzania you don't see women on the streets because they are in the fields working and all the men are hanging around and they drank, some of them. In Morocco they don't drink, they just smoke a lot of weed. But we didn't want to attract a lot of attention because a lot of times we provoked people by just being two girls. We weren't sure if we should wear scarves on our heads because we were women or whether they might think that we were making fun of them by dressing like them since we aren't Muslim. But I felt like it would be respectful to do that, so it is difficult to know how much to imitate a culture to fit in. The same in Tanzania because I bought a big dress with the bright fabrics and a lot of people liked it, but others felt like it was too much that I, the white girl, should wear that kind of clothes because it is traditional clothes for them. It is difficult to know the line.

The cultural immersion process and learning process seem interwoven here. They both involve an authentic approach of trial and error, participant observation, contemplation of possible actions and reflection. Factors of formal education are somewhat implied through awareness and expectation of differences as well as reverence for respecting customs, religious perspectives and observing community values with retained judgment. In addition, the concept of how to show respect is not only culturally contextualized in its relativity, but also appears contextualized on an individual and identity basis. This is indicated through the heightened awareness of her altered cultural role as a female in addition to that of being a conspicuous outsider, as indicated by her awareness of her own skin color.

Here she makes reference to formal institutional curricula, as an example of where some cultural knowledge has been transmitted through coursework in the form of seemingly contextual and localized cultural education through a language class.

I took a Spanish class in high school. So I learned some Spanish and I learned something about the culture. And I think that just by living in Europe you learn

about Germany and you just learn about the history of Europe and I think it's just very normal to know a little bit about everything.

She also refers here to what she assesses as a general knowledge that she perceives to have accumulated through a form of cultural absorption.

Emma's narratives divulged that her past intercultural immersion experiences were sometimes in conjunction with different types of institutions or organizations, as well as personal travel. She had previously gone to Tanzania to visit family members who were working there with an aid agency. She then decided to work in a volunteer capacity at an orphanage. She was provided structured language lessons from a Swahili language teacher during this experience. However, she made distinctions between the exercise of lessons and the practical experience of speaking and understanding in the real world context and learning from trial and error of asking the people to explain their meanings in different ways.

Her experience in the United States was also the result of getting involved with an institution. She came to the U.S. to pursue theater studies as well as gain language practice.

Actually, I wanted just to go someplace to study theater and I wanted to have a directing course and I wanted it to be someplace where they spoke English because I have been traveling in some countries and they didn't speak that well English, so I thought my English was getting worse and worse. Because I didn't use it that much and when I used it I had to select my words so people would understand what I was saying instead of trying to develop my language and make it better. So I wanted to go to an English speaking country and improve my English and make it better. And my written English, I wanted it to be more clear, I think. And actually I wanted to go to London and study theater because I think it is a more theater like city. But um... the seats were taken there and then I got this offer. I kept on writing to a lot of universities all over and then I got this offer and I just thought that it was too good to say 'no' to.

Emma's references to the institutions seemed to indicate a rather pragmatic approach to using established means, such as an international study program, as a vehicle to the opportunity to live in another culture in order to pursue her own personal goals and interests. She continued in her narrative on the topic of language, indicating that English language education came easily to her because she uses it all of the time in her daily life in Denmark to understand television and music programs that are in English and not dubbed over in Danish language, but have subtitles. This seems to signify a type of reinforcement relationship that exists for Emma between popular culture aesthetic expressions and her formal language education in institutional settings.

These narrative vignettes were also riddled with references to cultural aesthetic expressions which were not specifically discussed here, exemplifying the porous boundaries of categorical and thematic structures that organize this inquiry.

Aesthetics and education.

For Emma, cultural aesthetics took two distinct forms: One was arts-based, the other was more philosophical with an axiological grounding, or the sense of what is valued and good in terms of culture. This distinction seemed to occur depending upon the application of the concept of culture as well as the cultural context. Her philosophical aesthetic notions valued a communal sense and the respect for other cultures and warrant some mention here, even though philosophic aesthetic sensibilities that are not indicated as artistically expressed in some manner by the participant edge a bit outside of the concerns of this research. However, Emma's communal aesthetic sensibilities also related

to learning and formal education settings as noted in this quote derived from her experience in the U.S. university classroom:

It seems like in this country you are weak if you can't make it by yourself and I don't think that is true. But I think that all the time you have to show that you are able to do everything yourself and if you are not able to do it you try to hide it as much as possible. People are always trying to do their work on their own, for their own success only.

This quote suggests an emotional response with affective thinking in regards to a sense of cultural isolation. She had explained that she was having trouble understanding what was expected of her in class at first and felt frustrated with having to ask for help.

This next quote also indicates her aesthetic value of respect as she sees it in withholding judgment and attempting to understand contextual issues of the cultural Other as well as an implication that learning through history and personal experience within contexts is a necessity as an aesthetic of practicing cross-cultural understanding.

It is important to understand actions in the context of the culture. To understand the culture you need to learn about the people and what was happening at the time. For example, World War II, to understand how this could happen you have to know about the people and how there was a lot of unemployment and they needed someone to make Germany stronger and they weren't too crazy to vote for Hitler in the beginning, I just think not to judge but to see the context of why the people did what they did at the time because if you always judge from your own culture at the current time then you will not be able to see why they did this.

Maybe through experiencing other cultures you can see something you can change in your own culture and how you can improve your own life, to expand horizons. I don't think it is good to judge each other too much, I think its fine that some people believe in Jesus and some in Mohammed. I don't think that people should think their beliefs are better than someone else's and if you learn about different cultures and beliefs then you might be able to understand what it is about rather than trying to push your own opinion onto someone else.

A point of possible contradiction of note in Emma's narrative and her aesthetic value of understanding, consideration of context and judgment-free respect is that it is somewhat inconsistent in its application to her current cultural context. The first quote in this

section and many of the quotes in subsequent sections imply a more judgmental approach to cultural adaptation that is subdued in her discussions of past cultural contexts. This may either indicate disenchantment with the current culture or part of the process of cultural immersion which includes frustration.

The other distinct aesthetic reference made by Emma was arts-based. In terms of arts and education, formal classes in the arts were a common part of Emma's past education experience. However artistic classes were considered an "extra" enrichment activity and presented additional costs for her family.

I had a lot of music before. That is just what I did. I sang a lot and played the piano and in Denmark we have this musical school where you can have some classes after your normal schools. You can have some classes in this music school and you can choose a lot of different things. Then you have to pay for it and have a teacher teaching you piano or singing or playing the drums and guitar or something.

I have always played music and it has been an influence on my life, I have played with my dad and it is very nice to be able to do that. My grandmother had a small house where we could go out there and paint. I always felt like art was a big deal in my life and I always wanted to know more.

She considered her arts training a serious part of her formal education and worth putting a great deal of effort into. However, after completing high school, she mentioned that she found limited opportunities to continue practicing and performing in the social sphere and she perceives her talent as having withered.

Another point of interest was how her opinions on formal visual art education differed in approach from her musical arts and informal visual art experience.

I think art is a very normal thing to learn about. Just by seeing pictures or seeing paintings you know that this is Dali or Monet or something. You just know the period of time or what culture they were made in and what time and where. I think a lot of it is just history lessons. We just know, okay, this was the romantic period and then they all painted like this and did music like that.

Here we are possibly provided insight into Emma's experience of a particular approach to visual art education that is quite common. It can be described as an historical approach to art or perhaps an artistic approach to history, but seems not to have result in a very meaningful interaction with art in terms of an aesthetic experience, or a rewarding and educating aesthetic learning experience in Emma's narrative since she just considers it a "normal" experience.

Cultural aesthetic experience.

Emma had arrived in the U.S. directly from traveling for several weeks in Morocco. She described her initial experience in the U.S. as a bit of a culture shock in terms of a sharp contrast between the lifestyle in a traditional Muslim country and the lifestyle in Southern Georgia, which she described as, "having hot pants all over." She felt overwhelmed by this contrast in cultural dress and behavior in terms of dancing. She stated that in her opinion the girls in the U.S. should dress more conservatively.

Come on girls, what are you doing, put on some more clothes. One thing about American culture that I am still trying to figure out what is going on about is the need to show-off. Everybody is always trying to show people what they are able to do. For example, when going out dancing, I think people don't just dance to have a good time they are like, they know this kind of series and they do that. So it feels like to me that they aren't just dancing for the joy of dancing but they are trying to show how good they are to move their body like on MTV. And everybody is always talking about something extremely fantastic that they did. I don't know if it is only because I'm just seeing the surface of this country, or that I don't see the surface at all because I don't want to see the surface. And maybe I don't go to the same kind of discothèques here as I would in Denmark. I think in Denmark I go to house parties with my friends and I don't go out that much and here I really don't have the opportunity to do what I really want to do and so I go to the disco and they're crazy.



2. MTV performance featuring Britney Spears in hot pants.
Image retrieved July 11, 2008 from: <http://graphics8.nytimes.com/images/2007/09/10/arts/10mtv.xlarge2.jpg>

She continued to describe the girls as very sexual and “porn-like” and expressed that she was surprised that the girls didn’t have more dignity, wear more clothes and dance differently. She said that there might be the same kind of

“show-off” culture in Denmark but she just doesn’t see it since she doesn’t move in those circles there.

Something I found intriguing about Emma’s narrative was looking at how her perspective and aesthetic issues changed dramatically in respect to different cultural contexts. At the very beginning of the interview she had asked me what I was referring to on the background questionnaire by requesting the participant to provide data indicating their race.

I think I’m going to have a question about this, um, what was it? Yeah, it was just the race. I didn’t write it because I felt...(shrugged). And I just didn’t know what my race was. I usually don’t answer that question because I don’t think it’s necessary. You know what I mean? What is my race, do you know?

I explained the different race categories that are accepted as normative identifiers in the United States.

Yeah, we don’t do that, we don’t ask for race, and yeah I think its kind of, I don’t know. I don’t think that much about it, so its just not, I don’t feel comfortable thinking about race because I don’t want to think about race. You know what I mean?

This dialogue concerning Emma's discomfort with the concept of race in the United States is made relevant to the discussion of cultural aesthetics in its relation to quotes pertaining to her experience in other cultures. For example, Emma's experience in Tanzania seemed to be characterized by a sense of racial/cultural identity that played into her aesthetic experience and formation of cross-cultural understanding.

I always felt like a stupid white girl, because I was the only white person. I felt like I was just glowing everywhere.

I felt like I had to do something and they expected me to be rich and white. I felt a lot of times I had to give some more money or something to the church and I didn't do that because I was like, no, I'm just like you and I don't have that much money. I'm a student and didn't make...I'm not rich.

In Tanzania it was always about being white. I felt like I had a lot of friends until a certain point and then I just found out that some of them had just talked to me because I was a good contact and I was white and maybe they could get married to me and then they could...well have a good connection.

Socio-economic issues piggybacked on racial observations. These concerns also seemed to play a significant role in Emma's cultural and aesthetic experience more in connection to the two African countries in which she had traveled, but did not hold prominence in her narrative in regards to her experience in the U.S.

I had an artist friend and I really felt that we were close and we would speak a lot. But also I felt that he kind of expected me to pay some money for his art. I don't know, it was kind of awkward because I really felt with a lot of people that I wasn't sure if they liked me or if it was because I could be a good connection. That maybe, if they could be friends with me that I could sell some of their art, that I could do something for them in my country. And there was just, awkward sometimes, to be like, hey I'm just me.

Socio-economics turned toward capitalist issues as she discussed her friendship with an artist in Tanzania. She told me that this friendship was based upon commonalities of ideas and the ability to talk about a wide array of topics. Her friend was a painter, musician and dancer who had gone to an art school. He had given her one of his paintings

and then she bought more for her home. She described him as “more progressive” than the artists who worked primarily to sell their work to tourists and felt that she could talk more freely with him. She described the art schools in Tanzania as primarily geared toward teaching artists to make work that they could sell to tourists.

Emma’s comments indicate a differentiation between a tourist aesthetic, which is rooted in capitalistic motivation for monetary gain and representing value placed on economic value of skills or trade based education model vs. another form of “more progressive” and perhaps inherent or cultural artistic aesthetic that Emma valued more highly in terms of her own intercultural experience. However, Emma’s aesthetic values for visual art do not seem to be completely formalist or expressivist in nature either.

I like art, like if I see a painting that impresses me. It can't be something that makes me think, oh I could have done that, it needs to be something that looks like it was a lot of work and it must have taken three years or something and I think this guy has got a lot of talent, rather than just cutting some slices out of the painting or throwing some paint on the wall. I just have to feel impressed if it is going to be art. Otherwise I think ok, I could have done that too. There has to be some kind of work behind the art.

Her comments indicate that she responds more to the representational aspects of artistic expression than to the conceptual or symbolic considerations. Her appreciation for aesthetic expressions seems to linger in the need for something involving extraordinary skill rather than ideas, or something that she herself could not accomplish technically. Understanding of culture through aesthetic means in this case has some limits imposed upon appreciation; the representational aspects must be within certain boundaries for a comparative identification connection to be made, yet contrasting enough to provide a new slant on the phenomenon.

Additional themes present in Emma's narratives are seen here in reference to her experience with people in Tanzania. The following quotes perceive learning in a comparative capacity between Tanzania, her own culture, and that of the United States. Topics of contrast were individual presentation, lifestyle, religion and the consumer aesthetic.

I think that I was very much changed when I came back from Tanzania. Because after being there a long time I felt that the way they lived their life... they had one pair of jeans and that was it so they need to keep them as in best condition as possible. And then I came home to Denmark and I saw these shops and they sold these jeans and they were ripped and torn and I just felt it was very disgusting that we here in our country and I think it's the same in this country, that people spend a lot of money buying clothes and it looks old and dirty and I think that is disrespectful in some way...down there just felt like, they bought something and then it was just supposed to hold a long time...I just felt like, okay I want to buy some quality, I don't want to buy something that won't hold...



3. Ripped jeans. Image retrieved July 11, 2008, from: <http://www.hdclothing.co.uk/hdconcept/male/jeansmale/hugo/Hugo%20Jeans/hugo%20boss%20denim.jpg>

I sang in the choir down there because I wanted to sing and that is actually another big difference between Tanzania and the USA, and it's kind of similar that way, in basing a lot of the social life on the church. In Tanzania, everything was based on the church, you met people during services, and in the choir and the band there was for the church, and everything was just based on this society. And I think here, I just met some people and they know each other from church and they're like...it just means a lot. And in Denmark we are like, not that many people go to church and it's not a big deal. It's not that important, I think we based our society in Denmark on Christian thoughts, but it is not that important, it's just there. I mean I've been baptized but I don't ever think about it. I'm not going that much to church and I believe in something but I'm just not practicing. And I think a lot of people here and a lot of people down in Tanzania, they were very much into their religion and the basing of society...I think maybe Denmark you base more of your friendships and which people you talk to base it on music,

if you hear the same kind of music or if you like to go dancing, or if you like to go...I don't know.

Referring again to a sense of aesthetics expressed in terms of interpersonal values, Emma also presented cultural observations in terms of differences between Tanzania, Denmark and the U.S., many of which presented problems. For example, the lack of public transportation in the U.S. presented a difference with her own country that she referred to as cultural in terms as “bad infrastructure.” It also caused her difficulty to get provisions she needed and wanted and rendered her dependent upon host country friends and acquaintances for transportation from the campus to the local Wal-Mart for staple food items like bread and milk.

Differences were noted on an experiential level in terms of disparate cultural meanings of time and punctuality. Furthermore, Emma stressed in aesthetic terms the taking of time to show caring for others. She told a story about getting sick on a camel excursion in the desert in Morocco and being nursed back to health by their guide who rubbed oranges on her head that night in an effort to relieve her fever as she slept.

I just felt the caring from him was amazing. Even though he didn't know me at all, I'd just met him that day. I was so sick I was just lying there. I don't know if something like that would happen here. Even in the hospitals you need to have insurance otherwise they might not take you and it was just amazing what he did.

As previously mentioned, language played a significant role in the conceiving of culture and determining the intercultural context for Emma. She had previously made reference to Swahili language being different from the other languages she had studied and refers to some occasional similarity to English words in that language, an influence she found amusing. She referred to having learned the English language both in school and through television and music which is broadcast in Denmark in English with Danish subtitles. She

said that traveling has made her realize the spirit of Danish music and the beauty of the lyrics. In American music she hears the melody more than the lyrics. Emma also gives conscious consideration to the aesthetics of art forms that incorporate languages that she doesn't understand.

I think movies when they don't speak English or Danish, I can still understand a little bit, and I like it because I've embraced it a bit. My boyfriend hasn't been exposed to a lot of expressions of art and he doesn't like any of it.

She sees her openness to aesthetics as a matter of exposure. She perceives her openness and appreciation of exposure to cultural art forms with a sentimental response which is based on the attachments to symbolic representations and stemming from family experience rather than her formal education.

My family has been into paintings and that kind of exhibition art, my grandmother always took us to exhibitions. My father is a musician, they do some old Danish folk music that I don't like and they do some Irish songs and songs from the 60s like the Beatles and Beach Boys. My mother gets involved in these things all of the time, suddenly she's really into Indians and then next its stars and then she's crazy about Japanese sushi or something. But she is very good at getting us involved in all these things and showing us all of these art movies. She didn't like the American culture and the pop culture. She just wanted something very different. She is very good at seeing the qualities in different things.

Surprisingly, however, Emma's choice to pursue an academic degree in theater does not seem to be reflective of her previous pattern of influence. The aesthetic experience that she derives from her work in this aesthetic field seems to be the major motivating factor.

My interest in theater has nothing to do with my family and I don't think they understand that expression much. I did a play in high school and it just worked, I feel like I sound very selfish but I just felt like I could do something there and like I said, it worked on stage and it was nice to have this experience. Its not like my parents don't like theater, they just don't go that often. It's kind of expensive, unless you're a student and then you can get really inexpensive tickets.

Emma perceives her learning through the formal curriculum in a university theater program in the United States as strictly informational, universal and devoid of noteworthy cultural meaning.

What I have learned here is a lot of basics, acting methods and theories, basic theater studies. I think they are pretty universal; these basic things are the same all over. The core would be the same.

However, she does note diverse cultural distinction historically, in the field of theater as a whole.

The European and American theater cultures have grown differently. The German theater in the 30s was more aggressive, and I think Danish and German is basically the same but the German is more aggressive. I think that America is more new so a lot of the old traditions were adopted from the European tradition and then they added some new things like the method acting, but I think a lot of the fundament of theater is from Europe and it is from a long time ago. I would say that it is like the religion in Denmark, that it's just deep underneath and not something that you think that much about.

In the next quote she describes her personal tastes in theater and presents cultural differences in this art form in a hierarchical manner.

I very much like minimalist theater because I think it demands a lot of the actor. I don't like musicals because I think it demands too much entertainment and too much show-off. Theater is about expressing things that are not able to be said with words only. It's like a movie but the artist is performing right there in front of you and I think that is unbelievable that this artist is actually doing something like this right in front of you. In theater I think there are cultural differences. I think that times have changed and it has grown a lot without so much overacting. I think different cultures are at different stages of how acting is performed. I think that the different settings in different cultures have an influence on the different staging.

Here she seems to refer to different acting styles as stages of growth toward some form universally situated hierarchy of achievement. The cultural context appears to either cultivate or hamper the progress and development of the art form.

Emma said that she found the Americans she came into contact with in her theater classes to be young and unfocused. She would have liked them to be more engaged in the

performance. She was frustrated as assistant director. Everyone told her that the experience was specific to the group dynamics.

She didn't feel that she interacted much with Americans much during her time in the United States because she spent most of her time studying and working in class. She said that she didn't know any actual American people prior to her arrival in the United States, but she had seen shows like *Friends* and *Beverly Hills 90210*, Hollywood movies and cultural expressions such as hip hop music, which are exported to Denmark. Most of her impressions of the U.S. came through movies and newspapers. She liked that the American movies are not synchronized in Denmark so she could hear the actual actors speaking their roles.

Her expectations of the U.S. included everyone having a car and drinking a lot of Coke and being fat and she thinks all of that turned out to be true. She found the side items that come with food orders to be very strange and unnecessary.

People drive everywhere and then go to the gym to workout rather than walking and getting exercise through daily activities.

When asked to describe what can be learned about her own culture through aesthetic expressions, Emma started with a description corresponding to the beauty of the natural aesthetic of place.

The lighting of Northern Europe influences the way we do art. Winter is dark and people get depressed, the summer is more light. Because it changes the people's moods so there is more street art and graffiti and posters and different kinds of expressions in the streets. In the winter time it is silent and in the summer time it explodes with festivals and such. In the wintertime it is just dark and boring.

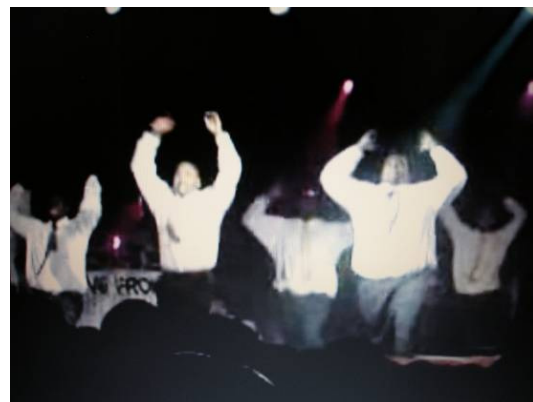
Furthermore, Emma sees her own cultural aesthetic characterized in Danish architecture in terms of functionality. She said she would describe Danish culture in watercolor painting, because it captures the sensitivities of Northern Europe's spirit. Also, her

grandmother was a watercolor painter so she is very influenced by watercolor. She would express her culture with a play in the Danish language.

The language is kind of flat, that would be a strong element of the play, the continuous way of doing things maybe. It's a lot of people doing the same thing all of the time, some people are trying to revolt against that by expressive music or something. I have a friend playing music in a very hard core rock band, so that is another symbol of the Danish youth, being very angry like with the war in Iraq and our government that sympathizes with Bush and trying to express some feelings about that, being unsatisfied with what is going on in the world.

Second and third interviews with Emma.

To show me how she was learning about the U.S. through aesthetic means Emma chose to take me to an Omega Psi Phi Fraternity's talent show on the campus of Georgia Southern University. Omega Psi Phi is an African American, male oriented student organization. It may be appropriate to offer some statistical information about the student population at Georgia Southern: The student body is comprised of 2.3% international students like Emma, 72.9% are Caucasian, 21.6% of students are African American and there are smaller percentages of additional ethnic groups. The talent show showcased students in a variety of diverse acts, including a step group performance, lip-synch acts,



4. *Step group at talent show.* Images retrieved December 10, 2007, from http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kAPRZZqZU_M

several different types of singing, dancing and musical instrument performances, a dramatic monologue, and several rap performances. The students performing in the talent show and the audience for the show were approximately 95% African American.

The volume level in the auditorium was too high during the show to allow for in-depth discussion of the experience as it was happening, but Emma spoke to me with brief comments on each of the acts during the performance in the following ways:

Step group: *That was cool.*

Lip synch rappers: *That is not a talent at all.*

Dramatic monologue: *That was too long, theater wise it was quite good, but for this event it didn't fit. The crowd was not very polite; she should have just cut it down to the exciting part.*

Pianist performance: *He was not relaxed about it. People were talking a lot during the performance, not surprising but I think it is quite rude when he is performing.*

Country music guitarist and singer: *He got people with him, swaying their cell phone lights in the air; I think that makes a difference when people follow along.*

Dance group of girls dressed in long shirts with bare legs: *It is surprising that they want to do it for free.*

Rapper: *I think it is more about who you like and don't like then it is about their talent. I like some of it but I think it is a little boring. It takes all my attention to listen to what they're saying so I don't enjoy it.*

Female karaoke singer who was booed off stage: *Too many rappers, too many slow, sad songs. They need more variety. They should have planned it better.*

Rapper group: *If they are hip hop, if they are street, they dress like this. It's like a sub-culture. My brother wears some kind of big jeans, not that big though, but there is also Danish hip hop and he dresses that way because it is American hip hop. We call it 'pop pop,' not real hip hop.*

Due to inability to be heard over the talent show to speak in-depth, Emma and I met to discuss the experience for a third interview.

It was just like a talent show we would have in Denmark, except for the audience reaction. I thought it would be very American in that people would be showing off and proud of what they just did. I think it is very American to talk about the other person's bad side. In Denmark commercials for example, we aren't allowed to say, like, that water is very bad, we can only say that our water is very good and not point out the problems with that water, we can only say how good our own water is. So that is a difference. I don't know if it is not allowed or if people just don't do it, I don't know if it's just polite, but I think it is not allowed.

In this quote it is interesting that Emma is perceiving of culture not only in the characteristics of the act or talent performance itself, but also in the distinctiveness of the people involved in the context of the act. The attitudes of the performers and the reaction of the audience are factors in her perception of learning through aesthetic expressions and the major theme of interest that she wanted to share with me.

The talent show was not as good as I had hoped it would be. But I think I learned that everywhere around the world people are very exclusive and people who want to be a part of that group are cheering and understanding what is going on and if you aren't a part of it well then that's just too bad. And I think that in Denmark it would have been for all people and the hosts would have tried to make all people feel welcome instead of just their friends.

I asked Emma if there are fraternities or sororities at universities in Denmark and she told me that there are none.

I watch "Beverly Hills," so that is my first impression of the sorority thing. So I thought in the beginning that it was very American to act like that and the behavior to try to be accepted into the popular group and be popular and have the popular house and be with the popular boys and I think its just very exclusive and they make you go through all of this hazing to be accepted and I think that's kind of childish. I didn't know this was going to be a fraternity event when I decided to go, but I didn't mind.

Here she has mentioned a television show as formative of her impressions of young adult society in the United States. Relating this to her previous statement that she had not known any Americans prior to her arrival in this country and the context in which she was requested to show me any example of aesthetic expression that depicts culture, something that is interesting here is that she has selected to show me an example that is related to her prior experience and impressions of the culture through popular media.

I think the stepping was very cool and it was very surprising because they rehearsed and they were very talented as opposed to some of the others who just went up there and did their thing because they just like being seen or being heard or something. And I think that that group just wanted to have fun doing their

stepping and wanted to show all of the fun that they had and I really liked that. I just think that was very cool.

The focus of Emma's aesthetic attentions and the specific access to facets of U.S. culture that her experience and specific interests allowed her to present may have served as reinforcement for her previous notions of this culture. However, the experience granted me new and previously unconsidered insights into the nature and diversity of culture in the United States.

Significant themes in Emma's narrative.

Emma describes her understanding of cultural arts/aesthetic cultural expressions in her own and other cultures quite broadly. Her narrative included discussion of high art forms, as well as popular culture and daily cultural customs. High arts such as theater and painting were primarily considered with an essentialist perspective in relation to their institutional settings within academia and the art museum. Music, however, seemed to permeate the academic barrier as it was described as an aesthetic expression shared within the family. Emma's discussion of her experience in the United States exhibited a value oriented focus toward intangible expressions of culture such as the attitude expressive of identity through contemporary forms of dance in non-formal settings.

The institution played an extensive role in Emma's exposure and access to cultural arts/aesthetic expressions during her intercultural immersion process in the United States. Although this influence does not seem to be visible to her, her exposure and access to cultural expression in the U.S. was limited to the campus community. Furthermore, her narrative was limited to selected experiences geared toward illustrating her personally chosen theme of the "show-off" attitude she had encountered. In the other

cultures mentioned Emma's access seemed to exhibit a more societal determination, based on her outward appearance and indicative of privilege in some respects and oppression in others.

The role of the cultural arts/aesthetic cultural expressions in Emma's learning process through intercultural immersion takes two distinct forms. One is characteristic of academia, pertaining to her essentialist perception of the canon of the formal curriculum in her theater program and in art classes. The other form is related more toward lived culture and aesthetic expressions of identity and is indirectly woven throughout Emma's narrative.

The concept of performance of identity is prominent and both formal and informal types of performance are repeatedly discussed in terms of theater, music, singing, rapping and popular dancing. The narrative also contains many references to the aesthetics of personal adornment. Clothing was emphasized in at least five different contexts. Clothing and adornment are considered an aesthetic expression of personal decorum and identity. In all five cases the clothing was characteristic of common aspects of daily life culture.

The first reference to clothing was in the context of a problematic awareness of what would be appropriate to wear as a female tourist in the Islamic culture of Morocco. Emma exhibited a pragmatic acknowledgement response in her reflection on how she should alter the practical activity of clothing her body in order to adhere to cultural norms. She also signifies an ethical concern toward personal adornment aesthetics to refrain from offending people from the host culture. Her intention appears to be geared toward achieving understanding of the context in order to adhere to an appropriate cultural code of dress. This encounter with a cultural aesthetic expression presented a

problematic situation requiring Emma to participate in emergent, problem-solving and convergent analysis of the context. Her awareness of the problem and her attitude toward understanding exhibit affective learning and perceived growth.

Emma's second reference to clothing presents two points of analysis concerning the same aesthetic object, a brightly colored Tanzanian-style dress. In this circumstance Emma's access to the aesthetic object was interpersonally derived, her acknowledgement of the aesthetics was emotion-based and the aesthetic value of the dress was sentimental. The problem associated with the cultural aesthetic inherent in the dress resulted in an ethical dilemma for Emma, again requiring an analysis of the context in order to adhere to a culturally acceptable code of dress. The acquisition of the dress demonstrates meaning making as a responsive, participatory act. The social problem that she became aware of and responded to as result of wearing the dress indicates perceived emergent and affective modes of learning.

Her third and fifth references to clothing were briefly mentioned in response to clothing styles worn by her American peers, an aesthetic to which her access was interpersonal in nature and her acknowledgement of the aesthetic emotional. The "hot pants" she encountered on American women were assigned an ethical aesthetic value and judged in a perceived divergent manner. The baggy hip hop jeans were attributed sentimental or symbolic aesthetic value and her comments indicated affective assimilation of the aesthetics from prior knowledge to a different context.

Finally, the ethical and economic aesthetic value she placed in the torn jeans she saw in the clothing stores in Denmark after her experience in Tanzania with people who could only afford one pair of jeans was encountered interpersonally and acknowledged

with an emotional as well as empathetic response. Aesthetic meaning was made through critical processes and indicated an affective change in attitude and perceived growth.

Mung's Narrative

The only thing you need to live a good life is your mind. Not necessarily happy, but you keep your mind balanced. So the philosophy is just in the middle.

-Mung

Background and profile.

Mung is a 26 year old male from China studying for a Master's in Education degree at Georgia Southern University in Statesboro, Georgia. This is second visit to the United States, but his first visit was only for a week. He had been in the United States for approximately three months at the time of our initial meeting. I was provided with Mung's e-mail address from a colleague who had mentioned my study to him and said that he was interested. Our initial face to face meeting took place in his graduate assistant office on campus and also served as our first interview.

Mung's formal arts education was in Chinese calligraphy. He described his personal interests in artistic expression with enthusiasm for music, movies, traditional Chinese poetry, Tai Chi, and Karaoke, among others.

His intercultural experience includes a course in Inter-Cultural Communication, his Bachelor degree in English Education and travel. His international travel experience is made up of a number of week long trips on university sponsored business and for educational exhibitions. Besides the United States, Mung has traveled to the United Kingdom, Vietnam, Cambodia, Japan and Korea. Additional background information about Mung is provided in table 3.1.

Cultural immersion and the institution.

Mung had a very broad conception of what it means to be culturally immersed. He told me that he had majored in English Education in college for his Bachelor degree where he had taken courses with several foreign teachers and considered this experience as a form of cultural immersion. Mung explained that his first experience with cultural immersion outside of China was a trip that took him to United Kingdom. During his two week visit Mung worked with colleagues from his home institution and from a U.K university to initiate a joint Master's degree program. As mentioned in his profile above, all of Mung's prior intercultural experience has been linked with an institution of education, either as part of his formal education in China or with affiliated universities in the United Kingdom and United States.

I began by asking Mung to tell me about his experience thus far in the United States and what he thought it meant to be immersed in another culture.

When I am in China I have some American friends, but I think that it is different when you are in your own country to have some foreign friends from when you come here as a foreigner yourself. I don't think I am immersed into the American culture now because I have only been here for three months.

Some of my classmates say "Statesboring," its kind of a university town. I think I expected to make a lot of new friends and probably have very interesting life here. A lot of my friends from China have the same feelings; we can live a more colorful life in China. Because we have a lot of places to go and a lot of entertainment in China, a lot of restaurants or karaoke bars, but here I feel like I am in a temple or something like that because all my life here for three months I get up in the morning and then study in the library and then go to classes in the evening and then come to work here in the afternoon and it feels like just a very simple life. So, before I came here one of the immigration specialists told me that you might not be used to that because you already led a very busy life in China but Statesboro is a very quiet place you don't have much to do there. That's the part I'm not used to but now I am getting used to that because it seems like now it is a very good time to learn something a good place for you to study.

Mung's sense of immersion may have been distorted by a difference in lifestyle. The norms of his lifestyle in China may differ due not only to cultural differences on a grand-scale, but also to sub-cultural differences on a local level. City lifestyles in the United States can differ in significant ways from the rural experience offered by a cultural immersion to Statesboro, Georgia. Mung's narrative reveals that he is aware that different areas offer a diversity of experience and that people in real life situations aren't necessarily as they are portrayed in the movies.

Because I'm only here for three months and I don't think that Statesboro can represent the United States, so I haven't been to New York or any of the big places. Before I came here I thought American were open minded, very free and very independent and more Westernized, a stereotype of Westerners; humorous, independent, open minded, free, living for themselves. But when I came here it is a little bit different because now I can hang out with some friends and I think they are all a little bit conservative because they are Christian so they live a very, very strict life. They have Bible study classes and I think they spend 3 or 4 hours about religion most of the days. I think it is even more strict than most Chinese people. I don't know whether it is more in the Southern part, if there is more religion power in the Southern part and people believe more in Christianity in the Southern part than in the Northern part.

Interestingly, religion is considered as regionally situated whereas most other cultural attributes are broadly generalized across the culture. The next excerpt grabbed my attention. It is a comment of coincidentally familiarity to a specific example of American behavior that is described in the U.S. State Department literature published for international students that I mentioned previously in the cultural context section.

I have met some new friends or talked to them and it is kind of interesting to me when people in the States say, "Well, we must have lunch together," or "we must get together later." I don't think they really want to have lunch with you. I don't think they mean it. It's just kind of like a social situation it is kind of mingling skills. That is a kind of thing I'm not used to because in China when we say something like lets have lunch together we do mean that and the first time it caused a lot of misunderstanding for me because, yeah you invite me to dinner, what time? After several times I recognized it does not mean a kind of invitation

it just means a kind of interest in you or kind of being polite. Now I recognize that and I think it is kind of cultural difference.

The passage from the literature states:

Americans tend to be very polite people. This is often expressed in conversations. It is common for an American to end a conversation by saying: “Let’s get together sometime,” “Come by for a visit when you have a chance,” or “Let’s meet for coffee.” However, these invitations are usually not intended to be taken literally. An invitation is not firm unless a time and place is set. (U.S. Department of State, Educational Information Resources Branch, no date included, p. 153-154)

The origination of prior impressions of culture is a theme of significance to this discussion that will be followed up on later.

Mung also addressed his U.S. immersion experience in terms of the arts. Here he mentions a couple of forms of art that he thinks I am referring to, and then he talks about his own concept of art in a more expansive sense.

I still don’t think I have had a chance to immerse myself in your arts like painting and architecture. In my mind art is in a very wide sense, so that is why I think karaoke and Tai chi is also a kind of art. So is religion a kind of art, the paintings in the church are a kind of art. I have been to a church and I was moved by the paintings.

In another instance, Mung offered examples of Hollywood movies as a source for developing his ideas about American culture prior to his visit.

I remember one very interesting movie is American Pie, I thought, “Wow, that is the school life in the States.” I watched a lot of movies about the parties by university students but its kind of...I don’t see much of parties here, just kind of a quiet life.

I think the beautiful part of the States is that they also value their family very much. This impression comes mostly from the movies and television. Most express the importance of the family, like Forest Gump, the love between the mother and the son and The Notebook, the true feelings between lovers. A lot of movies give

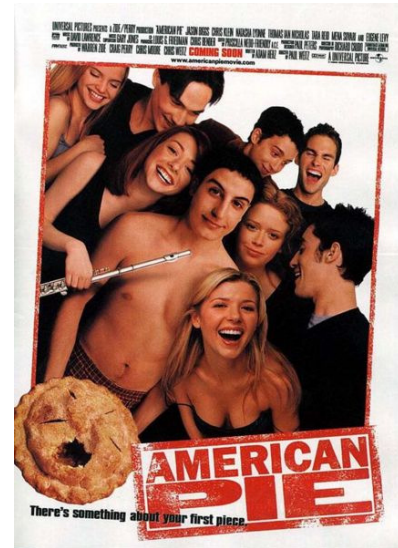
me this feeling that actually Americans value family very much. When I came here the other feeling is that Americans express their feelings very directly. In China with my mother and father I never see them express their feelings like I love you very directly, but I think it is very important for you to express to your dad how much I love you or tell mom, "I love you." In the movies I saw a lot of that, and that is another difference, you must express your feelings. Mostly from the movies.

These impressions of American culture gained from watching movies are a significant emerging theme that will be discussed further later.

As in excerpts above, Mung's narrative continued to express his thoughts and observations about his cultural immersion. Here his observations take on a comparative approach.

The two countries are very different, in China we depend on others very much so you are not by yourself, so you have a lot of social relations you are not living by yourself, a lot of people care about you. But here in the States people live very independently, you don't have to care much about the social relations, that's the kind of feeling I had. Even though you have a lot of relations in the workplace, after work you are by yourself and you don't go to see each other very much but in Asian cultures it is different a lot of people care about you. One part I don't like is caring about your private life, so you don't have much privacy in Asian culture. They know your lovers they know everything. That is the part I don't like in the Eastern culture. They value the family very much; they value the big family very much so they have a very close relationship with the families and even with your colleagues in the society. Some of my friends who are studying in the States expressed that in the States you are living for yourself, but in China you are living for others. You have more freedom in the States.

Mung's cultural immersion seems to be characterized by philosophical reflection through which he processes his experience to make meaning from his new environment. Besides what is mentioned above, Mung's narrative did not focus extensively on matters pertaining to the institution's role in his ideas about cultural immersion. However, he did



5. *American Pie* movie poster. Image retrieved July 11, 2008 from: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Image:American_pie_poster.jpg

address the dynamic between educational institutions and historical, political and economic issues in his country.

Before 1978 China experienced a bad economic time with the Cultural Revolution there was fighting between the social classes. After 1978 the reformer of China came to the stage and said it's not right you put the country into a big mess, I think it was a very bad period for China because they don't think about the economics they only think about the politics. So now the people have some money in their pockets, they live a good life, so especially now days, especially in the cities some Chinese people have some money in their pockets.

The competition is for good jobs, the most intense competition is for the college entrance because in China, not like the States if you want to enter a college you have to take a kind of college entrance examination because even though China has a lot of universities I think the entrance rate is kind of low, like 50%, so probably the other 50% cannot go to colleges because we have such a huge population that it is not possible for all of the high school students to go to college, so there is a kind of examination. You have to pass the examination because college graduation is important for the future career of students.

Mung's views on the relationships between political/economic conditions and competition for limited jobs and college slots continues in pertinence, relating significantly to his views on the relationship between aesthetic expression and formal education presented in the next section.

Aesthetics and education.

Mung's narrative indicates a perceived connection between skills acquisition resulting from formal curriculum training, the value of aesthetic expression in terms of Chinese calligraphy and affective learning reflecting personal character.

Chinese calligraphy is very important; we have an old saying that your calligraphy shows what kind of person you are. If you write very beautifully people will think, "Yeah this person is very serious or very strict to himself."

Mung seems to identify personally with the cultural importance placed on calligraphy in a way that elevates this skill beyond a mere psychomotor task. His reverence for

calligraphy as an expression of self is based in tradition and suggests that calligraphy is itself perceived of as an institution more than a form of expression, not in terms of the academic institution but as an institution of calligraphy which is grounded in culture, philosophy and tradition.

The parents always want the children to write very good calligraphy. Beginning from primary school my parents wanted me to go to calligraphy class. I took probably four years of calligraphy courses in brush pen from 8 years until 12 and before my graduation from primary school. In high school, I went at 15 years old and it was a requirement that all the students in my class, because I had a Chinese teacher who was very interested in calligraphy and said that a good Chinese student should write very well, so every week we had a kind of assignment in our writing book and we would copy 4 or 5 pages and just write, so it was a kind of training.

The above quote attests again to the societal significance placed upon Chinese calligraphy as an aesthetic expression of culture. Mung referred to the transmission of



6. Chinese brush pen calligraphy. Image retrieved July 11, 2008 from: http://www.understandchinesecharacters.com/Webpages/chinese_calligraphy.htm

knowledge involved in the process of learning calligraphy in school as “a kind of training.” He also seems to comprehend his training as an artistic expression with its beginning in skills-based, imitation

exercises aimed over the long-term at teaching a refined technique of subtly coordinated, precise movements that combine articulation with commanding aesthetics on multiple symbolic levels. Not only is the product appreciated, but also the process of mastery.

In the following passages, Mung's narrative situates the traditional significance of Chinese calligraphy and music with popularity in relation to contemporary economic issues and competitive pressures within the society.

When I was young the economics were not so good in China, so it was not normal for young children to take art courses because you have to spend money to join different courses so not so many families had this kind of extra money for the children. But now, especially after the 1990s, now the families have some more money so they want the children to have art training such as Chinese calligraphy or traditional string music or Chinese flute.

I think now it is a kind of a burden for children because now if they have time in the evening or weekend they must take some art courses. Some children are happy to do that but some children don't like it, but the parents say that it is good for you so you have to do it, especially in China now the competition is very intense so not only a great GPA in your studies, if you want to enter some good high schools or universities you should have some kind of talents, art talents like you are good at piano or violin or calligraphy. I think that is the same case in the States.

Here Mung's perspective appears to shift as there seems to be a consequential evaluative response to aesthetic expression as a contributor to societal stress factors concerned with formal education institutions and high pressures associated with political/economic issues. These concerns are developed further in the following excerpts.

So art is just a kind of secondary part...So art becomes a kind of tool or weapon for your competition. It's not a good situation.

It is just about training the skills. So it is just pressure for the children they don't have time for themselves, they don't have time to play with their peers, they have very heavy class burdens and then after class they still have to go to the piano or violin courses. Even some sports courses, some parents want them to play soccer or basketball, but that also becomes a kind of burden for the children because they just do that not because they like it but because their parents want them to do that.

One of the points of interest here is that in the circumstance of high status, where artistic expression is perceived of as being in high demand and high stakes are on the line, aesthetic expressions inhabit a cultural space where they are considered of secondary

importance to Mung. To Mung it appears that children bear the “burdened” of artistic expression as another obligation to prove themselves in the formal academic sphere.

I wanted to do calligraphy because I find it interesting, especially with the brush pen. I think some children like the brush pen too. But some children want to do piano and their parents want them to do calligraphy so it becomes an extra burden for them. I think it is kind of for a good social status. I'm not quite sure but that is the kind of situation my colleagues who have children told me. They have to do that because other children can play piano and my child cannot do anything it is not good. Even though they think their children should have some leisure time they have to send them to some other courses.

The perceptions of learning revealed here continue to indicate a sense of problematic tension between societal status and/or economic pressures and the value of artistic expression.

When I was young my family didn't have much money and they couldn't find me a music teacher so I just liked music and I taught myself to play the harmonica. I also liked to watch movies. I think most of us like to watch movies, especially some American movies; they let me know something about the States because when I was in university I was in English language studies so my professors would show me a lot of American movies because movies are a very good tool to learn language. Movies are very good training for your listening comprehension. My teacher would just use sticks to cover the subtitles because he wanted us to listen and understand. That's what I do now, I always cover the subtitles, I don't want to see the subtitles.

In these last few statements there is a recognizable division between or at least a concern about the motivational aspect which is directly connected to the value of the aesthetic expression. If an aesthetic endeavor is a personal choice then the value of the aesthetic experience tends to be inherent. If the experience is resulting from outside pressures, such as society or parental expectations, the experience may still be aesthetic but the value of the experience is altered for the individual. The experience shifts from characteristic of personal experience to representational of political or institutional experience. In Mung's

narrative, the aesthetic expression also shifts to become symbolic of influence rather than pleasure and satisfaction.

Cultural aesthetic experience.

One of the first things Mung pointed out were some of the differences he found exciting about his cultural experience. For instance, he showed delight in explaining the difference in the order of Chinese names from names in other cultures, including the United States.

In China we put the family name first. That is an interesting difference between the two cultures. We put the family name first to respect our families, but you probably respect yourself more [laughter].

Mung's joke, if taken literally, would be an example of a comparative response to culture that represents an inductive fallacy. The inductive fallacy in this case would be as follows: If in one culture respect is shown to the family by putting the family name first then that must be the way respect is shown to the family in all cultures. Thus cultures that put the individual's name before the family name must be showing less respect for the family. What this does not take into account is that the concept of respect as well as what is considered an expression of respect for family, is culturally relative.

At the time of our initial interview, Mung did not feel that he had gained enough experience with the culture of the United States to talk in depth about aesthetic expression. Instead, his narrative focused on describing aesthetic expressions of China with which he had familiarity.

In old Chinese poetry we have different forms. One has five Chinese characters for each line and then four sentences is the poetry. I cannot express that but it is kind of a Chinese philosophy.

Mung's likening of poetry to philosophy intrigued me so I asked him to explain further.

Most of the old Chinese poetry is kind of a description of their own feelings and most of the feelings are kind of unhappy feelings. I don't know why but let me try to describe it in this way... You are in a small boat and the boat is floating in a river and beside the river is the mountains and the monkeys are crying in the mountains. The poets most of them are not successful in Chinese politics, so they are trying to describe a kind of feeling that they are not happy about the society they are not happy about themselves.

Here is an example of a traditional Chinese poem by Li Bai, translated into English (retrieved July 11, 2008 from: <http://www.chinapage.com/poem2e.html>):

*You ask me why I dwell in the green mountain;
I smile and make no reply for my heart is free of care.
As the peach-blossom flows down stream and is gone into the unknown,
I have a world apart that is not among men.*

李白

During our conversation, I was able to connect Mung's example of poet subject matter to emotional experience, however my knowledge of Chinese politics is lacking and so his reference to unhappy politicians did not register. His narrative shifted from politics to philosophy and then to another form of art that Mung considered an aesthetic example of cultural expression, Tai Chi.

I think poetry is a very important part of the arts, Chinese people would think it is a kind of philosophy because most Chinese people are very quiet and they believe in the philosophy of balance. They balance themselves just like Tai Chi; very round, very balanced. They believe that if you want to live a good life you must balance yourself.



7. Tai Chi performance. Image retrieved July 11, 2008 from: http://www.wellnessthroughtaichi.com/images/r_j2.jpg

I prompted Mung to explain further about why he considers Tai Chi to be part of his cultural aesthetic experience.

Because we believe that the world was combined by two different counterparts which are yin and yang. Yin means a negative, yang means a positive. So if you want to harmonize life you should have a good balance of the negative part and the positive part within yourself or outside yourself. If you have a good balance you can live a very harmonious life. A lot of Chinese people, especially old people practice Tai chi. It is a kind of art and it is also a kind of Chinese martial arts. When you practice Tai chi there is a kind of special chi, a special air or blood flows through your body in a very round way, a very balanced way, not so aggressive. So when they are practicing Tai chi they are actually practicing balance. Sometimes they are feeling heavy or not happy, so they try to balance. It is a good practice to release your pressure, the pressure you are facing from society. It is not only an art but also a kind of treatment for your mind.

Like Mung's perspective on Chinese calligraphy, there is also a connection here between meaningfully refined movement of the body and an aesthetic form of expression which is tied as much to philosophy as to creative energy and artistic performance.

Do you know something about Tai chi? It is very slow a kind of martial arts it is created to protect yourself just like Tai chi masters they can fight with 5 people or 10 people by themselves. It is kind of fighting skills, but it is so different than Ti Kwon Do, Tai chi is very soft and fluid. We have an international festival in the coming months and all the Chinese students will do that. In China they think of it as an art of the body or an art of the mind when they are practicing Tai chi they don't think they are practicing a martial art they are trying to balance themselves. It is just like dance.

Mung considered Tai chi as the best art form to represent Chinese culture as an embodiment of balanced philosophy.

The Chinese people have their own special philosophy about life, they are not so aggressive but they are also not so conservative. They always try to keep themselves in good balance of the positive and negative. They think there are some good points for you in society and there are some negative points for you in society. If you want to live a good life the most important thing is not how much money you've got or the social status. Chinese people think all people, even if you don't have much money, can live a good life. The only thing you need to live a good life is your mind. Not necessarily happy, but you keep your mind balanced. So the philosophy is just in the middle. We like to be in the middle. Not so aggressive, not so conservative, but in the middle. This kind of philosophy is represented in the arts.

Mung applies this philosophical sense to his appreciation of a number of additional art forms which he perceives as sharing an overarching cultural aesthetic.

We also have traditional Chinese music. You can also feel this has a very harmonious way and dance, not the disco, but very soft and very fluent. It is totally different from the African dance, very slow and like the very slow wind and the clouds, something like that.

It is also expressed in Chinese architecture, you know the Forbidden City. All the houses are keeping the balance with the middle line. When you see the architecture in a balanced way you know that is the Chinese architecture, we always try to keep in the middle.

Another kind of art is calligraphy. Chinese people think that the best calligraphy has balance, not only the calligraphy but the paper that you are writing on, you must keep the calligraphy in the middle and then you have seal of yourself and the title must be balanced.

Mung mentions calligraphy again here in a different way than he had discussed it previously. Earlier dialogue focused on this art form in relation to societal and economic tensions. Here calligraphy is representative of a balanced cultural philosophy.

Switching to the topic of popular culture, Mung's narrative stretched the boundaries of my conception of cultural aesthetic expression further than I had expected. He presented the following ideas about the aesthetics of karaoke as a form of popular culture in Japan, Korea and China.

In people's minds they think the Asian people are much more conservative ...because they are very conservative in many ways they need a way to express their feelings, so karaoke...can express their feelings. That is why it is so popular.

Mung went on to describe his impressions of karaoke as a form of popular culture in other countries he has visited.

Especially in Japan, when I visit Tokyo I feel a kind of pressure, even though I am an outsider. Every man I saw was in a suit, tie and black suit. They just don't look at you; they walk very fast to work. I think the society is so modernized that the people are just a small part of the modernized machine. The buildings there are so tall, so the street feels very narrow because the buildings are so tall. It is just

such a modernized country the people must have a lot of pressure, they are just living in a suit, so they need a place to express their own feelings after office hours. That is why karaoke so popular. It is a kind of pop art. It is also the case in China, but it is more the case in Japan and Korea. After work they just don't go home, they go to karaoke, they go to bar and they drink there until the middle of the night and then they go back home. I don't think they are really signing a song, they just shout a song, something like that.

Mung talked about his own practice of karaoke as a form of release to recuperate from work pressures. This seemed to be a form of popular culture activity that he was enjoyed to the point of seeking it out during his experience abroad.

It is a kind of expressing of your feelings and then I feel good after karaoke hours. You have a kind of pressure story in your mind and then you feel released...I like a lot of English songs, I like the Beatles. I cannot find a karaoke here; probably you have to go to Savannah or Atlanta.

Keeping on the topic of the aesthetic of contemporary popular culture, Mung talked about the concept of celebrity and compared the phenomenon cross-culturally from his experience with Western fashion magazines such as Cosmopolitan.

The pop stars are always causing a lot of attention and they don't have a private life. There are celebrities in China, it is becoming like that. They are movie stars or famous singers. In the States there is American Idol, that is also the case in China, it's called Super Girls. It is becoming a national wide movement. It is the third year, but the first year 80% of Chinese were involved in this movement. The girls are in their 20s, but the Chinese people are crazy about it. They use their mobile phone to vote. It is big money for the TV station and the organization that organized that. Can you imagine 80% of the population? So that is a kind of popular show from the States and I think they just create this show according to American Idol.

Interestingly, *American Idol* in the U.S. is influenced by similar shows that were popular in the U.K. The larger population of the U.S. from the U.K. and the sense that the U.S. culture is characterized by entertainment, whereas U.K. is distinguished by tradition may create a sense of there being more of a “craze” culture in the U.S. over a trendy phenomenon. This may further result in the notion that the U.S. is the origin of certain

forms of popular culture, serving as the genesis of contemporary influences that may be considered threatening to the fabric of traditional culture in the receptive societies.



8. *Super Girls*. Image retrieved July 11, 2008 from: <http://www.globalvoicesonline.org/wp-content/uploads/2007/09/super-girl.jpg>



9. *American Idol*. Image retrieved July 11, 2008 from: <http://www.americanidol.com/photos/?set=724&seq=1>

I think Hollywood has influence not only China but all of the countries in the world. I think some Asian countries are worried we will we lose our culture or become Westernized and in big cities. It is the case, they are more Westernized than they used to be. They don't value their own values from before, the value of family or good moral standards, but that is what some Chinese people worry about. But when I come to the States I don't think that is a problem because Americans value family more than the Chinese. We are worried that we are losing our culture or we are losing our traditional values.

The threat of popular culture aesthetics turns Mung's comments back toward economic and political concerns.

Because China was in a kind of reformation so now there are a lot of people who have a lot of money in China, but we also have a lot of poor people. The country is now putting a lot of attention into economics so they have a lot of good policies for the business people who are making a lot of money, but the poor people, because during the cultural revolution, they were denied the traditional culture of China because they thought it was bad, not revolutionary, so they just denied the traditional culture so after 10 years most people in that age who experienced the cultural revolution when they were 20, now that are in their 40s or 50s so now they are the people who control the society who have the power. They have the money but that generation is losing their traditional values. They were denied their traditional values, so it is causing a lot of social problems. They have money but I don't think they have good morals. They don't know how to use the money. They are living a very bad way of life, drinks, beers, alcohol, they just waste their money. In the States, I think the rich people donate their money, they give the money back to society, in China a lot of millionaires don't donate. I think the way

they live is very bad. That is why a lot of people hate the millionaires in China. I don't think in America people hate the millionaires. But I don't think in China they got the money in a good way. You get the money because you are in a good situation, you have the power and the power causes the money or you gather all the money in an immoral way. So there is a revival of the traditional values of the Chinese people, then you care about the family and the fairness of the society and people always put money behind your moral standards. You should be a good person rather than a bad person with a lot of money. These are the traditional morals of China. A lot of socialists are trying to revitalize the traditional culture of China.

Mung concluded our first interview with the following statement in regards to the aesthetic of popular culture.

Popular art is dominating, like the Super Girls. Some people don't like this kind of popular art they think it is not good for the girls to cause too much attention. They don't think it is good for their development as human beings.

Thus, there seems to be a strong connection in Mung's narrative between cultural aesthetics and cultural values. These influences impact and are reflected in the politics and economics of the society.

Second interview with Mung.

For our second interview, Mung showed me examples of how he was learning about the U.S. culture through a series of digital photos on his computer. The photos depicted the cathedral in Savannah, a primary school where he had participated in a "country dance" in the company of a Chinese instructor from Georgia Southern University and photos from two different American homes he had been invited to for Thanksgiving Day.

Mung briefly showed me the photos of the cathedral without much comment. He elaborated more on his experience at the dance, where he had learned the steps for several square dancing sequences. He had never been exposed to this form of dance before and

mentioned his excitement with the novelty of the experience and the contact it allowed him to have with local American people.

They told me that 100 years ago there were no TV shows, so on a long winter night people from the community could gather and spend the night dancing. I really find a lot of fun in it because it shows how the community gets together and then the partners change very often. It is very interesting my partner and I changed and we danced with each other's partners and finally I got back to my partner. We don't have anything like this, just the ballroom dance in China, but you stay with your partner. I think this way is good because you get a chance to know other people and get to socialize with your neighbors from the same community. I enjoyed it very much. I love to dance very much. If I have time I will go there next time too. I had a lot of fun.

Mung's response to this cultural experience seems both emotional, as he is delighted with the interpersonal access the dance allowed; and romantic, in the sense with which he imagines and attempts to empathize with the situation of people from past eras.

The music is kind of like Irish music, I think some people emigrated from Ireland. There was a live band and I really loved the music, very happy music. There were 30 to 50 people there. We just danced together. It is a very smart dance. How it was created because you changed partners so smoothly, when you turn around you change to another partner and then get back to your original partner so smoothly without interruption. Especially in the old days this was probably the best way for people from the same community to gather together and have some fun together and create a sense of belonging to the community and a kind of harmony in the community. I think it is a very good part of this culture.

Here Mung discusses his technical appreciation for the dance. His evaluation of the aesthetic value of the dance, if further developed in the following excerpt and centers on the theme of traditional sentiment; of a sense of community that has since been lost.

I think the reason they bring back the old dance is because people are more separated they can have their own fun at home and they don't depend on each other very much now, with their cars they can go anywhere very easily. But probably a century ago people stuck together because they cannot just spend the whole night being alone. It is not only a sad part of the situation in the States, but in other nations people are getting more and more distant. It is the same in China it is very interesting that in the countryside every door is open to each other and you can just go and visit with your neighbors and talk, but in the cities it is different they just have tall buildings like small boxes and the doors are always

closed. It is not easy for you to meet your neighbor because you have to knock on the door and if you just knock on the door people think you are rude. Especially in the cities everybody is busy, people are busy they have their own business and it is rude to visit someone without an appointment but a century ago or in the countryside in China it is very common for people to be more intimate.

His perceptions here are comparative. He refers to the dance as different from anything in China and to the sense of community that he applies to the dance aesthetics, to his experience of communal sense in Chinese society.

Dance is a kind of art, of course. I think they try to bring back this kind of art. I don't think it is very popular now, but I think they try to bring it back as a good memory of the old times, a sense of belonging to the same community. There is a good feeling about more socializing with people, especially in the cities. In the cities in China people are more indifferent, more isolated from each other but in the small house in the countryside people are more open to each other.

I really like the feeling of when you are dancing, going back to old times. You can really create an intimate relationship with people. I met some professors from GSU and I got to know the band. I just went up to them and told them I really love the music. One girl taught me how to do a ballroom dance waltz. I think this has given me the feeling that it is the same as in China where the city and the countryside are quite different. Probably because of the high pressure and busy schedule in the cities people tend to be more indifferent but in the countryside there is a slower pace it is different. This made me compare likenesses in the cultures rather than contrast differences.



10. Mung's folk dance experience. Photo taken November 2006, Statesboro, Georgia.

In the above narrative, Mung seems to apply a collective, cultural identity lens to the instrumental aesthetics of the dance experience as a form of historically meaningful folk art. The technical rules of the dance appear to have contributed to his reading of the

dance as situated in tradition with formalistic qualities that reflect conservative communal values.

Mung's photos from the dance concluded and he began to discuss his experience of the Thanksgiving holiday tradition. He was invited to two different homes. He expressed that the experience had changed his views of the culture since our first interview.

My ideas have changed a little bit since the last interview; since I had just arrived here and I was still in a period of adjustment, still not used to this kind of situation. Now I am more involved in different types of activities and more socialized with people I feel much better and less boring, more immersed into this culture.

Mung showed me several photos of him holding an approximately three foot tall wooden nutcracker doll in the home of one of the families he had visited for Thanksgiving. The theme of community aesthetics was once again prevalent in Mung's discussion.

I really love The Nutcracker. In the university there is a play about The Nutcracker that I really want to see because people from the community dance in the play. I was told that in every small city they do The Nutcracker just before Christmas time they perform the same play but with different people, I think it is a very good tradition. Every year this professor will buy a nutcracker.

I can not describe it but I really love that feeling of community and the sense of belonging. Especially in the rural part people are involved in the community and the feeling of tradition. As a result of these experiences I feel more involved in the community.

If you want to be a part of the community you must join the community, you can't just watch from the outside you have to get involved in activities do volunteer work, yesterday there was a good activity called the holiday helper. Some senior



11. *The Nutcracker Ballet*. Photo retrieved July 11, 2008 from: <http://savannahnow.com/node/185302>

citizens or small kids have some wishes, they are less lucky than us maybe they cannot afford their wish to become reality and you can help them realize their dream, so I helped them to prepare a gift, a man's hat. I think it is very good volunteer work for this community. People value tradition and are devoted to the community, willing to help each other, they care about the younger generations this way they show their values.

In his next set of photos, Mung showed me many pictures of Thanksgiving dinner food taken at the table, apparently just before the start of the meal. He also showed me photos he had taken of the people he visited.

For Thanksgiving I was invited to people's homes, a white family and a black family, they were a little bit different and it was interesting. The white family was kind of more formal.

Some of the pictures were from after the dinner, he observed that at both family homes they had coffee and talked together. He commented from the photos about his observations of the formality of the seating arrangements, the decorum of the homes and additional aspects that made the two experiences distinct, including some different food items at the African American home.

Gumbo was my favorite. After dinner I tried to teach them how to use chop sticks and we used a pencil as chopsticks to eat peanuts. After dinner all the males were very lazy and the women were washing the dishes. All the males were watching TV and then after they danced a little bit and sang. They had a bigger family, more outgoing.

Mung summarized his thinking about cultural aesthetics at this point with the following statement.

Caring, these things are an aesthetic manifestation of what we care about or create the feeling of the community; these kinds of art forms reflect people's values.

Significant themes in Mung's narrative.

Mung's understanding of cultural arts/aesthetic cultural expressions in his own

and other cultures is very broad. He includes such expressions as calligraphy, karaoke and Tai Chi in his discussion as art forms that express philosophical notions that reflect communal culture. In the United States philosophical concepts and communal culture were embodied in a range of different aesthetic expressions, including family holiday traditions, the process behind the performance of the Nutcracker and the mechanics of square dance participation.

Mung's exposure and access to cultural arts/aesthetic expressions during his intercultural immersion process in the United States was determined by his affiliation with the academic community. Thus, even his interpersonal experiences were in some respects related to the institutional hidden curriculum. His prior exposure to the U.S. culture through movies initially played a role in his perceptions.

Movies played a role in Mung's intercultural immersion as an aesthetic expression of culture that affected his perceptions and served in the capacity of prior knowledge. The prior knowledge gained from American movies inducing a prove/disprove approach to learning in the early stages of Mung's experience. American movies, according to Mung's comments, are also a vehicle of influence that affect the norms and behaviors of people in other cultures.

A prominent theme that emerged throughout Mung's narrative is the notion that aesthetic expressions reflect and convey communal sensitivities. This theme was mentioned in at least eight different contexts, including within his culture. In Mung's narrative, aesthetic expression of communal culture was experienced in the United States in four different contexts. Cultural meaning was derived through the forms of movies, folk dancing, a folk object and a holiday family tradition.

Mung's first reference on this theme was the popular culture portrayal of American family values in Hollywood movies. He mentions his emotional reaction to the movie, *Forest Gump* specifically, and the impact the characters of the mother and son had on his perceptions of American culture prior to his arrival. Mung exhibited an affective, empathetic response in his reflection of his own family experience in contrast to the fictional characters in the movie. During his cultural immersion, cultural understanding gained through movies such as *American Pie* presented a problematic awareness of discrepancies between reality and Hollywood portrayals of American culture.

Mung's second reference to communal culture is in the context of a folk dance tradition. He participated in square dancing with a local group in Savannah as a pass time activity. Mung's access to this aesthetic expression was through a professor, but as it was not part of a formal curriculum it could be considered interpersonal. His acknowledgement of the aesthetic was empathetic in his effort to relate historically to the traditions and sentimentalities of aspects of American culture 100 years ago. Mung responded to the dance's formal qualities, referring to it as a "smart dance" with fluid partner changing moves, thus indicating learning took place in the psychomotor realm as well as offering an opportunity for Mung to exhibit responsiveness to communal participation.

The folk object reference and the holiday family tradition are overlapping references, accessed interpersonally. Mung learned about The Nutcracker ballet through exposure to a collection of wooden nutcracker dolls he was shown during his visit to one of the family homes on Thanksgiving. Mung's response was romantically derived from the idea of the community uniting on the grounds of tradition to put on the annual

performance. The Thanksgiving holiday tradition, on the other hand, involved Mung in the experience of traditional cuisine as a form of aesthetic expression of family culture as well as an expression of communal cultural identity. Mung's response to the food and customs of the two families was chiefly intellectual, as he took a comparative approach to making meaning from his experience with the two families.

Stephen's Narrative

My belief is that each of the cultures have extremely valuable influence, over the course of time they make your personality.

-Stephen

Background and profile.

Stephen is a 34 year old male originally from Afghanistan. He has been living in Georgia with his wife and children, and working as a Computer Science professor at Georgia Southern University for the past four years. I met Stephen several months prior to asking him to participate in this inquiry at a campus cultural event, where he served on a panel to present his views on Islamic culture and issues of education.

Although Stephen was born in Afghanistan, he has spent as many years living abroad for study and work, as he has lived in Afghanistan. From the age of 17, he obtained his education through PhD in Russia during the Soviet era, residing there for 10 years. He also earned a post doctoral degree in the Netherlands and became a resident in that country after living there for 5 years. Stephen's immediate family lives in the Netherlands and he met his wife, also an Afghani there, through an arrangement between families. Stephen has traveled extensively through Europe. He lived for over a year in

England and has visited Australia and Mexico for academic conferences. Stephen is fluent in Dari, Russian, Dutch and English languages.

Poetry is Stephens's primary personal interest in terms of aesthetic expression. He has had no formal training in any art form. Additional background information about Stephen is provided in table 3.1.

Cultural immersion and the institution.

Stephen stated that almost all of his cultural experiences were associated with academic institutions. However, Stephen's narrative doesn't refer explicitly to his cultural learning through academic institutions.

A relevant theme that emerges in Stephen's narrative on the topic of cultural immersion and the institution is his perspective on the Taliban's influence within his Afghan culture. Here he talks about the Taliban institution in terms of schools, education and power.

The Taliban were foreign bodies mixed with Afghans who were raised in Pakistan. Mostly people who probably lost their parents and were educated in madrasses. Madrasses are traditional schools, most education is around Koranic studies. It is wonderful if they really studied the Koran. They should be merciful and respectful; they probably should be a God fearing people. The problem is that the Koran is written in the Arabic language and the only person that you can rely on is the Mullah who will tell you his interpretation. If his interpretation is in a hostile way then this will affect the minds of these small kids. If the entire Koran is just reduced to a few small verses where they teach you that you have to go and fight for your country then this all that these kids learn.

The Taliban come from those madrasses and that is what the word Taliban means, it means a student. If you study in a normal school you will be called a student, but if you study in and Islamic school or madrasses then you will be called a "tali." So that is the students from the Islamic madrasses, but not with Islamic studies; with a very poor very wrong interpretation of Islam, with the strictest, harshest way of interpretation. Like for example, imagine the Bible and somebody who reads it, "an eye for an eye," and imagine somebody just takes it

and purely applies this in life. Imagine that somebody just accidentally strikes you or hurts you just accidentally and you take that “eye for an eye” and I have to now poke his eyes, so that was the case with the Taliban.

In addition to that, we had people from all around the country from Arabic countries and from Pakistan, educated by Pakistani Generals behind the scenes. Pakistan at any price wanted Afghanistan to be ruled by the most darkest people of the world; the Taliban. At any price Pakistan wanted to have this country under his rule. There are several reasons, economic reason; Afghanistan would always be dependent on Pakistan. Historic reason; Afghanistan has a disputed area with Pakistan. Safety, security reasons; that you always have the country under your hands. Hegemonic reasons; if you want to be the leader in that land, plus always bullying other countries, the United States and other countries. Since, okay we have some leverage or influence in Afghanistan, so we should be considered. That is probably the reason the United States is helping Pakistan with a tremendous amount of money because the leverage Pakistan has in Afghanistan. Imagine that you have a genie in a bottle and you have the bottle in your hands and you are bullying people by saying that otherwise you will just let the genie out of the bottle. So, because Pakistan created a heaven for terrorists now Pakistan must be taken into considerations. There are lots of reasons, these are among them.

The above passages are important to provide a sense of Stephen’s perspective on issues that permeate the majority of his narrative. Later he discusses the Taliban in relation to its historical and contemporary impact on Afghani cultural aesthetic expression.

Aesthetics and education.

Stephen’s narrative regarding aesthetics and education focuses on talking about the cultures outside of Afghanistan in which he has lived for extended periods of time, presented in a chronological manner.

My belief is that each of the cultures have extremely valuable influence, over the course of time they make your personality. My first interaction with another culture was with Russian culture. I have learned from Russians and from Russia how they are great. First of all, I learned from them during this period of internationalism. I learned equity of women’s rights. Even though many, many horrible thing happened during the Soviet Union there are a couple of things that probably history will always appreciate. This is one thing, well it was probably part of propaganda, but they really give women lots of opportunities and you

would see women at all levels. You would go to any college or university you would see plenty of women professors. If you go to the medical sphere, be it medical academic institution or hospitals you would probably see tremendous domination of females in this field...or math, even hard core engineering.

This is part of the intellectual sphere that Russia is very rich in: literature. Thanks to Russian language I was able to read lots of novels and they would call it the gentlemen's collection. They were like the elite of Russian writers and novelists and poets. These are the things I learned in Russia.

The aesthetic present in the first quote is philosophically situated and value oriented. The second quote presents an aesthetic medium that indicates Stephen's perceptions of culture in two ways. Literature is viewed here as an important form of expression for the Russian culture. A certain canon of Russian literature, or "the gentlemen's collection," is perceived of as consequential. The literature offers knowledge-based access to social status, or the idea of being considered *cultured*. "The gentlemen's collection" represents a hegemonic cultural canon.

An interesting aside evident from Stephen's quote is his questioning of what he has learned of Russian culture institutionally, as possible propaganda. This may indicate that learning was more a result of information transmission, rather than Stephen's own constructed ideas based in experience. Stephen mentioned propaganda again referring to his experience in Russia and the influence it has had on him as a person who values multiculturalism.

I am a person of multicultural or international spirit and that is probably why I think that this part [of his character] should be owed to my time in Russia. I don't know how sincere the Soviet Union was about multiculturalism, but the way that the propaganda was, I am a very international person: by interaction and respecting people from different cultures, enjoying interaction with people from different cultures, and being accepted also by different cultures.

An additional point of interest from the first quote is the discussion of women's equality, especially as he followed it with a culturally inconsistent reference to "the

gentlemen's collection" of elite Russian literature. This indicates that there are cultural differences in the meaning of what exemplifies the equality of women within a given society.

Another of the aspects that impacted my personality is the feeling or sense of sharing. I remember at the time when I was leaving Russia after the Soviet Union collapse how people became poor and how their society was in need of foods and products and everything was not in abundance anymore, but you would go to a Russian family and they would happily share with you and hospitality, this was part of Russia.

Stephen's immersion in Russia seems to have provided him with a sense of communal values in Russian culture. However, in his narrative he does not seem to consider himself a part of that society.

I did my schooling in my native country and moved for study around the world. I chose the path of life that was built in a way that would introduce you to many different people. I had classes from Jewish professors and then from professors from Arabic countries. I became friends with many intellectuals in Moscow. I was an activist when I was a student as president of the International Student Organization. All of these things make you gradually; it's not one of those things where you say at this point I realize that I am this. The way of life gradually made you to be very comfortable and very easy with different cultures and people and foods even. I have no problem with the local foods. I never have problems with local foods, except if it is something that is not traditional.

I asked Stephen whether there were any low points with his experience in the culture. He told me he is not naturally a criticizing person, then he offered the following response.

There are so many appreciations and so many good memories that even if you saw something, with all the appreciation, they are just somehow faded in my memory. I probably have to push my memory a bit to recall them. Russians they drink a lot, they really, really drink a lot. They are also not people who will force themselves to work too hard. Another bad thing that I experienced in Russia is that Russian government do not care about their countrymen, people are different from politics. When you look at Russian politics you will find them sometimes very horrible, but when you go there and live among those people you find them some of the nicest people.

Next he briefly summarized his impression of Dutch culture, where he established residency.

When I came to the Netherlands, which was my second stop for almost five years, I learned how these people are accurate towards work. They have an attentive approach toward work. They are accurate in executing tasks. Different from Russia, Russia is rich in some aspects, but the Dutch people they are workaholics. Probably, of all the people in the world, Germans are most respected for their hardworking. But when you look at Dutch people they are probably exceeding the Germans in working hard. I remember they had a saying that God created the Earth and Dutch people created the Netherlands. Because of the name of the Netherlands it means the land that is beneath the sea level and gradually they were taking land from the sea. I remember when Katrina happened here some engineers were sent to the Netherlands to learn how to protect lands or cities by building dams and such.

Stephen's words reflect a divergent approach to generalizing culture. Statements seem more reflective on experience. Historical examples are offered in terms of new events, but they are rather non-specific. Experiential examples are general and impersonal. One consideration to take into account in this reading, however, is how the experience is positioned in the past. Experiences may tend to become more generalized as they fade from the dynamism of the present.

Reporting chronologically, Stephen discusses his experience in two English speaking cultures.

I have spent a short period, like a year and a half in England. That country is absolutely different, very conservative and very resistant to changes and positively, but also very closed people. Positively into privacy, this is the first time I saw they will respect your privacy and distance in a positive way. So these are some highlights of the culture....English people, it is hard to become a close friend with an English person quickly. It takes a long time in order to develop confidence or mutual trust and again this is probably part of the English people being conservative.

I heard that in the United States time is going very fast and people are very busy. Because we had some Afghan acquaintances here, they told me that families would not even get together very often because of the work, because of two jobs people would sometimes have. I think the United States is very different from all

the experiences I have had. This country is far, far more hardworking and the people are far more busy and the demarcation between work days and weekends—there is no demarcation. Like in Europe if you send an e-mail on Friday lets say at 5p.m. there is almost 100% guarantee that you will not receive a response until Monday morning because 5:30p.m., six at the latest, is when people will be finishing work. The first time I was surprised here when I had to contact an editor in chief and it was a Saturday and I thought...on Monday I will receive. I was still working in my office after 5 minutes I received an email back. I thought the address was not available but to my surprise it was an answer. People will work seven days here...in terms of hours, work much harder than anybody in the world.

Emergent themes woven through Stephen's comments in all of the above cultural experiences were his focus on work ethic and generosity. My suspicion with this narrative is that much of the focus is biased toward a current issue with which Stephen is dealing while he happens to be in the United States. The majority of his family life experience has taken place in the U.S. and he has had two children during his stay here. The perception that working hours are longer in the U.S. may have some truth to it statistically, but it may also be relative to personal demands.

America is a great country and you have to live here to understand. You cannot learn it from movies or journals, TV or readings. It is another aspect if you come here and live among these people...I thought about the United States, and this is true, to be a full valued member of this society all you need to do is work honestly, to live honestly and do your duty. Probably there is no other difference and nobody would say, 'oh, you are not born here or you are not a native of this culture,' there are some things that are closed and you can not penetrate into that culture. I find the United States a very open culture. Also if you speak the language that is spoken here and you have a job and honestly work and honestly respect people then you don't feel any difference if you are a foreigner here or an international here or came here 2 years ago or were born here. This was my understanding of the United States, so my multiculturalism and internationalism would be better met in this country.

Stephen also offered his perceptions of his own culture in a generalized and comparative manner.

Obviously they are different from Afghan culture, first of all Afghan culture is an Islamic culture. We are not people that work hard, we are more relaxed, family

oriented people. We have family gatherings and socializing with families and relatives for any reason. Reason or no reason just get together and spend time. So we are different in terms of our culture and religion and when you come to these countries you will see a totally different aspect.

He seemed to feel more comfortable looking critically at Afghani culture than commenting on his less positive experiences in other cultures.

Let me tell you some negative stuff about my own culture. We are mostly relying on faith, like instead of doing some stuff or taking measures to prevent some stuff, in many cases we will just rely on faith. If it is destined it will happen anyway regardless of how much I try. This is one of the things, and another that is a bit negative is that we are a bit extremist, either we are very friendly or we are a bit reactionist and we are emotional.

These comments show that Stephen identifies most strongly with the Afghan community, regardless of having lived abroad in complete immersion for ten years longer than he had lived in Afghanistan and despite that fact that in all of his experience he had been participating extensively in academic institutions for extended periods of time. Stephen describes the character of Afghan in general terms in the following quotes.

Afghans are very informal people, they are very trustful people. If you borrow money from someone he will never ask you to write something for that. If you go to the bank and someone knows you he wouldn't ask you for an ID card. We don't carry with us ID cards. If they give you their word that they will do this then it will be a great shame if he fails to do that.

To make Afghan friends is very easy, but you have to be very careful because Afghans are not a people who can be oppressed. I don't think you will find more rebellious people on the surface of the Earth. Go back to the history of when Soviet Union came to Afghanistan and I can't imagine what power could come to make them compromise their freedom. These people they are very freedom loving people. They cherish their freedom.

Stephen's narrative regarding what he has learned through cultural immersion is characterized by broad generalizations. Demonstrating the thinking of an individual with a uniquely organized mind, during the interview Stephen stated his notions about each culture in the manner of bulleted points on a power point slide. His experience seems to

inform these generalizations, as examples of affective knowledge exemplifying selective attention.

Cultural aesthetic experience.

Stephen's narrative up to this point reveals much on the topic of cultural aesthetics and education. However, so far Stephen's aesthetic concerns have been focused on cultural values and have only briefly mentioned any form of cultural aesthetic expression. This section will illuminate further on Stephen's opinions and perceptions in this regard.

To get him to talk about things associated with cultural aesthetic expression, I asked Stephen to describe the cultural aesthetic expressions that he responds to most from his own culture.

Afghanistan has a very long history of literature: Poetic literature, not prose literature. Afghanistan probably is, in my personal opinion the strongest country that ever existed on the surface of the world and contributed to poetry. If you look at Afghanistan it is a small country, until recently under 20 million people.

Here Stephen is pointing out the size of the population to make his point about the significance of the world-wide influence of Afghan poetry. He provides specific examples in the following two excerpts.

I don't know if it is officially recognized, but Shahnameh is a book that was written in Ghazni, which is a province now in Afghanistan. The book was written during 40 years by a king in Ghazni. Shahnameh was written precisely 1000 plus years ago and this is considered to be one of the most old pieces of the world literature. Prior to the Shahnameh which is a well recognized book that was digitalized by Princeton University here. "Shah" stands for king, and "nameh" stands for story of kings. This is written in pure Persian language. It is translated into English...In terms of size, I am afraid not to be precise...it is a huge, huge text probably 40 or 50 plus thousand verses.

Even prior to that Afghans were very, very good in poetic language and after that the cultural of Afghanistan was very successive with poetic language. Another example is ...he is better known in the West as Rumi... These whirling dervishes they dance... he was born in Afghanistan and then because of the Mongol Empire he moved to Turkey, where he is now probably one of the best sight-seeing places in Turkey. He established the school of mysticism and Sufism. He was also translated into English.

Stephen's first example, the Shahnameh is an epic story of Persian royal history and myth from the creation of the world until the Islamic conquest in the 7th century A.D written around 1000 A.D. by the Persian poet, Ferdosi (Gay, 2006). In Stephen's narrative, this collection of poetry serves an instrumentalist aesthetic purpose. Like the example of the spiritual Islamic poet known as Rumi, the Shahnameh book provides an historic precedence for his initial statement about the cultural importance of Afghan poetry. Additionally, the example of the Shahnameh furthers the moral and political anti-Taliban perspective that is implied and directly stated by Stephen throughout his narrative. This perspective is evident also in relation to the following quote.

I think Afghanistan in terms of art was always very strong in poets. Even thousand years ago we had female poets recorded and saved works of poetry by women. What made me really, really sad when this horrible Taliban came to power was that after thousands of years women wouldn't be allowed to go to school. When thousand years prior to that women would go to schools to be a poet to be accepted and respected everywhere to be a part of that culture.

After his discussion of poetry and literature as an historic intellectual cultural art form, Stephen turned his discussion of cultural aesthetic expression to historic monuments attesting to religion and civilization.



12. *Standing Buddha*. Image retrieved July 11, 2008 from: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/low/south_asia/3251741.stm

In terms of civilizations, Afghanistan was home for a number of civilizations. Evidence to that were these two giant statues of the Buddha. Can you imagine more than 1500 years ago, and the technology back then. Two giant statues of Buddha were built in a very central place in Afghanistan, so Afghanistan became a center for Buddhism. At some point Afghanistan was also the birth place of Zoroastrianism, the person who created it was a prophet they would worship light and fire. This was preceding Islam and then Islam was introduced obviously to Afghanistan and became the official religion.

Having perhaps served a ceremonial or religious instrumentalist aesthetic purpose for the Emperor Kanishka, who ordered the construction of the world's largest Buddha sculptures during the 2nd century AD in the cliffs that are now part of Afghanistan territory (Gruen, Remondino & Zhang, 2002); the example of the Buddha sculptures and Zoroastrian religious expression serve a different purpose in Stephen's narrative. The Buddha statues, which are referred to by Stephen in the capacity of a cultural aesthetic expression of historic significance were destroyed with dynamite and anti-aircraft weapons by the Taliban in March 2001 since they posed "an insult to Islam" (Gruen, et al, 2002, p.363). Considering the narrative as a whole, these examples imply further evidence of Stephen's critical, affective thinking toward cultural aesthetic expressions in relation to contemporary events taking place within his own culture.

I asked Stephen to tell me more about the contemporary culture of Afghanistan.

He responded with examples of cinema as a popular art form.

Afghanistan cinema is very young cinema it has always been dominated by foreign movies. It doesn't mean that we didn't have cinema industry; we have our Afghan national films. But Afghanistan was weak and far dominated by other nation's movies like Indian, and then Iranian, and then Western movies. These are translated into Persian language. One good movie that I saw recently was called Osama. That movie got a Cannes festival award, which is a very prestigious award.

The tragedy that Afghanistan has been going through in the last four decades is expressed in the art. The movie Osama that I told you about is a marvelous example of this tragedy in that film. A young girl, 12 or 13, who has lost her

father and now the Taliban is in Afghanistan and the mother is not allowed to work to get money to support the family. So the girl is cutting her hair and masking like a boy to go and make money for the family. The tragedy of this film is a reflection of what happened in Afghanistan.

An emerging theme in Stephen's narrative is the way in which he esteems the origins of phenomenon and objects with cultural meaning. In the following quote he mentions the significance of Afghan music in relation to the musical instruments that originated in the region that is now Afghan territory and the extended influence of these instruments on music in other societies. Historical origin sets the precedence.

Afghanistan has a very good history of music. Afghanistan has its national instruments very prolonged history. Afghanistan introduced at least 4 or 5 good instruments for internationally recognized instruments. Rubab is an instrument that was introduced by Afghans also a sarode, it is called sarode in India because they took it over. They even made their way to the United States and some European countries.

Stephen also talked about contemporary Afghan cultural aesthetic expressions such as fashion, contemporary poetry and painting. Interestingly, the notion of traditional dress and traditional dancing is discussed here as a contemporary aesthetic expression. I point this out because in many cases traditional dress and traditional dancing serve to perpetuate a myth of tradition, reflecting historical roots in a society from some selected era as though contemporary cultures have evolved from some earlier stage of societal uniformity where everyone associated with the culture dressed in matching finery and participated together in the same dances.

In terms of clothes we have our own national clothes, but Afghans are very westernized people in terms of clothes. You will see people from India and they are cherishing their clothes culture or people from African countries or Arabic countries. When it comes to clothes Afghans are not too attached to our national costume. There are traditional costumes for men and women and traditional dance and music is very popular. When we compare Afghanistan to all other Islamic countries Afghans are very liberal, we are very open-minded.

Poems again, my favorite, if you look at Afghan poetry of the past few decades you will probably find most of them reflecting in one way or another, the tragedy of Afghanistan and the suffering of the women and children especially.

In terms of painting, you will find many paintings reflecting or illustrating the tragedies that we are going through for three or four decades. These are the reflections of what happened in Afghanistan. Even that we sometimes get emotional when we are talking about the Taliban, this is also a reflection. Probably you have noticed when I am talking about the Taliban, I really, really, really feel that these are the maddest people that ever existed, so all this is reflected in many aspects of culture and art, movies, cinema, poetry and probably if you go into Afghanistan you will see lots of posters and illustrations.

Stephen's discussion of cultural aesthetic expressions from his own culture turned toward his cultural aesthetic experiences in cultures in which he has been immersed. First he talked about his experience with the arts in Russia. Here his focus was on literature and poetry and theater; including cinema, opera, and ballet.

Russia is also very known for prominent writers and is also very celebrated in literature like prose and poems, like Pushkin would be the equivalent of Shakespeare and then Dostoevsky is a philosopher writer, like Chekhov, Gorky, Tolstoy the author of War and Peace and many of them. Russian culture is very rich in terms of literature and intellectualism.

If you compare it to Afghanistan, Russia has a very strong presence in cinema and I have seen many good movies in Russia...and in painting, visual arts, theater, opera, ballet. We didn't have opera and ballet in Afghanistan. I was very fond of opera and ballet in Russia, like if you go to the grand theater in Moscow, you will be impressed with the size and the way it is decorated. This was my ritual, every other week I would go to see something in the theater and that is very different from here that theater is a big deal in Russian life and it hasn't changed from centuries ago when there wasn't TV. Russians are still very big fans of theatrical art and I was impressed by this. I remember Swan Lake was my first ballet to see and when I went to the huge hall and suddenly when it starts a few hundred dancers came onto the stage in white and would come to the stage and dance.

Stephen's reference to aesthetic experience in the Netherlands was brief. He claimed that his aesthetic experience there was lacking because he didn't grasp the language well

enough to enjoy the culture. He went on to talk about his current experience in the United States, starting with prior knowledge derived from movies.

Hollywood was the thing that I really appreciated before coming to the U.S., every time there was an Oscar ceremony we would wait in Europe because it would be on late at night. If for some reason we couldn't watch it we would record it. Hollywood was the best example of American art that we knew before coming here, even back in Afghanistan. I am a great fan of Hollywood movies. Probably the oldest movie that I remember was Gone with the Wind and The Good the Bad and the Ugly. Then later it became a ritual to watch one movie a week. Elizabeth Taylor's movies and Sofia Loren's movies for example, these were my favorite movies.



13. *Gone with the Wind* movie poster. Image retrieved July 11, 2008 from: <http://artfiles.art.com/images/-/Gone-with-the-Wind-Print-C10281600.jpeg>

A theme that emerged in association with Stephen's U.S. experience was the concept of entertainment as a cultural aesthetic. This theme is

initiated above with his discussion of previous knowledge of the aesthetic of American culture coming from movies and continues to be prevalent in the next two excerpts.

Here in the United States whenever we have a chance to go to some shows we go. Now we have a ticket for the Cats show. We can't afford to go to every show because of the kids, so we have to be selective. I love arts and culture, maybe because of the multicultural experiences I have had they have developed my life toward culture. I probably need some time to appreciate many other things here. We haven't had a chance to go to many places yet.

Here Stephen touches on the economic aspects of cultural access in the United States. In this case; the entertainment aesthetic is not free. This raises an interesting point to consider how effectively bonded American culture is with the consumerism. There is culture beyond consumerism and entertainment, but entertainment serves as a spectacle in

this culture that has differentiated American aesthetic expression from other cultures Stephen has experienced.

In America there are many attractions that are entertaining, like we went to Orlando to Florida, to Atlanta to the Aquarium and this was very impressive. So I think that American life is more rich in entertainment and attractions which are very close to daily life. You go and entertain your family for the whole day or whole weekend. So I think this country is more into these types of attractions. One of the things for me and my wife is that we want to go to a Broadway show in New York and also the Fox Theater in Atlanta. I have quite a long list of things, but because of distances, we have to wait for an appropriate time.

Stephen's narrative indicates that he is drawn to the entertaining attractions and connects them to his experience of community and family in the United States.

What I have learned here that I didn't know about was related to the culture of the country in terms of family relations. I found the United States much more family oriented and family values are appreciated here more than I thought. Usually people think the people in the United States do not have such strong cultural family values. Maybe it is because I am living in the South and have not had the experience of living in the Northern part of the country, so I don't know if it is the case everywhere or just in the Southern part of the country but people are more religious here than I thought. People are really very religious and they appreciate religion.

In two of the three narratives from the United States, there has been a tendency to associate family values with organized religion and a questioning of how these values are situated regionally.

Another thing that was revealed to me is the patriotism that people had. I was watching documentaries of the civil war and how these 13 and 14 year old kids were participating in the war and defending their lands, their states, their homes. This was a revelation for me, I didn't realize the level of patriotism here.

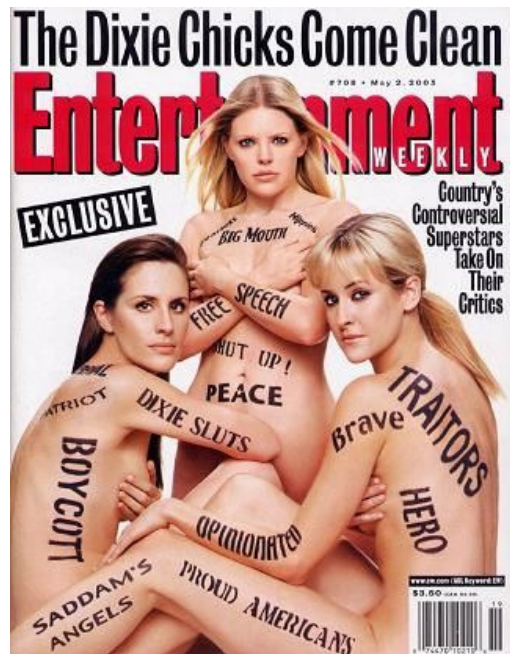
I thought that the United States was mostly dominating by the power of technology, but indeed I find people would be ready to share their last savings in order to stand for their country. So I didn't think this much about American patriotism, I thought the American power was because of the technology and advancement in military and weaponry and all this stuff they had, not because of the patriotism they have behind all of this.

Stephen continued to provide two examples of how he perceives patriotism to be expressed in the U.S., one from politics and the other from popular culture. As an American, some of Stephens insights into American culture seemed to stem from sources I recognize as rhetorical and tend to ignore. This narrative pointed out to me how powerful rhetoric in the media can be on people's actual experience and their perception of reality concerning culture.

Just a couple of weeks ago, John Kerry said that college kids if they don't study and do your best then you will get stuck in Iraq. You might think this is very normal in talking to kids and encouraging them to study. But when I look at the reaction and two days later he apologized, I see how people are sensitive about their patriotism and to say that people in Iraq are not smart or stupid kids.

Another example is with the Dixie Chicks, they were performing in London and said that we are ashamed that George Bush is sharing the same state with us. I was listening to the reactions of the people and the people were not angry about the free speech, but the fact that they say this on foreign soil. So people said you can have whatever opinion about the president you like, you can be ashamed of him, but the problem is that they say this on foreign soil, so this is patriotism for me.

The media plays a strong role in Stephen's conception of U.S. cultural values, perhaps a stronger role than it plays within the lives of the locals in some respects. I have experienced the distortion of media perceptions myself in my experience living abroad. On many occasions, including the events and aftermath of September 11, 2001 which I watched on CNN from the United Arab Emirates, and the



14. Dixie Chicks controversy magazine cover from May 2003. Image retrieved July 11, 2008 from: http://www.viewpoints.com/images/review/2007/230/7/1187439078-14022_full.jpg

2008 political campaigns that I currently follow through internet news sites; the media has offered a somewhat distorted image of U.S. culture and the values of American people that often generates a surreal sense of incongruence in my own identity with the American culture.

Second interview with Stephen.

For the second interview I attended Stephen's presentation on the book The Kite Runner by Afghan-American author Khaled Hosseini. The book discussion took place as



15. Still from Kite Runner movie. Image retrieved July 11, 2008 from: http://www.vh1.com/sitewide/flipbooks/img/movies/production_stills/k/kite_runner/210.jpg

part of the campus International Week activities. I considered this to be a significant event that pertained to this study because of Stephen's expressed interest in literature as the cultural aesthetic expression he responds to most. Furthermore, the occasion provided a unique opportunity to witness firsthand Stephen's experience

sharing examples from his culture and interacting with Americans.

The room in which the presentation took place was fairly small and was full of professors and students. At least one professor had brought her class to the event. The presentation took place at lunch time and was advertised as providing free pizza and drinks, so many of the students were eager to get to the refreshments that sat on the back table while Stephen spoke.

Stephen's presentation included maps and statistical information about Afghanistan and the Afghani people. His power point presentation exhibited examples of the pre-Taliban Afghan culture, as well as a comprehensive review of the plot of the book. The time allotted for the presentation did not allow for Stephen to complete all he had prepared to present. Questions from the audience were concentrated on the elements of the book that were true to Stephen's cultural experience.

Stephen referred to the book as a fictional novel that offers a true to life exposure of the effects the Taliban's rule has had on the people and culture of Afghanistan.

The Kite Runner is an example of how the culture is reflected in our art. Literature will be now dominant; creative writing and literature will be evidence of this period. Many sources contributed to this novel as a true reflection of the tragedy. Although the novel says that all of this is fiction, and all of the names are fictitious, when I was reading it I knew that none of it was fiction. For me this is not a novel, for me this is a history which is written in a novelistic or creative way. These are examples of how life impacted our culture and art.

Despite his focus on the novel to present issues pertaining to his own culture, Stephen summarized his narrative and our interviews with the following statements about learning about culture through books.

As a human being the most that you learn will not be through the pages of books. The most you will learn will be through conversations with people, dialoging with people. I am very fond of reading books, but I never learned as much from books as I've learned through my interactions with people from here. You wouldn't learn about the peculiarities of cultures from the pages of books, so I think that interactions, dialogues, conversations with different people will open opportunities for people to interact, this will create and dramatically improve your knowledge.

For Stephen it is important to learn about a culture through interaction within the culture and with people from that culture. He refers to his perspectives on Afghanistan to make this point.

I am grateful that I had the chance to interact with many different people and this has allowed me to know about the many nice and beautiful things that different nations have. Sometimes you may think of people as horrible, this is just a horrible country. But it isn't horrible if you just start interacting. If it is a horrible country it is just because something horrible was happening, but this is just something.

If you think of Afghanistan probably 5 or 6 years ago, probably people thought of Afghanistan as the most horrible country of the world, but if you look into Afghanistan in depth, know the people are nice people, peaceful people, friendly people, freedom loving people. But the horrible was just a group of terrorists coming to that country. This was not Afghanistan, Afghanistan history is full of appreciation, full of values, full of arts, culture, spiritual aspects. The horrible was just this group of terrorists who found Afghanistan in chaos and you can use this chaos for harming Afghanistan and then the international body. Only through talking to people and meeting them you can better judge about many things.

During his discussions about other cultures, Stephen tends to reflect also upon his own cultural identity. He considers his experience with individuals apart from the whole of society in a way that offers a more personable perspective than a generalized notion of culture does not.

Significant themes in Stephen's narrative.

Stephen considers cultural arts/aesthetic cultural expressions in his own and other cultures in traditional, institutional, rhetorical and intellectual ways. His narrative is unique in that he considers each of the other cultures to feed into an aspect of his character, while maintaining a strong Afghani cultural identity. Aesthetic expressions that have shaped Stephen's multi-cultural understanding include ancient poetry, literature, traditional music, cinema and theater.

Academic institutions have played a profound role in Stephen's exposure and access to culture and the cultural arts/aesthetic expressions in all of the cultures that he states have contributed to his character development. His cultural access was not

necessarily limited to academic institution due to his acquisition of languages, prolonged length of stay in each culture and his professional affiliations, however his primary reason for being in each culture was academically defined.

The role of the cultural arts/ aesthetic expressions in Stephen's learning process is highly internalized. He formulates his statements about each culture and its perceived philosophical value oriented aesthetic, as well as artistically expressed aesthetic in terms of what he has learned and how this knowledge has been affective. Stephen includes a variety of art forms in his discussion of aesthetic expression: Literature, poetry, painting, theater, opera, ballet, sculptural monuments, movies, music and personal adornment. While literature and poetry emerge as the predominantly discussed form of aesthetic expression, mentioned on seven occasions in the narrative and the aesthetic inherent in the discussion of literature is especially focused on an essentialist, perennialist canon, the majority of references to aesthetic expressions are discussed in an instrumentalist manner, in association with political, historical and religious import. Thus the most significant theme to emerge in analysis is how the concept of instrumentalism relates to aesthetic expression in Stephen's narrative.

At the beginning of the narrative Stephen discusses the teaching of the Koran, a literary object, in instrumentalist terms. The Koran is understood as a religious aesthetic expression and what is criticized is the manner in which it has been conveyed as a device for the purpose of indoctrination into an ideology of which Stephen disapproves. The aesthetic in this case is characterized as academic, spiritual, political and collective identity generating. His access to this aesthetic is inherent within his own cultural

experience; his acknowledgment is intellectually oriented and evaluated on religious, ethical and consequential grounds.

The Russian literary cannon, referred to as “the gentlemen’s collection” is the next example where Stephen applies an instrumentalist aesthetic and it is mentioned at an additional point within the narrative. In this context the aesthetic lends itself to an academic conveyance of social status beyond the inherent aesthetic of the literature. Stephen’s access was academic and socio-economically identifying. A traditionalist form of gender identity is also implied in reference to “the gentlemen’s collection,” but may not be explicit in contemporary practice. He exhibits an academic response, assigning cultural/traditional and consequential aspects to the aesthetic.

Afghani literature and poetry are discussed as inherent to Stephen’s native culture, however since the majority of his education took place outside of Afghanistan it is unclear how these aesthetic expressions were actually accessed. This is a particularly interesting aspect of Stephen’s narrative, since much of his cultural identifying Afghani aesthetic is the result of non-Afghani sources and influence, or at least accessed in a context outside of Afghanistan. These references are presented in the narrative in an instrumentalist manner in relation to their historical, political and religious significance.

The aesthetic references in Stephen’s discussion of the United States are characterized by the instrumentalist function of entertainment. Stephen refers to attractions such as Broadway shows and performances in Atlanta in this capacity and as an aspect of culture requiring extra time and finances. In this context he discusses movies and theatrical performances as a form of common popular culture, family culture and a pass time activity that contributes to cultural identity. His access is considered on

situational grounds, acknowledged pragmatically and ascribed a primarily economic value. His statements indicate insightful, convergent processing. His meaning making in relation to culture is possibly responsive, as he states that he is motivated to participate.

Part II: Narratives from Participants in Germany

This part of the field data presentation will include analysis of narrative vignettes from two participants: Pirkka and Lara. This section will begin with a brief cultural overview of Germany in terms of the “official word,” continued by insight into the localized context of the culture and the setting as it relates to this study. Case study profiles will be provided for the three participants named above, followed by the respective narrative vignette analysis for each.

The character of this narrative will be somewhat different from the last set, since I too was undergoing the cultural immersion process in Germany. Therefore, I will weave in many of my own observations and thoughts in addition to the analytical comments on the participants’ narratives. Again, I preface this section with the admonition that it is not meant to present anything close to a comprehensive view of my concept and experience of this culture. This section acts only as a point of departure and a semblance of notions related to theoretic and empirical observations.

The Context of Culture and Setting for this Study

Theoretically, my exploration of German culture was framed by a study of aestheticians due in part to my involvement with the Performance and Media Studies PhD Program at the Johannes Gutenberg University in Mainz. Thus, discussing the

German discourse on aesthetics would seem a rather appropriate way to frame my experience of cultural aesthetics in Germany, since the 18th century German aesthetician Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten is credited with inciting the paradigm shift of aesthetics to a philosophical concept, and fellow countryman Immanuel Kant with defining the term in the manner in which it is understood today (Hammermeister, 2002). However, I have intended for this part of the inquiry to be more empirical than theoretical, so I will focus on experiential contextual aspects in setting the stage for the narratives. Aesthetic theoretical insight will be woven in and will also inform the analysis of narratives.

Contemplation of my interactions with participants and my own immersion experience made me aware that there are few cultures so notoriously stereotyped as German culture. I was aware of, and had expected to confront my own partiality, but I had not anticipated such similar notions from each diverse participant, reinforcing perceptions that I was struggling to subdue as biased and to overrule experientially. What would cause people coming from different cultural backgrounds to have similar experiences with the respective non-native culture? My thinking on this phenomenon led me to look into how the culture is projected and marketed to outsiders.

To explore one facet that was emerging as significant from my experience, I turned to the theoretical literature on tourist culture. Tourist culture is highly developed in Germany and in some instances it is difficult to determine authentic lived culture from commodity culture, where the two intersect and where they have become interrelated. For my prospectus hearing I brought each of my committee members an “authentic handmade in Germany,” wooden smoker in the form of a Bavarian man dressed in lederhosen and wearing a wolddreispitz (a traditional Bavarian wool hat often decorated with a feather) to

broach the topic of tourist kitsch aesthetics, and how my awareness of tourist culture was formulating in relation to my immersion experience. Although the smokers may have been too obvious in their polished, caricature affect, they were meant to represent the



16. *A Bavarian man smoker*. Image retrieved July 11, 2008 from: <http://www.erzgebirge-palace.com>

question of the commoditization of cultural artifact as a phenomenon that arose in the mid 19th century when tourism became a popular activity (Phillips & Steiner, 1999). According to Bourdieu, mass manufacturing of artifacts relieves them of the distinguishing factor of refined artistic taste (1984). Yet, consideration to the circumstantial development of the semiotics behind such representations and their consequences are thought provoking and warrant further discussion.

Although their argument is focused on postcolonial commoditized artifacts, Phillips & Steiner's thoughts are relevant to this conversation, "...tourist art, which was constructed not just to represent the idea of the handmade, but also display iconographic motifs and forms that signified "old" ways of life imagined as simpler and more satisfying" (Phillips & Steiner, 1999, p. 13). The souvenir art object is viewed with suspicion on grounds that it lacks authenticity and is dislocated into a separate categorization of artifacts (Phillips & Steiner, 1999). However these objects are a genuine aspect of the culture since, "...peoples all over the world often did wear the same kinds of garments and ornaments they sold as souvenirs, and many forms of aesthetic expression within indigenous communities were profoundly transformed by their makers' intensified involvement in market production" (Phillips & Steiner, 1999, p. 10). Citing

modernist and avant-garde treatment of commercialism and the concept of commoditization, the authors also argue that, “the art-artifact-commodity triad must now be merged into a single domain where the categories are seen to inform one another rather than to compete in their claims for social primacy and cultural value” (Phillips & Steiner, 1999, p. 16).

The tourist experience is another phenomenon that has developed in terms of commoditization and is relevant to the discussion of my experience in Germany as I visited many tourist attractions such as museums and monuments in my pursuit of meaning and cultural aesthetic experience. In association with their exhibition about travel and tourism, the Chicago Museum of Contemporary Art published a book, *Universal Experience: Art, Life, and the Tourist's Eye*, which states, “Tourism, the largest industry in the world, is a significant social force in contemporary society with far-reaching international, economic, cultural and geopolitical importance” (2005). The book poses questions about tourism through an arts-based inquiry and locates the first tourists as ancients on a quest for meaning (Chicago Museum of Contemporary Art, 2005). If the tourist seeks meaning, what is the nature of meaning obtainable through tourism?

John Urry analyses contemporary travel and tourism in his book, *The Tourist Gaze* experience stating, “...even in the production of ‘unnecessary’ pleasure there are in fact many professional experts who help to construct and develop our gaze as tourists” (Urry, 2005, p. 1). Our gaze as tourists is constructed socially not only through our own cultural lens but also through what we are deliberately allowed exposure to through the legitimated tourism discourse, which is determined by historical and political societal

power structures. How we are persuaded to think about a culture and its history is constructed by intentionally derived access.

An intriguing aspect of the tourist aesthetic in Germany is the commoditization of history tourism that has emerged. While historic tourism, often also referred to as heritage tourism, has developed in respect to a wide array of historic happenings, the aesthetic of the experience exists in relation to power, distance and time. “There is ethnocentricity in time—from the point of view that one epoch has value-systems different from those of other times.” (Beardsley & Schueller, 1967, p. 21). The value-system of the tourist gaze in terms of ethics is pertinent to the German historic tourism context. Germany is just one of many cultural contexts in which atrocities of the past lend to the economy of the present in relation to tourism.

The violent atrocities that characterized World War II color the contemporary cultural dialogue in Germany with a daunting shadow which imposes itself as negligent to ignore. I asked one German professor (see Michael, table 3.3) what he would expect someone from another country to know about Germany before visiting, his answer was straightforward:

From my perspective I would think that at least a minimal degree of historic knowledge. Especially of our recent past, I'm speaking about the Nazi period, would be necessary because it literally fuels the way we—well I hope that it fuels, the way we conceive of the public space and the way that we behave in it. To give an awkward example of what I mean, I was most offended when wondering through the ancient part of Jerusalem and some Arab people tried to bond with me by making anti-Semitic jokes. So, I would expect anyone who is coming to Germany to understand that we programmatically consider ourselves as an open, liberal society and that he tries to respect this, at least to the point he can. (personal communication, Michael, June 21, 2007).

For me there is an impending pressure to visit sites where certain historic atrocities took place to sense them fully, impress their reality upon myself and absorb a

better sense of understanding of human experience. The legacy of 20th century conflicts and violence is aesthetically present at these sites in the form of memorials, sculptures and other artistic expressions. I find the history of World War II to be presented mostly on an intellectual level, in institutional settings such as museums and memorials. As



17. Kathe Kollwitz, *Mother with her Dead Son* (Replica, dedicated 1993). Bronze sculpture. Photo taken August 2007, Berlin, Germany.

depicted in the work of Kathe Kollwitz, specifically in her sculpture entitled, *Mother with her Dead Son*, a replica of which was in 1993 placed directly under the oculus in the Neue Wache or New Guard House in central Berlin to rededicate the historical building as the “Central Memorial of the Federal Republic of Germany for the Victims of War and Tyranny.” The aesthetic is contradictory in its beauty vs. the horror of its symbolic representation.

The official word on Germany in tourism guidebooks and officially published tourist literature makes very little mention of the human violence of the past century. If the topic is approached at all, it is usually in terms of structures having been rebuilt after being destroyed by allied bombing, like in *The Eyewitness Travel Guide: Germany*

(Egert-Romanowska & Omilanowska, 2003). This guidebook initiates an overview of Germany as follows:

Germany is a wealthy country, whose people are generally regarded as hard-working, determined and efficient. This view stems from the country's industrial might and the smooth functioning of its economy, but it overlooks other important aspects of Germany. These include its important contributions to art and culture, its breathtaking scenery and excellent tourist facilities. (2003, p. 15)

The tourist role has taken me to different regions and cities in Germany for brief and in many respects, superficial explorations during this immersion process. I have traveled widely in the country, especially throughout the Bavaria region many times and to specific cities including: Munich, Garmisch-Partenkirchen, Nürnberg, Regensburg, Rothenburg ob der Tauber, Würzburg, Köln, Potsdam and Berlin. Wiesbaden, the town where this study took place, is very close to Frankfurt and to the Rheingau region, so I have also frequently explored villages in this region.

Local Context for Narratives: People & Place

Narrative collection for this section of the inquiry took place primarily in Wiesbaden, Germany during the Spring and Summer semesters of 2007. There was no commonality of institutional affiliation among participants in Germany. Contact with each participant was the result of networking through institutions and friends. Each of the interviews for this study took place in a different location; some were at the homes of the participants or coffee shops, others in the classrooms of the Logos language school or at the Johannes Gutenberg University in Mainz.

My immersion experience in Wiesbaden, Germany began in December 2006 and continued through August 2007. I had also spent two months of the summer of 2006 in Wiesbaden and had visited the Bavarian region for two weeks a couple of years prior. I intend to return to Wiesbaden in May 2008. My experience in Germany has been in the capacity of: Researcher, tourist, U.S. military spouse, and I have also participated in seminar sessions at the university in Mainz in a doctoral student capacity. Each of these roles has provided me with a different perspective on the culture and has slightly altered my access to and understanding of cultural aesthetic experience.

According to a tourist information brochure, Wiesbaden has a population of approximately 270,000 and a predominantly service-oriented economy. Wiesbaden has been the capital of the German State of Hessen since 1945 but has a history spanning two



18. *Downtown Wiesbaden*. Photos taken July 2007. Wiesbaden, Germany.

millennia (Kurbetriebe der Landeshauptstadt Wiesbaden, 2001). Founded as a Roman military concern, Wiesbaden developed as a popular spa resort for Prussian aristocracy in the 19th century due to the healing properties of the natural springs, or baths, and was home to a number of millionaire residents in the early 1900s (Knorr-Anders, 2007).

These, along with other factors of history, have enriched the architectural elements of the city with layers of well preserved cultural heritage.

Interviews with locals contributed to my impressions of the place. In addition to expatriate participants, I spoke with Germans associated with the culture and education sectors in order to establish insight on the local perspective. I had no difficulties finding local people who were interested in sharing their perspectives with me for this inquiry. My experience with the German people with whom I came into interpersonal contact was overwhelmingly positive and culturally enlightening. Among the Germans I spoke with were a German language instructor, two university theater professors, a member of the national movie age-rating jury, and a freelance culture review journalist. Limitations prevent me from including these narratives in their entirety in this dissertation, but I must mention their participation since it had a significant influence on my thinking and thus impacted the direction in which I directed and understood conversations with the



19. *300* movie still. Image retrieved July 13, 2008 from: <http://bloviatrix.files.wordpress.com/2008/02/300.jpg>

expatriate participants. For example, the member of the national age-rating jury for movies in Germany, Alex (see table 3.3), told me about the process the national board goes through to “protect the youth from being harmed by some visual imagery” (personal communication, Alex, June 24, 2007) in Germany. Alex talked about cultural differences

in concerns about visual and thematic content, especially between Europe and the United States. Contextual issues and attitudes surrounding nudity, sexuality and violence were especially contrasting between cultures in Alex's view. One movie that raised Alex's concern in an interesting way was a popular American film about the Spartan battle of Thermopylae against the Persians.

The Spartan soldiers are depicted, in my opinion in quite a fascist way, a way which connects to the way Leni Riefenstahl, one of the most famous fascist directors, depicted male bodies...so I decided that this connection between this representation of the body and the political statement in this film, dying for the home country, is a very problematic issue because it links to very dark moments of German history. (personal communication, Alex, June 24, 2007)

This conversation was very enlightening in how it raised my awareness of differences in the concept of nationalism and how the cultural historical and political archives play a role on an everyday basis in cultural access and evaluation of aesthetic expression.



20. Leni Riefenstahl, *Young Athlete* (1936). Image retrieved July 13, 2008 from: www.designboom.com/portra

Several of the local participants discussed contemporary practical issues in Germany related to cultural identity, national identity, especially in regards to the large Turkish population that is a current political issue. Eva (see table 3.3), a German scholar and freelance journalist put it this way:

Probably under the surface, and now in politics people are starting to distinguish between ethnic Germans and German citizens which is no longer the same. For example, the largest minority in Germany is Turkish people and they can be Turkish, but German citizens. So if you want to put it in American terms, they can be ethnic Turks, we really have trouble finding words for these issues because we used to not have them. It is a big issue because if you are born in Germany to Turkish parents, you didn't used to be automatically a German, not like in the States. If you are born in the States you are American because of the connection

between citizenship and the territory, so I could have a child in Washington and then my child would be American. Historically I think it was quite important in U.S. history. But in Germany it used to be the other way around, so it is important where your parents are from and that would determine what citizenship you have. Now we have this large minority that was brought into the country originally, or lured into the country, because of cheap workforce in the 1960s and 70s and everyone was thinking, they'll go back after they've done their work in twenty, or ten years or five years and we don't really need to think about immigration. But the people stayed, they didn't go back. Now you have a large community that are not allowed to vote, or used to be, and also had kids here who went to German schools and in a way they have a hybrid identity. But as soon as there is any trouble, any offenses or they want to travel to another country, they don't get a passport from Germany, then need to get a passport from Turkey and it is really mixed up for a number of reasons... That has become a huge identity problem for the Turkish minority because of course they want to have the German citizenship because of the privileges that allows for them, but then their identity is also Turkish, so in a way they don't want to cut off their last tie to their cultural base. So it is kind of an ongoing discussion. (personal communication, Eva, June 25, 2007)

One thing that stayed with me after these conversations and throughout my continuing journey and inquiry was the openness exhibited across the board by the German participants, to talk about problematic issues in a straightforward and critically-minded manner.

Pirkka's Narrative

When you are traveling you see things, you meet people and you go to museums and you get a better understanding. I am absorbing from everywhere but I just don't realize that.

-Pirkka

Background and profile.

Pirkka is a 34 year old male from Finland. He is a lawyer by trade and is living in Wiesbaden, Germany with his wife and one year old child. He is studying German language in an intensive program at a private language school in the mornings and early afternoons. He also studies business English at another private language school in the

evenings. He has come to Germany with his wife, who has a job in a local bank and he is looking for work while they are in Germany for a year and a half. When I met Pirkka at the language school during a coffee break and gained his interest in participating in this study, he had been living in the country for four months. Pirkka has no background in the arts. He has never had any formal arts classes in school. He has also never pursued any art form as a hobby.

This is Pirkka's first time to live abroad and his first time in Germany. However, he has traveled a great deal in Europe. He has also taken many two week vacations in other parts of the world, such as Thailand and Cuba. He is a fluent speaker of Finnish and English and also speaks Swedish and German.

Cultural immersion and the institution.

Pirkka's immersion experience was not affiliated with an institution. He did however, seek out language education institutions as ways to enhance his skills and meet people and it is through contacts in the language classroom that many of his experiences were realized. This section will focus on aspects of cultural immersion which have more to do with prior knowledge and philosophy than with the arts.

On the topic of cultural immersion Pirkka saw his immersion in Germany as an opportunity to experience something new.

My wife got a job here and we had a kid at the beginning 2006 and of course I have a job in Finland, but due to quite good family laws I have the right to go back when my son is three years old, so I have one and a half years of time here. This was such a great opportunity for us because I want to see the world and use my language skills and meet other people. I have said this is my sabbatical year; I like it, because up to my graduation I had worked for ten years in a different job as a department manager. It was quite stressing. I would like to work here and that is why I have to study this German language a little.

I met Pirkka at the language school where I too was attending German language courses. My experience with Pirkka and the other multi-lingual participants has had an impact on my thinking about the status of multi-lingual education in schools in the United States. Fluency in other languages opens up the option of a whole new world of culture. Aesthetic expressions can communicate on a non-verbal level, but ability to understand the language allows for practical verbal and written communication that can vastly deepen the experience and resulting meaning.

I asked Pirkka about his expectations and preconceptions of the German culture before coming to Germany and how his ideas have developed.

I guess I knew what Germany is before I came here, but I guess I've felt different now. I've seen a lot here and I've changed my mind about Germans. They are, for example, not that humorous. Before I thought that they are.

For example, there is a joke about Germans that they are washing their cars every Saturday and their wives are going to the malls. And that is correct, they are really doing that. The joke is that they are washing their cars on Saturday even if it rains.

In Finland we have joke for Germans, when they come to the hotels and they are having breakfast they are taking food with them, that is not allowed, but Germans do that, because they are so cheap. Some of this is true and some not.

While he was talking I found it interesting that Pirkka's examples of stereotypical jokes he had heard about Germans as a cultural group were lost on me, both in terms of my experience of Germans and how the jokes differed from the stereotypes of Germans with which I was familiar before coming to Germany myself. It seems that stereotypical humor relies on cultural norms and expectations in order to marginalize the ways of the other and make the joke funny. In a CNN article reporting on the a study to find the world's funniest joke, psychologist Richard Wiseman from the University of

Hertfordshire determined that one reason we find a joke funny may be that it gives us a feeling of superiority to someone else (CNN article, Oct. 3, 2002). Thus, in order In order to understand how the joke might be funny I had to construct ideas about the norms of Finnish society. If I ever get to Finland, I may find myself looking for evidence of the notions that I have constructed to either confirm or reject them, but I certainly won't take food from the hotel with me when I leave the breakfast table, because I now know that this is not allowed in Finland.

Pirkka continued to talk about his previous ideas of German people.

One stereotype of Germans is that they are drinking beer with their lederhosen, but it is only the Munich people, not all the people in Germany.

Before coming to Germany myself, I had the idea that the lederhosen were a form of traditional dress that would reside in the closets of German men until Oktoberfest, at



21. *Bavarian shoeplätzen*. Photo taken February 2008, Garmisch-Partenkirchen, Germany.

which time they would accompany their dirndl female counterparts with dancing and merriment to festivals planned for domestic and international tourism. This notion proved to be distorted as I learned that lederhosen are a phenomenon distinctive of the Bavaria region, not the whole of Germany. Also, lederhosen are still worn quite regularly to the pubs by many elderly men and children who make shoeplätzen in ethnic establishments. Dirndl's on the other hand seem only to be worn by waitresses in Bavarian beer

halls, in and outside of Bavaria, and are worn in mass during Oktoberfest. Both forms of attire can be purchased in numerous department stores in Germany.

Later Pirkka had the following to say about how he learned through discussing stereotypes openly with his German instructor.

We are talking every day with my teacher about what is typical about Germans and it is very good to have these discussions. I already told you about how Germans are washing their cars on every Saturday morning and how cheap they are in shops and whatever. We have an open discussion, its funny. Of course there are these stories about Finns and Americans of course and it is good to know these things. When you are living in another culture it is really good to know just to get along and to understand.

His knowledge of past history also helps his integration into the German society.

Of course I have done my history lectures in school and I have some thoughts about Germans and their past. Especially the Second World War and what kind of an impact that war had for the Germans.

As a result of my immersion in Germany, I too have paid more attention to the history of World War II. I have reflected on what I was taught in school and through movies in terms of the perspective. I have tried to be aware of how my prior knowledge might impacted my perspective now. Several U.S. friends and family members had expressed opposition to visiting me in Germany due to their feelings about World War II. Although it is widely accepted that Germany was the site of a monumental world tragedy at the hands of the Nazi regime in the 1940s, it is fascinating to me that people my age hold such strong opinions against a people and a place where atrocities happened long before they were born.

In Pirkka's next comments he takes a critical response to what he is learning about the perspectives of many of the people he has met during his time in Germany.

It was a little surprising that some Germans are a little bit racist, but on the other hand they are saying that they like people from Turkey and Poland to come because they are making cheap labor. On one hand they like them, on the other hand they don't like them, so that is a little surprising.

This criticism was a returning theme in a later interview, indicating that Pirkka had encountered more of the same within the space of two months or that the thoughts he had initially had stuck with him and become an integral part of his experience.

One surprising thing has been that I didn't realize that Germans are so racist. I am a foreigner and people from Turkey are foreign here but I have discussions with Germans and I didn't realize that they were so racist or against people from the East. They are telling me that these people are making all the crimes or bad things. I am listening to them and saying come on I am also a foreigner. Why, I don't know. Maybe they are thinking the Finland, Scandinavia is a Western culture.

He went on to connect the last statement to a thought that came to mind on the history of conflict between Germany and Finland after World War II. There is no indication in this format, but when this was mentioned during the interview I was under the impression that this statement resulted from somewhat new or at least refined knowledge that Pirkka had sought to relearn in connection with his immersion experience.

Did you know that in the Second World War we had fought against the Russians with the Germans? Finland was not a fascist country but it was a must for us because we wanted to be independent and we were 500,000 soldiers and Russia had 50 million soldiers and we needed help. So they made a deal with Hitler and you know the rest of the story. At the end of the war we terminated that contract. There were a lot of German soldiers in Lapland, the Northern part of Scandinavia. Our president had made an agreement with Mr. Stalin that we had to get rid of Germans and we had a little war in Lapland and the Germans were running to Norway. That's the whole story.

Historical connections and conflicts seem to be major themes in Pirkka's narrative regarding his prior knowledge and immersion experience in Germany. This is reiterated in the next comment which also illustrates his perceived lack of awareness to cultural aesthetic expressions.

Maybe if you think about the history of Germany, they have had so many wars. With the Romans with France with England and with Russia and with the Americans. I guess that that must have had an influence for their mentality and their behavior. But what kind of influence these arts have, I don't know, it is hard to say.

Although the above excerpts have little to do with the topic of cultural aesthetic expression specifically, I include them as an important depiction of Pirkka's perspective. Pirkka showed a bit of reluctance at first to talk about artistic modes of expression, saying that he knew too little about the subject. However, he did acknowledge that he was learning a great deal about the culture in Germany through immersion and was making many historical connections. He also expressed eagerness to learn more about artistic aspects of culture, which may have been the factor that motivated him to participate in this inquiry.

Aesthetics and education.

Pirkka's narrative was sparse in specific references to formal education. Since he had stated that he had never had a formal arts class in school or pursued any art form as a hobby, his narrative falls interestingly outside of the norm for participants in this inquiry. To get Pirkka thinking along the lines of the topic of aesthetics, I asked him directly about his impression of the arts in Germany.

I don't know that many German artists or painters or composers. I know some, but I guess they are all European artists. What would be the special impression for German artists, I don't know that.

I then asked him to tell me about the arts of Finland to get him talking about things to which we might be able to connect to his aesthetic experience in Germany.

We have a few famous composers. Have you heard of Sibelius? He has done great symphonies. We have a few famous painters, old ones of course. Our modern cultural arts we have film directors. One is a domestic director, Aki Kaurismaki, he makes art films. Another one is in Hollywood, he is Renny Harlin, there is Cliff Hanger with Sylvester Stallone and Nightmare on Elm Street. We have folk dancing with these special costumes. Unfortunately the youngsters don't do that anymore. We have these dance schools and some people are dancing the old folk dances. There is modern singing, popular music, that is an everyday common art. People are going to the theaters and art museums and opera. Perhaps in the countryside they are doing the old tradition of knitting and they have these special parties for it.

Here Pirkka has indicated prior knowledge on aspects from a wide variety of aesthetic expressions from Jean Sibelius, who is a national historic figure in Finland credited with playing a role in constructing national identity through his music, to the practice of everyday crafts and community participation. Pirkka considered these examples to be common knowledge in Finland.

I asked him to tell me about what aesthetic forms he responds to most from his own culture.

I like graphics. We have a summer house in Finland and every year nearby there is an annual graphic museum opening and they are selling these graphics there and it is quite nice. They are pencil drawings of the sea, a tower, they are hand done. Some of them are original, some are copies.

I like to listen to music and look at domestic Finnish films. They are quite boring because we don't talk that much. There is always some kind of a plot, not that good. It is typical that we are laughing at ourselves through these films.

Both examples provided above seem to be valued more because they are experience related than inherently aesthetic art forms. Pirkka's enjoyment of graphics is narratively nestled within the experience of going to the annual museum event and decorating the house with graphics as a result. The Finnish films are valued because Pirkka can find meaning in relating the film text to his personal cultural experience.

Next, I asked to tell me what how he understood the concept of culture.

Culture is art, history, everything that is a normal way of life that the people are doing. It is quite broad. For example, Finland, it must be the language and the manners, I guess. We are quite the same looking as Swedish people and Russians.

Pirkka continued to elaborate on the theme of everyday culture both in Finland and in Germany, taking a comparative approach that indicated a sense of similarity.

Finland and Germany varies not that much, but in everyday life there are some differences.

We have these German TV series and we have a better understanding of how they are in everyday life. You do that when you watch the news, I like to read the German newspaper twice a week.

I have watched a lot of these German love series and they are talking a lot about daily life and tragedy and comedy. But they are quite the same as in Finland. There is not that great difference with these cultures. For us it has been quite easy to come here and start to live here. People are speaking English of course, I can speak a little bit of German, my wife speaks good German. This was a little accident that my wife had a job from here.

The above comments indicate an aesthetic of similarity and comfort with a common European identity. I wondered at this point whether Pirkka's experience in Germany was similar to what I might undergo in a cultural immersion experience to Ontario, Canada, which is just 30 minutes from where I grew up in Detroit, Michigan. However, it seems that the identity differences expressed by Canadians would still contribute to awareness of aesthetic experiences I would notice. I attributed Pirkka's perceptions to a difference in personal interests and educational background, but I also questioned my concept of national identities and cultural differences in Europe.

Thinking with culture, I wondered whether I had developed a keener awareness of differences between European cultures as an American, than perhaps the Europeans had themselves. I flashed back to memories of 5th and 6th grade, learning about culture through social studies and geography books and assignments that involved rigid

categorization and characterization. I remember drawing large maps of geographical regions on sheets of paper that were rolled out onto the floor of the classroom. We were then asked to draw pictures on each country representing the culture of that country. As I recall, Finland was represented in the textbooks and on our hand-drawn maps with very different images than Germany. But I can't simply blame my schooling for my impressions. Tourism literature from the governments of the respective countries, travel guides, Disney's EPCOT center in Florida, the World Shopping Festival in Dubai, U.A.E. and many other experiences have contributed to and reinforced my mental archive of cultural caricature dividing Europe into distinct sub-groups. So I continued to wonder, how can Pirkka consider the aesthetic so common to his own experience?

Cultural aesthetic experience.

Pirkka's narrative thinking about cultural aesthetic experience developed through association with travel experience where he found vast differences in philosophy on life and eventually came around to his current experience in Germany.

Thailand was such a different culture, people were very nice. They were very poor people, that is a developing country like Cuba, they are very poor. The religion in Thailand was Buddhism and that was so amazing. We made a trip to the River Kwai and there was a bus driver who drove us and we had a discussion with him about whether he had ever been abroad and he said he hadn't because he was so poor. But he told us that maybe in my next life I will have money that I can go abroad. And that was so amazing that they are thinking in Buddhism that if they don't make any harm or bad things or any crimes then their next life is so much better, and that was so amazing. We have traveled a lot and that was amazing.

We bought this old game, I don't know the name, but it is a wooden game and that is a piece of art. We went to, maybe that is an art too, the kickboxing arts. They are putting this oil with mint and the whole boxing place smelled like mint. And the food is excellent there.

In line with earlier perceptions, events and objects such as the conversation with the bus driver, the purchase of the wooden game and the kick boxing experience are representative of an everyday aesthetic in Thailand, which was profoundly different and affective in Pirkka's experience.

Profoundness of experience has also resulted in an aesthetic experience powerful enough to inspire several return visits to a particular monument as well as motivation to enhance his knowledge of the history surrounding the structure.

We have traveled here every weekend, maybe that is a cultural act. We are interested in history, my wife and I, and we have been in places where there are monuments. For example next weekend we are going to this monument called "Germania" in Rudesheim. It is a monument for the war of thirty years against the Lutheran and Catholics of the 1600s or 1700s. It is so impressive, 30 meters high and it is so high you can see over the Rhein. We have been in Koblenz and Frankfurt where I noticed monuments, buildings, life, the streets, culture.

You have seen the "Germania," but I would like to study the history of the 30 year war and tell you about it. Would you like to go there, I have a car we can go there. It is a very impressive monument.

I had been to the *Germania* monument and

I was equally impressed by its stature, craftsmanship, and surroundings. Pirkka

was exhibiting enthusiasm in his voice while he was realizing that he did have some aesthetic experience to share. I asked him to elaborate on what he perceives he is learning through his sight seeing ventures.



22. *Germania* monument (Niederwalddenkmal, 1871). Photo taken July 2006, Rudesheim, Germany.

The past of Germany specific to these areas. We are curious to see and there is no other way. Of course you can go into a café and start discussing with other people, but that is not the normal way.

Here, Pirkka reveals that transmissive learning through discussion with locals is possible, but out of context. He continued to provide a specific example of experiential learning through wine culture.

When you are traveling you see things, you meet people and you go to museums and you get a better understanding. I am absorbing from everywhere but I just don't realize that. For example, in this specific area, the Rhineland they have this wine culture and every year in August they have this wine party. We've been there and we have seen this and it tells a lot that these Germans have old roots in wine making and that is very important, that is one example.



23. Vineyards in the Rheingau. Photo taken July 2006, Rudesheim, Germany.

This notion of “absorbing from everywhere” that Pirkka mentions here was of interest to me. I related it to my readings about absorption of

aesthetic knowledge that relate to the 17th century metaphysics theory of Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz. Leibniz discusses ambiguous cognition in what now constitute aesthetic terms, suggesting that our comprehension of beauty subsist in the complexities of this ambiguous, indeterminate state (Hammermeister, 2002). Furthermore, according to Kai Hammermeister’s discussion of German aesthetics, arguments founding the field of Aesthetics by Alexander Baumgarten in the 18th century advocate that to realize “...obscurely, confusedly, or indistinctly is not a failure, and must thus be considered a specific achievement of the soul” (Hammermeister, 2002, p. 9).

I asked Pirkka what it is he notices when he is wandering around Germany taking things in through his senses.

Everything unordinary and old. Old monuments, houses, churches, museums. Finland is not that old country, its been there, but Finland is now 80 years old with independence. Finland has a lot of influence from Germany. Our law system comes mainly from German. I guess we also have impact of art from Germany and France. It is hard to say, but we have lots of influence from Russia and Sweden. We were under Swedish control for over 800 years. Words in our language, foods, fashion, old fashion; now days everyone is having the same fashion in Europe.

Here there is evidence of reinforcement learning about the influences of his own culture through what he is learning in Germany. He continued to express his appreciation for the history represented in the architecture and monuments of Germany.

These monuments and architects that are here are much older. Of course after the war, for example Nürnberg was bombed down and there are a lot of new buildings, but here in Wiesbaden the Allies did not bomb and they have a lot. I have asked our teachers and here are very, very old buildings from the 18th century.

I can not say that I like old things more than new things, I like them both. But the old things are telling me something about the people of this nation. You have to know something about the history, not about Mr. Hitler, but about the Kaiser Wilhelm and from the Roman times, you have to know. Then you realize that there is an old monument or ruins from Roman times. Then you can realize what they have done here and why were they here. That is the whole idea.



24. Model of Nürnberg bombed. Photo taken August 2007, Nürnberg, Germany.

Pirkka expressed that the history helps to provide a sense of the culture for him and helps him to feel more comfortable in Germany. At this point in the interview I was relating my thinking to what Pirkka was telling me about his experience. I was wondering how it is that people go to different cultures and most people don't go to the museum or the library to study the culture, but they leave feeling like they know something about that culture. Perhaps there is something cultural that is absorbed from many different places, something sensual, something aesthetic. Even if someone never talks to a German while in Germany, they may perceive that they understand and derive meaning from having visited the German culture. Thus, to some extent, culture is observed through the aesthetics of the environment. We sense it through our eyes, hear it, use intuition and body language, and connect it to what we know of the history and we form our own opinions. When things happen to us, and we all have different experiences within the culture, it might change our perceptions or it might strengthen our stereotypes.

My thoughts turned to the topic of arts and aesthetic meaning. I wondered from my own experience if it is because of the way art has been taught in schools in the U.S. that aesthetic awareness can become separated from our lives. Aesthetics, which is part of philosophy, is part of our thinking about ethics, about what is good and beautiful, and how we express ourselves. It is always there but it has somehow become removed from our everyday life and the way we cognitively approach our experience.

Furthermore, when we think of culture, we may think of things that happened a hundred years ago, but obviously we have culture now of which we may be less aware. Perhaps a hundred years from now people will be looking at our contemporary culture in historical terms. I try to imagine the ruins of the U.S. military airbase in Wiesbaden

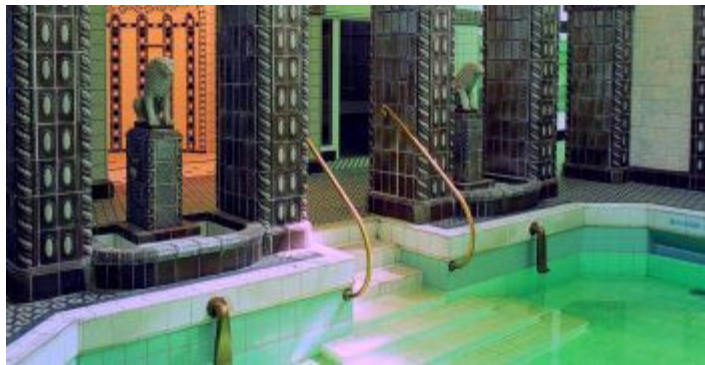
gaining some kind of aesthetic significance several centuries from now and attracting the attention of people to draw upon their historical knowledge and ponder what it must have been like when American culture held influence in this region way back in the 21st century.

Second and third interviews with Pirkka.

Since Pirkka was still unsure of his understanding of cultural aesthetic experience, we scheduled our second interview to talk more about his immersion process. I hoped to draw something from his narrative that would inspire him to show me an example of his learning. Therefore, to begin our second interview, I asked Pirkka to tell me how his thinking about cultural aesthetic experience has developed since our last meeting several weeks prior. He answered by taking a comparative perspective to provide examples of experiences where cultural learning had occurred.

We went to the baths with my wife, that was great because it was an old place and it is a baths and a sauna which is very important for a Finn of course [laugh].

There are great differences, there is a Finnish sauna and a Turkish sauna and the Romans steam room and a Russian steam room with differences in the moisture and the warmth.....The Finnish sauna is dry and it is 80-90 degrees Celsius. The Romans are the stone walls and stone seat.....It is an old place and it is built like an old Roman time bath and there you can bath like Cicero.



25. Wiesbaden thermal baths. Image retrieved July 13, 2008 from: www.germany-tourism.de/.../wellness_hessen.htm

We have a Finnish bathing culture and the Germans have their own bathing culture. The big thing is that when it is open to public sauna or bath we do wear

our swim suits. Only with the family we go nude. But here these Germans are bathing nude. At the beginning it was awkward.

It was a little bit surprising for me because I didn't realize that that kind of a bathing culture existed here in Germany. Of course they have these cities with Bad, Bad, Bad, Bad, but it was a little bit surprising for me. And it is even better than in Finland. Different saunas and different baths, hot water tubes, but they don't have a lake, we have a lake, always a lake, a sauna and a lake. We have 10,000 lakes in Finland.

I immediately felt a connection to Pirkka when he was talking because I too had visited the traditional Wiesbaden thermal baths and felt awkward about the nudity. The Germans consider it unhygienic to wear a bathing suit in the baths and saunas. Swimsuits are forbidden in the traditional baths. There are many places in Germany where a swim suit is required due to mixed populations. I have not been to a swimming pool where clothing is optional. However, I have found myself clothed in the midst of nude crowds numerous times in the spa areas of German hotels. I was surprised to find out that this habit was not the norm in Scandinavia.

Pirkka also reported that he had again visited the Germania monument and resumed to talk about meanings in historical terms.

We visited the "Germania" statue monument in Rudesheim with my father and then we have friends coming and we will go again. It is nearby and it is impressive, it's big, it's huge, it is over 30 meters high, and it tells something about this nation and the people of this nation. That is a monument that was built for the last war between the German and the French, but this time Germany won and that was the beginning of the German nation, the German Reich. They have always struggled in this area; that this belongs to us and that belongs to you. It wasn't the struggle for independence. The Germans wanted to show the other people, especially the French people, how powerful they are at that time. I don't know if now if we have a war and one country has won if they are going to build any statue for that, but at that time it was really important. They also called that statue the guard of the Rhein and that statue looks over the Rhein and says, "Don't come here."

I was thinking about what kind of influence that statue and that war has on these people here today. For example, have you heard that this national feeling here in

Germany from after the war until 2006 was a little bit taboo. Because after the war the country was divided and the German flag was also a little bit taboo. But last year when the German soccer team managed quite well, then they had German flags everywhere. Now they have this national feeling created. That is very important. Those two wars were so bad for this nation.

Here Pirkka's narrative, especially in relation to his earlier comments on this monument, indicates that a sense of curiosity has compelled him to inquire deeper and exhibit acquisition learning in relation to his aesthetic experience.

I discussed with Pirkka that his narrative tends to make a separation between the historical and the modern. As if the wars have built a kind of cultural wall between the present and the past. He contrasts

the historical winners of wars with whether anyone feels like they really win a war these days and the historic impacts of the wars of this country with the coming out of the national spirit in relation to soccer this past year.

Pirkka reflected on and examined his own learning in the process.

I have been thinking about your study and my theme has been that I like to learn the history of the people or the nation and the reason that I am interested is that only by knowing a countries history you can probably understand these people a little bit better and of course this history is shown in statues like this and in the culture, perhaps not in the modern culture but in older culture paintings. There is one graffiti painting in Shierstein it is very beautiful. There are two sides, one is the era of fascism and there are guys with machine guns and with blood dogs and another picture is of beautiful paradise and there is this text of "some things don't change." I can show it to you, maybe that is my picture....Hopefully no one has ruined that painting. It is really beautiful.

Thus, Pirkka decided to show me the graffiti painting to illustrate an example of his cultural aesthetic experience in Germany. A few days later we met and drove to an



26. *Celebrating soccer fans.*
Photo taken after German win during the World Cup playoffs, July 2006, Wiesbaden, Germany.

underpass outside of town so that Pirkka could show me the graffiti art. There was one mural in particular that he pointed out and we spent some time discussing it.

The mural was painted primarily in black and white with grey tones on one side and in color on the other. It covered over half of one wall in the underpass from top to



27. Mural “...Some Things Change, and Some Just Don’t” (partial). Still from video taken May 2007, Wiesbaden, Germany.

bottom and stood approximately 15 feet tall and 40 feet wide. The words “Some Things Change, and Some Just Don’t” were written across the mural in English language, with Old English black font. I asked Pirkka why he thought the words were written in English language.

I think that English belongs to graffiti culture also here in Germany. In Finland, I think all the graffiti’s are in English.

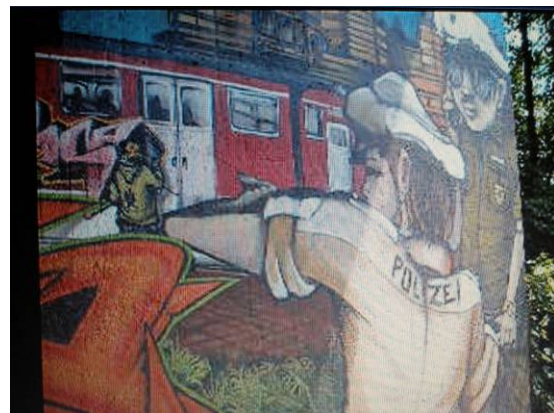
Pirkka began to describe the mural.

Here you can see two different eras, like I have told you; the Nazi era and these

days. There you have Nazi's with machine guns and a dog and there you have the Polizei, the German police and they are talking into their handys or mobiles. I guess the picture is from Wiesbaden because there is the water tower, you know. How should I say, what does this graffiti tell us about? I don't know, maybe the Germans, I don't know. It is still like a taboo maybe to them. The Second World War had a great influence or impact for these people, but now days they make these kind of graffiti's there. There is a little Jewish cross, can you see. It is like hidden there and the flag of America.

Walking toward the colorful, right end of the painting I pointed out the intersecting star on the American flag with the Jewish Star of David. We then began to look at the subject matter of the painting together, discussing what the two police officers were doing. One was on his cell phone and the other, a female officer was pointing at another figure in the painting.

She is showing that there are these hooligans painting graffiti on the train.



28. Mural detail "Polizei." Still from video taken May 2007, Wiesbaden, Germany.

We walked further back toward the left side of the mural, which was the black and white side. Pirkka stopped me to point out one of the black and white figures dressed in a uniform of some sort and stood raising his hand through a wall of crossbars might represent a Jew indicating that the continuation of the bars creating an alley could be representative of the Auschwitz concentration camp. Further along a line of figures took the eye along to a building in the background with a sinister looking thick black smoke rising in the air from the building's chimney suggesting an incinerator. I asked whether there were murals like this in Finland.

No, not that kind of graffiti, there is an important message from the painter, Prisco Sermon....Maybe the youngsters in this country still have a bit of anxiety still, that Germany is some kind of a police state.

I told Pirkka that I found the image to be powerful and I was impressed by the amount of effort that had gone into the planning and production of the painting. He also took me to another nearby underpass where there were more paintings of diverse nature including a series of stylistic faces and other caricature figures, but nothing that seemed to depict a narrative the way that the “Some Things Change...” mural did.

We met once more after the mural viewing to follow up. I asked Pirkka to tell me how things have gone since the last time we met. He began again by thinking in terms of art exhibits and museums and then shifted into summarizing his thinking about the German culture.



29. Mural detail “Incinerator.” Still from video taken May 2007, Wiesbaden, Germany.

We don't have much time to go for art exhibitions or museums or theater and I guess that our level is the normal level... We go deeper and deeper every day, but how I feel on a cultural level, I don't know how to answer that. We are like a tourist still... If I could have work here maybe something would change, but then I would have less time for myself, so it is not so easy. We were in one art gallery in Nuremberg, but what does that mean to us, I don't know, I cannot say. We like graphic arts, we have at home graphics. But I think that it takes a longer time to learn about this culture. We are now expatriates here for only six months and it takes more time. Now I have studied five months of German language and I am full of it. I just want to go back to Finland and take a vacation and see what happens next autumn when we come back. In Finland I can speak my mother tongue and I know the places, I know the people, I know the culture and this is a whole different world, still.

He provided several examples of cultural interactions that were making him feel irritable at this point in his immersion experience.

I was trying to say something and the Germans were always interrupting me. In Finnish culture that is very rude or annoying, but here it is nothing. Our teacher

comes from Great Britain and he was doing the same. I was so fed up with that, really. There I could see a few different cultures. I have heard that is the same in normal business negotiations too, that people are always just interrupting each other. I don't like it. The subject of the discussion it flies everywhere, I don't like that either. That was my experience yesterday.

When we open our mouths and speak German we get good service, but when we speak Finnish in a café and they hear us sometimes maybe they think we come from East Europe. We belong to Scandinavia and they are really wrong, that is really stupid behavior I think.

One funny thing is that the Germans are scheduling their goings and comings. They have a calendar with them and if I would like to go with a German to a movie they have to look up their calendar to see if they have free time. That's funny. Or do you have that also in the U.S.A.? That's odd, I would say. In my working life in Finland of course we have a calendar fully booked, but in my free time, no. They are efficient, the land of efficiency.

After venting on a few points of aggravation, Pirkka began to consider the positive aspects of his intercultural experience and how it offered a wealth of opportunity that he did not realize previously.

My motto today is that life carries. I mean that the decision to come here was a big one for us and I didn't know what to expect, but now that we are here it was a really good choice...you just have to try, you have to give the best you can....here I have also met a lot of people from different cultures in our German class and that has been very joyful and teaching because I haven't had that kind of experience earlier. Of course I have met businessmen from other countries, but this is so different...I am a very social person. Outside of the language school we have been playing football and this guy from Japan is going to have a party. That has been very teaching for me, I have learned something about myself. This is so new for me, in Finland I am not that social, if there are a bunch of people in the same room, why should I talk to them? But I am curious.

In this mode he began discussing things about German culture that he admired and considered how his culture could be influenced.

German culture and Finnish culture are European culture, of course there are differences. But I couldn't imagine that there are so many village parties and village wine parties. I thought that maybe in Finnish we should be more proud of our own summer parties. We have these little village parties of course all over, but we don't attend. Maybe later in the evening we will go and we have these national outfits and I feel they are from the 17th century, but maybe we should be

more proud because these Germans they are doing that every weekend. Have you watched the TV they have the singers from Bavaria every night with their Lederhosen. That was new for me...If that is also for tourist then they are very smart.

Finland is quite a young nation, Germany has longer roots and that must have an influence or impact on the arts...They have this Kaiser age before the World Wars and they have famous composers and painters and this is a much bigger country they have 80 million people and we have only five. I'm not an expert but I have read that most of our artists have lived in Germany or in France and Paris was a ghetto for artists, maybe it still is. Maybe we have an influence from Germany into our arts culture.

Pirkka had followed up on our mural viewing experience with some additional research and questions to his German language instructor.

We have seen this graffiti art that was very identified with the Second World War and I guess these wars still have an influence in the modern culture. I have looked at the history from the internet a few weeks ago because I didn't know it and I wanted to look at it...I asked my teacher if it was kind of a taboo to have a discussion with a German about the history of World War II and he said no, but the younger people don't know that history. Of course they have to teach that history in the school, but I thought it was a taboo that I couldn't do that, have a discussion about that.

I told Pirkka that my aesthetic experience in Germany had developed my interest in the era surrounding the two world wars. I am not so interested in the history in terms of political actions and leaders as the textbooks tell it. My aesthetic experience makes me think about the general population and what they must have experienced.

Kathe Kollwitz's charcoal drawings flashed through my mind as Pirkka continued to talk about his aesthetic experience when he walks through the local streets.



30. Kathe Kollwitz, *Untitled* (c. 1924). Image retrieved July 13, 2008 from: www.earlywomenmasters.net/.../index.html

If you walk here in Wiesbaden or you walk in Mainz you can see difference because Mainz was a much more strategic place for the Germans at that time and so they bombed that town. Wiesbaden was only not that important and we have here old buildings.

Beginning to conclude his thoughts, Pirkka raised the issue of money in relation to cultural experience.

I would say that if someone has this opportunity to go abroad it is always beneficial if you have time and money and opportunity. People say that you see the world, but what does that really mean? You see places, you meet people if you want. For me it has been very important and very living. I was thinking about cultural experience and if it just a question of money. If you want to go to a theater or to an art exhibition you have to have money. At least 5, or 10 Euros, or 50 Euros. Of course there are free exhibitions but what is then the quality of that exhibition? This city is a place for older people, for the pensioners. I guess that they have money, they are traveling and they are going to the museums and opera and stuff like that. We could afford to go to an art exhibition but we don't have time.

Pirkka's statements made me reflect on the books I had been reading about tourism and social class and the different kinds of experience people are looking for in regards to tourism. He continued to probe the concept, trying to make sense of cultural aesthetic expression free from economic constraints. His imaginings took him far from Europe, to rural Africa.

If you think about a small village in Africa or something, where they don't have electricity or anything and they are just playing with their drums or guitar, that is culture. If you a poor person in the industrial world or in Africa, you are making culture every evening.

I told Pirkka that I was thinking about how contextual all of the cultural concepts we had been talking about were. I considered social class issues in the U.S. and how the concept of social class in a non-industrialized country might be expressed differently. There is more implied in the term social class than just socio-economic class, but both are factors that impact access and exposure to cultural aesthetic experience. Considering Pirkka's

statement, if someone who has not experienced electricity were to come to Germany the things that would strike them might be more concerned with the modernization of the industrial world, rather than the aesthetic remains of two world wars.

That could be one reason that Wiesbaden and Frankfurt don't have that much to offer to us in terms of a different experience than what we have in Finland. We have an opera in Finland, we have theater in Finland, of course we don't have the same masterpieces in Finland as they do in Germany, but if we were in Tokyo or China or somewhere else, I think we would have done more cultural experiences.

Pirkka's comments made me think about how the tourist gaze is most aware of the spectacle, when something is quite out of the ordinary it presents entertainment. The first things that come to mind are these obvious spectacles and these tourist things that are put there for this purpose; for economic gain. The everyday lived experience in Germany, the small subtle things are also something that reveals culture. These subtleties may be what actually reveal culture vs. what is just an example of specific experience based on how much money is in your pocket, or because you just happened to be in a certain place at a certain time.

Significant themes in Pirkka's narrative.

In this narrative Pirkka tends to characterize cultural arts and aesthetic expressions as artifacts of essentially historical significance. He focuses on artistic forms and aesthetic expressions in Germany that are readily accessible in his everyday life or that he came across in the capacity of a tourist. Art forms such as architecture and sculptural monuments impressed upon him sensitivity to the historic dimension of culture. Aesthetic expressions such as graffiti murals and bathing culture are similarly noticed and treated as representative of historically situated contemporary culture.

The institutions role in Pirkka's immersion was ancillary. His narrative was unique in that he acknowledged no significant prior artistic interest or aesthetic understanding. Thus, the process of participation in this research may have played a role in establishing his understanding of aesthetic experience and influenced his attention more profoundly than may be the case with more artistically experienced participants.

Pirkka's exposure and access to cultural art and aesthetic expression was primarily in a tourist capacity. His prior knowledge of history lent itself to how he prioritized his exposure and influenced his meaning making. He also mentions that economic issues played a role in determining his access to forms of high art or institutional aesthetic expressions.

Awareness of his own learning through aesthetic forms emerged in Pirkka's narrative and seemed to develop into a motivating factor leading him to enhance his own inquiry and seek additional sources of information. This process was primarily intellectualized but still lead to indications of affective learning characterized by a gain of respect for the culture and a sense of how he fits in comfortably within the cultural context.

Emerging themes in Pirkka's narrative included mention of a perceived East/West dichotomy in interpersonal relations involving perceptions of the cultural other in the Central and Eastern European context. However, the most prevalent emerging theme in Pirkka's narrative is the relationship between learning about culture aesthetic expressions and learning about history. This theme emerges in 17 different contexts throughout the narrative. Pirkka's discussion of historical aspects of culture and aesthetics intersects with references to war ten times, including his presentation of aesthetic experience to me in

the second interview. This is perhaps a probable trend, considering Pirkka's employment of a predominantly historical lens to interpret his cultural aesthetic experience in Germany. The aesthetic aspects of historic conflict raised by Pirkka's narrative will be the focus of the concluding analysis here.

Conflicts included in Pirkka's discussion were the Thirty Years War between the Germans and French, earlier wars with the Romans and other nations, World War I and World War II. Seven of the ten references to conflict concerned World War II. Comments about war intersected with interpretation of aesthetic experience in four of the seven occasions. The art forms discussed were architecture, sculptural monuments, ruins and graffiti painting. Architecture, sculptural monuments and ruins typify an expression of collective historical identity, while graffiti painting in this case is a more individualistic and perhaps political expression. Pirkka accessed these experiences in a tourist and situational capacity and acknowledged them academically in terms of connecting to prior knowledge, and empathetically in an effort to understand the way people interacted in the past. The value assigned to the aesthetic expressions discussed was primarily historical, perceived in accordance with an art within traditions viewpoint, in other words the objects are considered aesthetic based on their role, presence or absence in association with historic events. Pirkka's meaning making process is indicative of reinforcement and convergent learning conveyed in an explorative manner.

Lara's Narrative

I think that the aesthetics of this culture are very deep. But I think it's like the people, it is difficult to get in, to understand.

-Lara

Background and profile.

Lara is a 42 year old female from Brazil studying for a Master's in Science at the University of Mainz in Mainz, Germany. She currently resides in Wiesbaden, Germany, and had lived in Germany for 7 years at the time of our initial meeting. I met Lara through a mutual friend who had told Lara about my study and provided me with Lara's contact information after Lara had expressed interest in participating in this study.

Lara's artistic interests include formal courses and professional work as an actress. She has used her acting experience in her education work and taken courses in primary school education through the arts. Her informal talents include music and she enjoys playing flute and guitar.

She has lived abroad in the United States and Germany. Her stay in the U.S. was for a year and a half when she was 8 years old, while she lived with her father who was there for work. As previously mentioned, her intercultural experience in Germany has been 7 years. She originally came to Germany as a result of a romantic relationship with a German who she met in Brazil. She has also visited many other countries in Europe including Italy, Portugal and Spain. She speaks Portuguese and English and some German. Additional background information about Lara is provided in table 3.1

Cultural immersion and the institution.

At the beginning of our first interview Lara asked for what I was referring to as cultural arts. I explained that cultural arts, as I am referring to them are very broadly defined and I am exploring how cultural aesthetic expressions inform us while we are learning about another culture, immersed in that culture. I continued that I am interested

in hearing about things she notices and has access to in Germany and how that influences her learning, or what she perceives she is learning about German culture.

She then asked me about what I am studying and began to tell me about herself and her experience in Germany. Lara's cultural immersion is linked to an educational institution where she studies language. However, she implied that she takes classes primarily to maintain her student visa, allowing her to remain in Germany. Thus, education is an institution of learning that also plays a complex, compulsory political role in Lara's residency situation.

Lara began our conversation with what I perceived as an effort to acknowledge my cultural identity and establish a connection through divulging her experience as a child, living in the U.S. for a year. She told me the people were welcoming and she was made to feel special in a small town in West Virginia where everybody knew each other in the neighborhood. She attributes much of her sense of the experience to the fact that she was young and had the support of her parents. Also her parents were invited as guests to work there.

Cultural immersion for Lara is a learning process that challenges her way of thinking, interacting, and experiencing the world, as indicated in the next passages.

I think if you are in a different culture you will be learning the whole time you are living there. I have this fantasy, maybe it is not true, but I think that if I were living in the States it would be easier for me because in America life is similar. Even if it is South America/North America, there is a way of thinking that is similar. I think that Europe is already something completely different. Germany inside Europe is already an exception within the exception.

I always wanted to live for a little while in Europe, but I never thought about Germany because I would chose England or Spain or Italy, but because of the language too. I had no idea what Germany would be like...Here I think there are lots of nice things, I love it, but it is quite difficult.

The highlights I think of my experience when I just arrived, it was the Spring and I've never seen, in Brazil we don't have these four seasons. So the Spring is something for me that is just magic...In Spring the smell is different and people get different and in the summer they start to be friendly, more friendly than normally. The atmosphere, I think people are more glad, happy, they smile, I think it's nicer.

Her narrative is characterized by comparative observations between her perceptions of society in Brazil and how she interprets and internalizes her experience as an outsider in Germany. Her immersion is not only a learning experience, but also a vehicle to what she perceives as a better way of life.

Something that I really like here is that I have the feeling of freedom. For example you are safer here than in Brazil because of the violence. This is a fact in Brazil. You were on your car driving, if you stop at the light you should not open the window especially at night because someone could come and steal your car, especially the street boys, the street kids and they come to ask for money sometimes. If they are really nervous or hungry or were doing drugs or something they will try to hurt you. They get a piece of a knife or a piece of broken glass and they say give me your money or otherwise I will cut and they put it here. It is quite dramatic, but it is something when you are immersed in that culture you learn to live with and I have learned to live with it because when I was a child it was not like this. It developed very fast actually from the last ten years.

Because she had been living outside of Brazil for a number of years, I asked if she had any experience with these perceived changes in Brazilian society.

Only once I had, when I was going to work a boy asked me for money. I said no and I didn't see the knife but he said I have a knife here, you better give me all that you have. And they change their voice. They come, "Oh, please give me..." and then its like, "You better give me now," and it's like a completely other person. They say bad names to you. So I gave him, but I had only a little purse with coins and that's all I had, but I gave him. But I always drive with the windows closed.

So this year for example I come from work and I can come walking from the bahnhof until here. I was with my niece here and we came back home from a bar and she said, "Oh my god, this wouldn't be possible in Brazil." I said that is why I love to live here because you have this freedom, okay something bad can happen but the ability is lower, much lower than in Brazil. Also with the bicycle, I can ride by bike everywhere at night and during the day and the cars won't go over

you...So all these possibilities to be a real citizen. This for me is a great point here, it is like they are really civilized in some ways.

Lara's comments about her immersion experience in Germany gave me a sense that she perceived her situation in some respects as a sacrifice. Here she talks about her travels in Europe, her sense of homesickness and the complexities of cultural perceptions entrenched in historical and hegemonic identity conflicts.

Italy, I loved it I had a big dream to go there. Portugal, I had no interest to go there, when I went it was like I was home again because it was so good it was the same language. I was very homesick at the time, I couldn't go to Brazil, so I went there. In Brazil most of the people don't care about Portugal because we were colonized and they are like, "Fool, why does somebody go to Europe to see Portugal there are so many better places in Europe to see." Some people think like this, so I was also not that interested in Portugal. But when I got there I said, "Oh my god, this is where we started, like it is inside me too, I have this in me." There are a lot of black people on the street and this mixture on the bus. It is much more chaotic and I felt that life was pulsing there. I don't feel it here, I don't feel life. I don't feel blood like pulsing. So it was very nice. For five days that I spent there it was feeling like home.

Here it appears that for Lara, learning about the German culture involves an attempt to understand the mindset of the people as a generalized group. Interestingly, she partakes in generalizing despite her interpersonal experience to the contrary, in order to make meaning from the distancing she perceives as an inherent aspect of German society.

I know lots of Germans who are very nice and very open and very easy going, but I mean the mass, most of the people are and I think that the foreign people also get this way of living, the German way of living, because you get a little bit colder. I feel that I got more colder, more rational.

This phenomenon, ok we are civilized, you are allowed to live here, we don't have prejudice with you, but don't come close, okay. You work, I work, the rules are this. Stay in your place, I'll stay in mine, but don't come and complain. I feel like this.

Lara mentioned language as a significant component of her immersion experience. Here she refers to learning the language as somewhat burdensome.

I think that the thing is that you are required, you have to speak German here because you are living here but also, oh they are very, they have a lot of ability, the Germans in learning foreign languages because when they go anywhere they learn the language, most of them. But it is funny that when you are living here, I had to learn German, otherwise I wouldn't develop myself, I wouldn't be living here... And it is funny that this is the only place in the world where people speak German, here Switzerland and Austria and they want you to speak German by any means.

Here her words indicate a change from resistance to acceptance of the native cultural expectations, resulting in learning gains.

I think that it's fair if you are living here for eight years and you want to relate to the people, and you have to work in Germany so you have to speak the language. I was just lucky that I can speak English because I learned it as a child and this helped me a lot, but my learning German got a little slower because I only spoke English in the beginning, but then I stopped and started learning.

Lara's narrative offered qualified generalizations reflecting her thoughts about her immersion experience in Germany.

I don't want to say that the Germans are like this, or like that, but it is funny—it is a symptom of the people who come to live here, they all hate the German culture in some ways. They speak bad, bad, bad, bad, but then they don't go away, because in some ways this country provides you stability and it is also a part of the people who live here. It provides you a stability that you know that tomorrow is going to be the same thing. In some ways it's good—but tomorrow is going to be the same thing and like, don't come too close to me. I am working, I function, you have to function and that's it. They are only close within the family, of course there are lots of exceptions.

It intrigued me that each of my participants in Germany had expressed a different attitude about the individual Germans they had relations with, from their experience with the society as a whole. Hearing this from others raised my awareness of this tendency within my own thoughts. I began to consider that frustrations inherent within the immersion process may develop contextual contradictions, as a psychological defense mechanism when the individual is confronted with change. I combined this with contemplation of the legitimacy of differences: Between the perceptions of interpersonal dynamics and the

participant's sensitivity to what may be intimidating collective forces of the society. The tension of these differences may impact the intrapersonal processing of the individual's immersion experience: The wider societal interaction taking on some essential qualities as a result of its more oppressive context than the interpersonal interaction.

The following excerpts provide insight into Lara's outlook on the character of German society at this point in time in her immersion experience.

They are very civilized and rational and functional, you know everything works out good here, but they don't make a bridge between emotional and rational. It's like one thing or another.

At the bus stop, I used to smile. This is my fantasy, but I think that it's true. They think that you want something from them if you smile just because you are a friendly person. I am friendly, but you learn not to be friendly. You learn to be cold, not to look at people. I used to go to the bus stop and smile and it was very rare that somebody smiled back to you. They looked like you were borderline crazy, because there are a lot of crazy people here that take the bus. I think this is good, it is very civilized that they let the people who have any kind of mental disease be independent and they do things. There are a lot of them on the bus and they speak alone. The bus is my study area, and the train, because I am most of the time on the bus or in the train. I've learned a lot there. But they think that if you smile to them you are a little bit crazy or you want something, because it is not normal to smile.

Lara's honesty about her frustration and generalizing perceptions interested me. I had sometimes come to similar generalizing thoughts about German behavior in my immersion and wondered how much of this perception was a result of stereotype prejudice that was pre-learned, prior to any contact with the people. Caricature images flash through my mind from movies, cartoons in history books, newspapers and television shows that I encountered in the U.S., reminding me of the biased lens created by my cultural archive.

Aesthetics and education.

Lara's discussion is not prolific on the topic of aesthetics in relation to education. Two brief quotes summarize this topic in the narrative.

I studied education in Brazil. Here I am studying languages. I would like to make research about children who learn two languages: How does it work for the child in her brain. I have a specialization in psychology and education for kids who had difficulty with reading, emotionally, not physical, but like an inner disability. They couldn't learn because of emotional aspects. I had a clinic in Brazil and I was working with treating those kids. It was like a therapy, we could use theater, playing games, talking, drawing...someway to improve, to start learning to get over this impediment of learning. I did this for ten years; before I graduated I was helping a psychologist help the kids with the homework.

So it is funny that here I stopped doing everything that I was doing in Brazil, first because of the language. I used to be an actress in Brazil for 15 years. I had to stop for education because you don't earn money in Brazil with theater. Though we were professional we just got the money to pay the theater and because it was good for my soul. So I need it like a therapy for me.

Lara's remarks about her theater experience indicate that her artistic endeavors are understood phenomenologically, a distinctively aesthetic perception that is felt more than rationalized. Her artistic sense of identity seems to be something forsaken for her existence in Germany.

Cultural aesthetic experience.

Lara recalled her perceptions of the German aesthetic from her initial impressions and expectations, coming from Brazil.

When I just arrived I thought everything was very nice, like somehow you don't see houses falling down. They have this symptom of reconstructing that I think is crazy, but I understand because of the wars. But they are always reconstructing things. This already in the beginning annoyed me, because I thought I was going to see like, a first world. I had no idea. I had never been to Europe before, so you think that it is developed—it is the first world. And the first thing I saw was the

autobahn being reconstructed and it didn't let me see the view. That annoyed me, it was like it is pollution for me because I had a big expectation.

When I went to live where I was living in Klopenhiem, it was on the woods and then I really said, "This is like a dream," because it was in spring and we had the cherry trees and little rivers and everything like in a film, that I have never seen. It was wonderful and I thought that the houses all together, all like each other, looked nice and a lot of green and everything. Then I started to see that all together in autumn, and in winter it changes completely. I thought that it was very sterile. It was like, there was no creativity. And the people as well, I started to see them like this.

The second quote indicates a shift in Lara's perceptions after a period of a few months, from a 'dream' to a 'sterile' environment. According to theories of culture immersion experience, including the one put forth by the U.S. government in the literature cited in the previous section, such changes in perception are a natural part of the psychological process. However, it is interesting how these perceptions took shape in Lara's aesthetic perceptions.

To get a better sense of Lara's point of reference I asked her to describe the Brazilian cultural aesthetics. She began with describing her sense of the people.

People [Brazilians] are very warm, that is what I feel from our culture. The codes are very simple to understand so you don't need to observe too much. It is more of a body culture. It's more passionate. They are more friendly, for sure.

Lara went on to express her phenomenological sense of the Brazilian cultural aesthetic, with a particular regard for samba.

There is something that comes from the ground, I can't describe it. The samba comes from this—from the beat of the black people, of the slaves that started there. And the basonova, there is a special like cult music and it became famous because the high class in Rio started to play it in a cool way with their guitars, so it got very famous in the world. The fundament of the samba is the drums and the music instruments of rhythm that in the African religion is used when they receive their gods. So it comes from the slaves and together with the Portuguese European culture and the Indian culture from the native Brazilians. So it has become this, but is very much still something that you feel; the culture comes from the ground. It belongs to the ground in some ways.

This quote, with its reference to the culture coming from the ground, reminded me of a passage from *Art on My Mind* by bell hooks. Hooks is referring to an installation piece by the artist Alison Saar entitled, *Fertile Ground*. Hooks relates to the work in the following way:

Enslaved black bodies could care for the soul by forging intimate connections and communities with the land. The ground is precisely the space where the dehumanized aspect of the self can be laid to rest and an integrity of being that transcends the physical plane can be claimed and affirmed. This understanding of the power of the earth, present in the religious beliefs held by the Native American dwellers and the first Africans who journeyed here, not as slaves but as seekers, is a legacy of spiritual resistance that continues into the present day. (hooks, 1995, p. 18).

I do not know whether Lara had been exposed to hooks ideas in the past, or whether Lara's words stem from a common expression of sensitivity in the Brazilian cultural discourse, which may have also influenced hooks. Perhaps neither is the case, and this sense of culture coming from the ground stirs within those who aim to express a certain shared phenomenon.

Lara continued to discuss her feelings of longing for a sense of belonging.

The thing that I most miss from my country is the culture. For this I would go back, only for this. The culture has given me a form, like I am what I am because of this culture.

Her concept of culture turned quickly to cultural expression through music.

Many people deny our culture and they like to hear music in English. I like a lot of music in English, but all my CD's I have they are all Brazilian music. When I

came to live here I had a backpack with all my CD's because I was bringing the thing that was most precious for me, more than books, it is the music of Brazil.

When I was a teenager it was like a shame to like the samba. You were only allowed to like American music or disco music and if you say you like samba it was like dodgy or redneck. So this mentality is still very strong in the whole of Brazil.

For Lara, Brazilian music has a special aesthetic that she experiences so strongly that it is like a piece of her culture she can take with her to continue her participation in that culture. In the second quote above, there is an indication of an ongoing, perceived struggle to keep an authentic experience with Brazilian culture alive through a connection with samba music.

She continued to describe her perceptions of the expressive value inherent in the aesthetic expressions of Brazilian culture.

We don't need to be recognized by the world, this culture is so intense and so rich that we don't need so much more than this. It is very expressive, very rich, and very self-sufficient. We don't need anything else. Everybody is aware of what is going on in the world, but even the big artists from Brazil, they go to New York, they come here to Europe, of course they need to recycle and exchange with other cultures, but what is made there is enough for the people that are there.

As she was talking, her focus began to widen from Brazilian cultural aesthetic to a global cultural aesthetic:

The style has changed all over the world, it is like this fast food culture and I think it is a pity and this is a phenomenon all over the world that I see. People just complain that people just repeat themselves. There's nothing new, but this is how it is right now and Brazil is also like this in some ways. But you can find good things in this as well, like now you can have access to anything you want. If you don't find it on E-Bay, it doesn't exist. So you have to know how to select. There is a lot of junk; there is a lot of good things.

She then focused on her experience with culture in Germany. She talks about music, dance and festivals in Germany with a tone of disenchantment.

When I got here I got a little bit closed to culture in general. I didn't go to the theater. I do go to movies sometimes, but music, I hate German music. It doesn't sound good to me—only the Christmas carols in German, but I prefer them in English.

My neighbor is a ballerina, I always go to see the dance. There is not one German in the company, isn't that strange. All the parts of the world you can imagine there is somebody, but there isn't a German. Even the director is from Belgium, so nobody; there isn't a German dancing in that company. I was thinking, isn't it weird.

This culture they have festivals in the summer that are quite nice with the wine and atmosphere, but I think it is not my style.

Lara responds to contemporary theater in German culture as acceptable.

I have seen some plays that are very good here because they have a lot of discipline and they really get into the character. There is also a TV channel that is only theater and you can see many plays. This I think is okay

Assimilating to cultural ways of dressing in order to blend in is addressed in a comparative manner. For Lara, codes of dressing are connected to behaviors and interpersonal interactions, specifically interactions with the opposite sex and her self-concept, as indicated by her reference to clothing fashions in Brazilian culture and the differences in her experiences in Germany and Italy.

The fashion here, in the beginning I felt like an E.T. because I felt like I didn't belong to this place. I did not find a style for dressing in this culture. Sometimes I think I am underdressed, sometimes I'm over dressed. They really look for this here. When you come to a place first they look at your shoes and the shoes are like your passport. But it doesn't matter if it is nice or not, it has to be clean.

I changed a lot because in Brazil the clothes are tight and it's okay that the jeans are very tight and it doesn't matter if you are overweight or not, but everybody wears like that. And you pass on the street the men will say something. Here, the men won't look at you, nobody looks at you. In the beginning I thought there was something wrong with me, but the day I put my feet in Milan I thought, I am alive again because immediately they are like the Brazilians, the men were looking at you and people were talking.

I took a long time to adapt, and normally I don't wear tight pants. In Brazil we leave our tummy free, but not here. Even in the summer I won't do this. It's like a

little bit conservative. Either they are very crazy with the painted hair, the punk, or they are conservative. I like it, I don't have problems with the mode here, I got used to it. I went first to the shops and I couldn't find anything I like here. But, within this 'no taste,' if you start to look you find—and this is learning; how to find.

I asked Lara to tell me about how she would describe or present the German culture aesthetically to someone who had never been to Germany. A tone of excitement entered the conversation when she began to discuss aesthetic experience with the castles along the Rhein River and Roman ruins in Mainz. She had shared this experience with her visiting aunt. Here Lara provides an example of an aesthetic experience that captured her imagination and prompted her to think differently about human existence.

We went to see the castles, I love the Rhein. It is like a gift to me that there is the Rhein there.

I love to think that Brazil is only 500 years, but here even the Neanderthal people were here and they have improved a lot, these pre-historical human beings. So, they were here and in Brazil they never found a human being, only big animals. I love to think of when those castles and people were living there that Columbus hadn't even gone on his trip yet to find America. I love the Middle Ages, it must have been very hard life at this time but in my imagination it is like magic, so I like it.

I took her to see the Roman ruins in Mainz under the mall because for us it is like you learn this in school and it is so far away from us, the castles and these things from the Romans.

Lara's access to ancient architectural expressions such as castles and the Roman ruins is referred to in a tourist capacity. Her response is romantic, indicating a sentimental historical value that is tied somewhat to her school experience, indicating that the objects are considered aesthetic because they are talked about within the tradition of art. The



31. Eltz castle (11th century). Photo taken July 2006, Münstermaifeld, Germany.

meaning she makes of her aesthetic experience is reinforcing of prior knowledge, but to a lesser extent than it is affective; impacting her attitude and awareness on an emotional level.

I shared Lara's fascination with both the castles and the Roman ruins to which she refers. The ruins were found in 2000 during construction of a mall in the center of the city of Mainz. I was captivated with these ruins on three aesthetic levels; the aesthetic and significance of the ruins themselves, the aesthetics of the high-tech presentation created by museum curators, and the consequence

of the situational presentation and juxtaposition with contemporary commercial society. To preserve the ruins and serve the local community with both a museum and a shopping mall, the ruins were built into a museum in the basement



32. *Magna Mater Temple* (c. 100 A.D.). Image retrieved from: http://www.livius.org/a/germany/mainz/mainz_2.html

of the mall. This seeming contrast of the ancient with contemporary consumerist culture appears as a unique complimentary attraction which appears to draw many visitors that might not otherwise show interest in the ruins if contained within museum specific structure. I have visited this museum on four occasions and been provided an explanation by curators in German language twice. The preserved 3rd century A.D. ruins have been identified as a temple dedicated to two pre-Christian faiths, worship of the Egyptian goddess Isis and the Magna Mater (Great Mother).

Lara refers again here to the element of nature as a positive and deliberate aspect of German culture.

Another thing I really like here is that in five minutes you have access to nature. I love the way they have preserved here and this consciousness of not letting everything be dirty. There is a gap in Brazil between nature and the city. I think because we are kind of young still and we had a different history of being colonized and not fighting against the colonizers and we just took everything they said to us as the truth. And this made the mentality of the aristocratic Brazilians and this is the mentality that dominates the people that are up in the governments. They think that everything that is from the folk and the people is not good and nature is not good. So when you build a city, they just destroy the green and it is very different from here.

Here, Lara has made a connection between folk culture and nature. She has a tendency in her narrative to dichotomize the Brazilian people and culture with a post-colonial government and a globalization trend.

Lara told me that the German culture expresses itself more intellectually, while Brazilian culture is more sensually expressive. She continued with the following examples and explanations.

I think that the aesthetics of this culture are very deep, but I think—like the people; it is difficult to get in, to understand. For example, I don't like classic music, but I think it is their highlight in some ways and also opera. I like philosophy, but even the literature here is so deep, everything is so intense, it is work; you have to be educated in this culture. It is not something easy that you just get. What is easy, I don't like here; like the pop German. I don't like it like I like the pop American. I grew up listening to it, so I am educated in some ways to the pop American, but the pop German I don't like. Even the folk music from Bavaria, it is not something to hear everyday.

Here they take emotion and they transform this, they symbolize this with an intellectual impression of it. You almost don't see any emotional impression.

Thus, Lara characterizes German culture with an intellectual aesthetic that relies on a specific and difficult to access, knowledge base or cannon. What she perceives of as the elitist nature of German high culture appeals to her here, more than what she perceives of as common or popular culture, which is more readily accessed. A similar aloof disposition, which she seems to struggle with interpersonally in her interactions with

people, informs the aesthetic to which she responds with some semblance of respect and admiration.

Second interview with Lara.

For our second interview Lara told me she wanted to show me the aesthetic of German coffee shop culture. She took me to a coffee shop in Mainz that was one of her favorites and a place where she perceived she had learned about aesthetic aspects of the German culture. The coffee shop was housed in an old building that had originally been a hospital.

I like this architectural style, there is a lot of history here inside. They have used the space for modern life. It is a mixture between history, old times and modern.

There are many places here that they try to renew like Schloss Johannisburg and it tends to be like a place that becomes very traditional. Old people go there to have their cake or a glass of wine and it's like strange. Here I think it is very easy going, people just come here and sit down and there are lots of magazines so you can read.

When I discovered that this used to be a hospital and how it worked and the river was passing just down the window and they had only the window to throw everything on the Rhein, every waste. I like these internal arches. In summer I wouldn't come here, but in the winter it is very cozy and it is nice.

After the university sometimes I would come here with my friends and we would have apple pie with coffee and cappuccino and that is why I thought of bringing you here. The people who come here are very relaxed and easy going.



33. Coffeeshop. Photos taken October 2007, Mainz, Germany.

Lara explained that she first encountered this coffee shop with a German friend and liked it so much that she began inviting her friends to meet there. She talked about another coffee shop that we had tried to visit first, but it was not open. That one had a different style, with a flea market or antique market theme where all the dishes were old and different from each other.

On the way to the coffee shop, Lara told me a story of how she started going to coffee shops when she first came to Germany and why she perceives this as a particular and aesthetic dimension of the culture. I asked her to elaborate on this.

In Brazil we don't have this habit of going to coffee shops. We either go to where people have beer on the beach and we have sea food there and stay there, or we go out pubs at night. But most of them have air conditioning or they are outside. It is not so important this culture of going to have a coffee somewhere. Though we drink a lot of coffee and espresso, but it's standing up, we drink one and we go. You don't sit down you don't take your time. You don't spend five hours in a coffee shop.

When I just came here, this I thought was very European. I don't know if in the States they have this. My ex-boyfriend used to come in to the coffee shop in Wiesbaden and have a glass of wine and stay there the whole afternoon reading a magazine. I was like, what is this, I can't understand this, it was so boring for me to do this. He could do this alone and he didn't need anybody. I always said, "okay, you stay here and I'm going to go shopping." Then when winter came and this was the only place we had to meet friends in some ways. So we should meet somewhere and here in Germany you don't invite people to your house so much so we had to have a common place in the coffee shops. So I started to see and know all the coffee shops and I think it's nice, I like it.

My neighbors, she's from Spain and he's from London and they like this, they have this hobby, it's a new thing to go and check new coffee shops. Now I want to go to a new one that is going to be opening in Wiesbaden on Thursday. We just go trying, trying, trying and it's nice.

As I was considering whether I thought of coffee culture in an aesthetic manner, I browsed the menu and thought about how coffee cultures in different parts of the world influence each other. As an American, I had to ask what constitutes an "American coffee"

in Germany. The waiter seemed confused that I should have to ask and responded that American coffee must be a common concept since it is the same in this coffee shop and at the German Starbucks which is an American corporation. The Starbucks phenomenon has played a huge role in bringing coffee culture as we know it today to the U.S.; with no less than 30 different coffee options on the standard drink menu. Furthermore, like Lara, I had experienced coffee culture in different societies and agreed that it does seem to exhibit aesthetic differences, at least in terms of cultural attitude, beyond the menu items.

As we proceeded with the interview, Lara continued talking about her cultural aesthetic experience in Germany.

My friend came from Brazil with a play written by a German writer, Schiller and it was the 200 years of Schiller. They had a festival in Mannheim and they made this play. They were invited to this festival and it was quite interesting, the Germans loved it and it was nice to see this interaction. The play was in Portuguese but it had subtitles all over where you looked. So in this way I was also exposed to art because it was such a famous playwright, although I have never read anything from him...so I am here and I don't care about Schiller or anything, but it is only when it touches me subjectively it is so incredible.

She told me a story about how the interaction with her Brazilian actor friends who came with the play and brought back an urge in her to do theater again. Her friend made comments about her work uniform and how it is symbolic of her caged spirit. He suggested she go back to the theater or to working with children again, or start a Brazilian theater group.

After I saw the play I got a little bit depressed because it is my roots, it is what I do. He said just come back to Brazil and I will put you into a good group in San Paulo, just for six months, you try it. I have it still in mind so I can not tell you what is going to happen in the future. Now I am going to finish my studies, but every once in a while I think about what he said.

It was funny because I saw the German culture, that I have a little bit of resistance to, through art and through Brazilian eyes, the concept that was displayed of Schiller. Then he saw the German culture through me, like a mirror

and he said, "What is wrong with you, what are you doing to yourself." He thought I was too strict and had changed who I was. He was like, "where are you and where are you putting the art in your life?" My mother and my aunt also say this, like now I am 'Germanized.'

Here, Lara seems to be aware of her developing opposition toward embracing the German culture and her sense of displacement. The theater exchange between Brazilian and German cultures acts as the contemplative medium to draw out these sensitivities. I asked Lara to explain what it means to be "Germanized." She told me that it had to do with her demeanor, ways of interacting with others in conversation and certain aspects of her value system.

Significant themes in Lara's narrative.

Lara's understanding of cultural aesthetic expression represents a convergence of environment, lifestyle and interpersonal relations, as well as artistic expression. Her discussion is a conglomeration of what is taken in through the senses and becomes thoughts, reflecting in aesthetic terms a form of sensual cognition. Lara's approach to the aesthetic is especially compelling given that the field of Aesthetics was defined by Alexander Baumgarten on similar grounds (see Hammermeister, 2002). Her narrative included discussion of high art forms as well as popular culture and daily cultural customs. Lara's background in theater is referred to through much of the discussion, which was otherwise characterized by the challenges associated with her attempts to make a life for herself in Germany and problematized by her expressed tensions between maintaining aspects of her existing Brazilian cultural identity and assimilating to perceived aspects of the German culture.

The academic institution plays a pragmatic role in Lara's narrative. She attends courses as a means to maintain her residency in Germany. The institution does not seem to play a role in her aesthetic pursuits. On the contrary it seems to be at odds with her impulse to pursue work in theater culture.

In Lara's narrative exposure and access to artistic and aesthetic expressions tends to be interconnected with interpersonal experience. Certain ritualized activities are perceived as having aesthetic value characterized by sentimentality and social interaction. Aesthetic experiences are not necessarily sought after and deliberate, but emerge as an attribute of Lara's lifestyle and social affiliations.

A parallel exists in Lara's approach to meaning making between her cultural adjustment and her internalization of cultural identity. In some respects she sets up a dichotomy between the intellectual and emotional in the respective cultures. The resulting tension characterizes how she internalizes her aesthetic experience. The role of cultural art forms and aesthetic expressions in her meaning making process portray an atmospheric interpretation of aesthetic experience. Lara's intuitively approached sensitivity to atmosphere emerges as a theme in a variety of contexts throughout the narrative, as well as in her presentation of learning through aesthetics in relation to German coffee shop culture she introduced for our second interview.

Lara begins to talk about her adaptation process in terms of seasons and the aesthetic change that is noticeable in the physical and emotional environment in Spring. She also remembers her romantic expectations upon arriving in Germany for the first time and becoming annoyed by the reconstruction that spoiled the view. She states that over the course of the seasons in a year she began to see the aesthetic unity that originally

captivated her as “sterile” and uncreative, her narrative is riddled with words like “cold,” “strange,” and “strict,” in reference to problematic elements in her cultural adjustment.

The form of aesthetic expression that emerges in this case is intuitive and atmospheric and could arguably be associated with cultural identification on a spiritual or sensual level. Her immediate acknowledgement response is romantic and the aesthetic experience is valued on a sentimental basis. In terms of aesthetic theory, discussing environment in cultural aesthetic terms is akin in concept to Kant’s aesthetic of the sublime. Learning in this context is approached intuitively and psycho-somatically, contributing to a sense of well-being and affective of attitude.

For our second interview Lara concretized the concept of concept of atmosphere aesthetic in a complex manner, embodied in the cultural practices and spaces of coffee shop culture. The aesthetic expression took many forms, characterized as a personal past time and a communal culture, typified by a collective historic identity in terms of the architectural styles as well as a popular culture and social-class oriented activity. Lara’s access to coffee shop culture is interpersonal. The aesthetic is acknowledged empathetically, valued both sentimentally and culturally as a social tradition and experienced phenomenologically. Lara’s meaning making process involved an intuitive knowledge gain and affective change of attitude toward the value of this aesthetic, leading to responsive learning and internalization of this cultural practice.

Part 3: Narratives from Participants in Slovenia

This part of the field data presentation will include analysis of narrative vignettes from two participants: Anya and Heather. The section will begin with a brief synopsis of

place in terms of the “official word” on Slovenia, continued by insight into the localized context of the setting as it relates to this study. Profiles for each of the participants mentioned above will preface the respective narrative vignette analysis for each.

I think it is important to reiterate for readers that this section is not intended to provide an overview of the Slovene culture or define Slovenia in any way. This section serves only as an introduction into my experience and learning process and to set the stage for the narrative inquiry that took place in Slovenia. The Slovenia portion of the study was conducted in cooperation with a U.S. Fulbright Grant and in affiliation with the University of Primorska and the American Corner Koper; in Koper, Slovenia.

The Context of Culture and Setting for This Study

I considered Slovenia as the third location for this study due to my interest in the culture on the basis of its geographical location, what I knew of the history and politics and anticipated population dynamics. The fact that I knew little about the culture was an attractive factor for me, as almost my entire learning process about the culture would happen within the culture itself. I selected Slovenia as the country to apply for a Fulbright Grant after making an agreeable contact with the Director of the American Corner Koper and the Rector of the University of Primorska, who both indicated interest in my study and in supporting my application to conduct the inquiry in Slovenia.

Throughout the grant application and acceptance process and prior to my arrival in Slovenia, I corresponded personally with the Director of the American Corner Koper on numerous occasions. Since I had very little background knowledge of Slovenia, I asked her what she would expect someone coming to Slovenia to know about the history

and culture prior to arrival. The answers I received to my questions in correspondence, which provide an overview relevant to set the stage for this study are included in letter format below.

Dear Nicole, a few answers, hope they're not too chaotic; some of them are very basic ... Take care.

-Historical:

Koper was the administrative center of the Istria peninsula (today, Istria is split between Croatia and Slovenia). For a long period of time, Istria was under the Venetian Republic. Traditionally, the coastal towns in Slovene Istra (i.e. Koper, Izola, Piran) were inhabited by Italians who built the palaces, houses, etc. The hinterland was inhabited by the Slavic, i.e. Slovene and Croatian population. After WWII, the majority of Italians moved to Italy, yet in Slovenia the area remained officially bilingual. With the exception of (Slovene) Istria, the major part of what is nowadays Slovenia used to be under the Austrians (Hapsburgs) until WWI. Istria always kept close ties with this "other" part of Slovenia, that's why we usually say that Istria and Koper as its center are located at the crossroads of Italian, German and Slavic cultures and influences. Istria is thus a multicultural area par excellence. With Italians forming the upper classes in the past, there's lots of cultural remnants from that time: as mentioned, palaces, houses (Piran, one of the most beautiful Slovene towns, is a perfect example of a town built under the Venetian influence) + pictures (the Municipality of Piran holds a painting by Caravaggio), etc. In the hinterland, the Slovene and Croatian languages were spoken; from this agricultural area, there's lots of cultural heritage in the sense of folklore, etc. (old songs, tales, customs and habits, material cultural heritage, etc.) preserved.

-Contemporary:

Today, Koper and its surrounding region (SW Slovenia = Primorska) are the second best developed area in Slovenia (Ljubljana as the capital being the first). For the last five years, Koper has been witnessing a number of changes - a revival in a certain sense. I'll try to describe the cultural environment of this whole area, that is the town of Koper, Izola, Piran and Portoroz, which are among the most popular tourist destinations in Slovenia.

Of course, as a capital, Ljubljana is the centre of Slovene culture (national theater, national museum, modern art gallery, opera, Cankarjev dom- the major cultural centre in Slovenia, etc.).

Hmm, I've just realized that the official page of the Slovene Ministry of Culture is only in Slovene ... So much about the promotion of our culture abroad ...

-Traditional cultural elements that contributed to Slovenian nationalism. Language, language, language + literature. A few years before the independence, some Slovene punk bands had very political songs.

*-The current political environment and how cultural expressions are playing a role. Official government web site: www.gov.si
A right wing government after 13 years of liberal democratic party, only a small number of women in politics.*

-The dynamic Slovenian academic environment. Currently, there are 4 universities, of which 1 is private. The government intends to establish a few more (?). The University of Ljubljana is the oldest Slovene university (established 80 years ago I think) and one of the largest Central European universities (cca 50.000 students). The higher education system has been undergoing the Bologna reform.

-Aspects of popular Slovenian culture and differentiation from American influences. (I'm not very in this field - hope this will help at least a bit) As in other countries, I would say that TV and music are among the most influential. Along the border with Italy, there's also the influence of Italian TV programs and music. Throughout the country, people like to listen to music by the ex-Yugoslav bands (kind of Yugonostalgia). For the last few years, reality shows ("Big Brother Series") produced in Slovenia are gaining momentum.

*-Ties to the East and West.
Huh ...*

West: Slovene western border with Italy; member of the EU and Nato since 2004

East: similar historical experience (Communism, Socialism). As far as mentality is concerned, Slovenia is much closer to Central Europe than to the Balkans (historically, we were under the Austrians or the "German mentality". Recently, there have been some attempts to raise awareness that part of Slovenia is also Mediterranean.

-Aspects of non-institutional culture

Koper: MKC Koper (rock, metal concerts, etc.)

*Koper: PINA (Primorska Informational Atelier) <http://www.pina.info/>
Metelkova mesto in Ljubljana <http://www.metelkova.org/> (unfortunately, I'm afraid the page is only in Slovene; perhaps try to see if you find anything on Google)*

- How We Survived Communism & Even Laughed (Paperback) by Slavenka Drakulic (Author) "The title of my book feels wrong, I kept thinking as my plane soared off the runway at Zagreb airport..." A great book, a collection of essays that will give you an insight into the Communist/Socialist era in Yugoslavia

-Influential Slovenians

I'll just mention a few from the cultural sphere. In the past: France Prešeren (poet), Ivan Cankrar (writer), Josef Plečnik (architect), Maks Fabiani (architect),

Nowadays: Tomaž Šalamun (poet), Aleš Debeljak (poet), Drago Jančar (writer), Šlavoj Žižek (philosopher), Brina Svit (writer), Irwin, Tomaž Pandur (stage director)

I'm sure there are others ...

-Theory & Philosophy of Visual Culture A graduate (master's and doctoral programme) conducted by our Faculty of Humanities <http://www.fhs-kp.si/english/izvori/5-3.htm>....

Regards.

For me this was all new information and even though I looked into the information provided, upon my arrival most everything that appears above was still empty words. It is only now, toward the end of my nine month stay in Slovenia, that most of the information above has gained significant meaning for me. In the words of Dewey, “Only when things about us have meaning for us, only when they signify consequences that can be reached by using them in certain ways, is any such thing as intentional, deliberate control of them possible” (Dewey, 1933, p. 19). In relation to my personal inquiry in Slovenia, much of what was previously just words has developed consequence or some otherwise meaningful signified status through experience.

According to the *Slovenia Cultural Profile* (2nd edition, 2007), Slovenia is a country of approximately two million people. Of the two million people who speak the official language of Slovene, 36 separate dialects are identified (More than once I have experienced a Slovene claiming not to be able to understand another Slovene because of the dialect). Slovenia is comprised of an area roughly the size of New Jersey (20,273 square kilometers) and an approximately \$47 billion GDP, export-oriented economy.

Slovenia shares boundaries with Italy, Austria, Hungary and Croatia and has 29 miles (46.6 kilometers) of coast along the Adriatic Sea (Pivec & Doling, 2007).

The *Slovenia Cultural Profile*, a 580 page almanac that resulted as a collaborative project between the Ministry of Culture of Slovenia and the British Council of Slovenia, is one example in an abundance of high-quality designed literature and brochures developed by governmental agencies covering cultural topics. There are different versions of cultural literature available, but of those available in English all seem to provide similar, if not the same version of the history and culture. The *Slovenia Cultural Profile* book was given to me during an interview courteously granted by representatives from the Slovene Ministry of Culture, as I was trying to gain a better understanding of the how the official version of Slovene culture is generated governmentally. It was explained to me in fairly vague terms, that the Ministry forms commissions of experts who decide which artists best represent Slovenia through certain criteria. These artists are then supported financially through resources which comprise 2% of the state budget. The book was then handed to me to officially answer any further questions regarding the culture of Slovenia. Although the book is quite comprehensive with handy and useful information, it didn't meet my needs for make meaning of the culture, but the experience did enhance my understanding of how the official version is derived and by whom.

My understanding of Slovenia has not emerged from the books on Slovene culture and Slovene history that I have referred to since I began this exploration, although they have served to feed one or more facets in terms of information. My understanding isn't primarily information based. The meaning making process of culture, in this case Slovenian culture, comes to mind in fragmented, somewhat photonic memory impulses

of mental image, emotion and thought, as my intentional and intuitive exploration develop through many layers, on multiple levels and with a temporal element. In order to communicate my experience, I organize it and mould it into narrative structures, but these too change over time and in light of context.

As I read through the references I had collected on Slovenia, I considered what to say that is truly relevant to this narrative inquiry. I concluded that the most relevant things for me to discuss here are not necessarily the most important things to know about Slovenian culture in the official sense. Besides, the inclusion of the letter above serves that purpose fairly comprehensively. My mindset is also of importance to understanding the biases that influence this analysis. First of all, I must admit that I feel an internal cultural pressure to be benign, as though there is tension between the diplomacy implied in my role as a Fulbrighter and the critical nature of responsible academic research. That said, my intent is not to take a critical approach to my gracious hosts. I will however, reveal what I perceive of as my own biases, reflect upon the basis for their development and the process of overcoming.

To begin this inquiry I arrived in Slovenia on September 1, 2007 with the objective to live in and explore the culture with a focus on learning through aesthetic experience, for one academic year completing my tour on May 20, 2008. I was looking for a multi-layered and diverse understanding and so I was deliberate in seeking varied experiences. As a result I participated in daily life activities, traveled to observe different parts of the country and attended a wide array of artistic and cultural events and venues. For example, I investigated art galleries and studios, museum exhibitions, aesthetics lectures and academic conferences, folk festivals, film and animation festivals, holiday

festivals and traditions, cultural tourism landmarks, historic landmarks, art and craft centers, architectural tours, artistic and musical performances of all kinds, local celebrations, student exhibitions, visited schools, underwent language training, provided language training, took horse riding lessons at the historic Lipizzaner school, learned how to make traditional foods, purchased work directly from local artists, conversed with the musicians whose performances I enjoyed, met for coffee with cultural experts and curators; and learned how to successfully get along on a day to day basis. My calendar was substantially marked and my journal is thick with pages remembering cultural events and experiences. My academic year in Slovenia included far too many significant learning moments to effectively discuss each in detail in this limited forum.

During the time I explored Slovenia there were noteworthy cultural events going on most everyday somewhere in the country. In relation to the population of the country, it seemed at first to defy my sense of logic—that there are so many artists performing on a professional level and that all these events could possibly be well attended. Given practical consideration I wondered to myself, where is the time and money coming from to support this culture industry? I never actually grasped a coherent answer to that question. I even ventured to ask artist directly from time to time. The question was never met with a direct answer and was often met with a shrug. Over time I came to realize a different way in which communal incorporation of cultural achievement exists within this society. Artistic endeavors are not a separate, distanced entity in people's lives—they are an integrated part of the cultural fabric.

Furthermore, there appeared to be considerable support for experimentation and exploration of marginal perspectives in the Slovene art world. On one occasion I took

another Fulbrighter with me to a performance art piece at the Kodeljevo Castle as part of the Festival Exodus. Before the performance we wandered around the building and viewed an artistic video installation which was in Slovene so I couldn't understand the narration, but it appeared to be about pagan fertility rituals. The exhibit and environment frightened my friend and made her want to leave just as I was getting into an insightful conversation with Slovene performance artist, Matej Kejžar. It was not my intention to make anyone uncomfortable, so I of course took my friend home and missed the performance, but this experience raised very interesting question for me about how artistic expressions can be considered threatening.

On the topic of pagan fertility rituals, these were an underlying theme in some significant traditional events in Slovenia. Fertility and the rebirth of Spring were prominent themes for the Carnival in Ptuj, Pustni Sejem, which spotlighted the celebrated kurentovanje and other characters rooted in pagan lore. At another festival I attended in the Prekmurje region, I was told the town had replaced the



34. *Kurentovanje*. Photo taken February 2008, Ptuj, Slovenia.

tradition of a pagan ritualized marriage to a tree with a historical portrayal of a witch burning. In “The fertility of Lake Cerknica,” the author discusses the relationship between east-central European popular culture, witches and fertility beliefs (Carmichael, 1994). However, the pagan heritage of Slovenia seems understood mostly as a tacit historical undercurrent present in certain aesthetic traditions.

Additional opportunities to experience cultural activities were offered through social organizations catering to the international community. I took advantage of programs offered by two social organizations in Ljubljana, the Slovenian International Ladies Association (SILA) and the International Club of Slovenia (ICS). Through SILA, I experienced a casual performance in the home of Nevenka Leban, a regionally renowned concert pianist, as she accompanied one of Slovenia's top opera singers, Mirjam Kalin. This organization also organized tours of the private interior spaces of two of, Jože Plečnic's (Slovenia's most famous architect) buildings in Ljubljana, allowed me to meet many local professional women, and offered numerous other cultural experiences that I would not have been aware of or would not have been available to me as an individual or tourist.

As a result of access through my affiliate to the international conference serving as the official launch of Slovenia's European Union presidency, I developed an

appreciation for Slovene intellectualism, seeing beyond my biased suspicion of European intellectualism as a manifestation of an elitist status quo and hegemonic world domination. I left the conference with hope that some voices in the European Union might be intent on addressing humanitarian concerns beyond Europe. In one session on Culture & Art on the topic of European identity and cultural heritage, Slovene poet and philosopher Aleš Debeljak stated (in Slovene which was interpreted into English and



35. *Jože Plečnic church interior*. Photo taken December 2007, Ljubljana, Slovenia.

several other European languages) that European identity shares only three commonalities: Conversion to Christianity, systematic use of violence to attain political goals, and modernist ideology. He explained that in the eastern part of Europe, due to late modernization and industrialization and the heritage of dictatorial regimes such as royalism, fascism and communism, there is a different understanding of the concept of culture from that of the western European nation-states. Culture, for Debeljak, is concentrated in language and language is the basis for everything else. He went on to propose that identity not be perceived collectively in terms of nation-states, so much as it should be the individual who perceives their identity in terms of concentric circles, allowing them to adopt more than one identity, to appreciate their own freedoms and to respect the freedoms and identities of others (Debeljak, A., personal communication, January 7, 2008).

Overall, my experience in Slovenia was enriching and rewarding on many levels. The situation of doing this inquiry as a Fulbright Fellow allowed me to concentrate on my learning process with an intense focus on exposure to aesthetic expressions. The experience was transformational; generating new ideas and establishing more profound meaning in historical events and contemporary political issues. I met many wonderful people who impacted my thinking; some who I respected for their accomplishments, others who became quite dear to me for their extensive kindness and generosity. Moreover, my awareness of those who showed thoughtful compassion was heightened in light of the challenges posed by experiences to the contrary—the inevitable, *on the other hand*.

That is to say, my experience in Slovenia was not all sunshine and daisies. There were personal challenges contributing to the intercultural dynamic during the process of this research. I find the psychological workings of cross-cultural communication fascinating, but very complex in practice. I see interpersonal challenges as an honest part of life; to not encounter any disagreement at all within an entire academic year would indicate to me that I was perhaps romanticizing the other, or condescending to the other, or being a hermit—but not interacting honestly with diverse individuals as respected equals. I am aware, however that this is a culturally derived stance and the capacity to agree to disagree is not universal. Authentic day to day interactions in a cross-cultural environment do not always result in the completely benign anecdotes about innocent personal foibles—as seem to be popular in some cross-cultural travel literature. When one becomes conscious of holding the short end of the stick regarding the workings of power in relation to one's role as an outsider, complex situations may present themselves when the circumstances challenge core values, exposing ideas that are taken for granted as rights, as culturally rooted. Many of my journal narratives reflected the process of working through times of conflict and experiencing these times as part of the process of learning. As Dewey puts it, "Life grows when a temporary falling out is a transition to a more extensive balance of the energies of the organism with those of the conditions under which it lives" (Dewey, 1934, p. 13). Furthermore, in *A River Forever Flowing*, Ming Fang He states that through her narrative inquiry she:

Seeks to capture the evolving, shifting nature of cross-cultural experience, to honor the subtleties, fluidities, and complexities of such experience, and to cultivate understanding towards individual cross-cultural experience and the

multicultural context that shape and are shaped by such experience. (He, 2003, p.xvii)

Informed by He's concerns about multicultural literature that tends to "either romanticize or essentialize cross-cultural experience while ignoring the subtle, everyday, changing quality of the way cross-cultural lives are lived, expressed, and addressed" (He, 2003, p. xvii), the aim of my narrative inquiry has been to present my experience (both good and bad), and that of my participants in as honest a way as possible—considering that as we learn and grow our perceptions of the past may also be altered. I have not done so with an intent to criticize anyone or any culture, but to present the complexities of human perception in relation to cross-cultural interaction. Also, I have made a conscious effort in my presentation choices to preserve and maintaining the integrity and subtle richness embodied in each of the unique narratives.

In Slovenia, the challenges I encountered did not at first seem too abnormal for undergoing a cultural experience in which I did not know the politics or social codes. There were some rather minor misunderstandings and logistical difficulties that were easily rectified and ignored. The addition of a few manipulative Americans into the mix however, and suddenly the dynamic went quite awry and non-issues were made into issues.

Perhaps the best way I can describe the way I interpreted the dynamics of my social (and in many ways political) situation is with a metaphoric analogy of the time I was scuba diving off the coast of a beautiful island and jumped off the boat haphazardly into a school of baby jellyfish: The compounding stings of their poisonous little tentacles impacted where they could find exposed skin; on the sensitive skin of my upper lip

between the mask and regulator. All I could do was accept the situation and remind myself to keep composure as I pushed tenaciously through to clear waters. In other words, I knew it was a matter of bad timing and dynamics, but that didn't make it any less painful to go through. Later, approximately eight months into my experience in Slovenia, I would write an e-mail to an officer in the Cultural Affairs office at the U.S. Embassy in Ljubljana:

I know it has been hard for people here to understand the situation of a U.S. dissertating doctoral student, but I think I have been able to contribute something to the communities where I have been welcomed. At least I have done my best to share my life and experience with those who have wanted me to, and tried to tread softly past those who have not. (personal communication, Nicole Harper, April 14, 2008).

To aggravate my sensibilities, I had caught a whiff of what I interpreted as a staunch xenophobic nationalism and a disturbing sense of superiority of European cultural heritage and ethnicity; predominantly rampant in individuals with whom I was associated in the surrounding academic community. This sense of superiority seemed set in tension with an overwhelming desire to be understood and venerated as a more significant part of the historic European cultural heritage, yet wanting to maintain that Slovenia was not part of this heritage—resulting in a somewhat neurotic inferiority/superiority complex with the yearning for recognition coming across as conceit. Although I saw this as a matter of individuals with issues (part of the jellyfish swarm), rather than an overarching cultural trait, the authors of *Slovenia and the Slovenes* suggest that the history of the Slovene people as a dominated people has attributed to certain traits, since “...they were never in a position where they had to look to themselves for explanation. This left them with a tendency to be self-regarding and narcissistic...rather than self-critical and measured” (Gow & Carmichael, 2000, p. 212).

In *Transformative Dimensions of Adult Learning*, Jack Mezirow offers the following insight to meaning making, “. . .it is not so much what happens to people but how they interpret and explain what happens to them that determines their actions, their hopes, their contentment and emotional well-being, and their performance” (Mezirow, 1991, p. xiii). In light of this inquiry, Mezirow’s perspective merges well with Ingarden’s thoughts on our desire to fill in the gaps in order to allow imagination to provide us with the most fulfilling aesthetic experience. With these thoughts in mind I decided to look for additional possibilities for reading the same experiential evidence. In this way I reinterpreted my observations of disturbing behaviors toward a new meaning. I made a conscious effort to see the characteristics exhibited by these individuals in a more palatable way—as perhaps a misdirected psychological defensive mechanism stemming from personal insecurities, resulting from oppressive cultural tensions and reflecting resistance to hegemonic dominance. In this meaning I found supporting documentation on a cultural level in earlier mentioned highlights of my experience and in aesthetic dialogue of the arts. I also looked for historic ways in which this might be expressed artistically in the work of Slovene aesthetician, Aleš Erjavec on Liabach and Neue Slowenische Kunst (2003); the IRWIN group’s *East Art Map* (2006); and edited books like *Impossible Histories* (2003) and *Body and the East* (1998).

In January I provided a public presentation at the American Corner in Koper using the concept of cultural “caricature” as a metaphor to discuss four different theoretical readings of Hollywood genre movies and how these movies represent the culture of American high school. After the presentation, a reporter for the University of Primorska’s student newspaper asked me if I had developed a “caricature” of the Slovene

culture. I told her that I probably would develop somewhat of a cultural caricature in my mind, but at least I would know that a caricature is all it was. A constantly changing caricature (in some respects), my meaning of culture is yet a work in process which continues to develop.

Local Context for Narratives: People and Place

Narrative collection took place during Fall 2007 and Spring 2008. Interviews were conducted in the homes of participants in Izola and Ljubljana. Throughout this portion of the inquiry I resided on Izola, but made frequent trips to Ljubljana which is approximately an hour and fifteen minutes drive East. Izola is a small Mediterranean



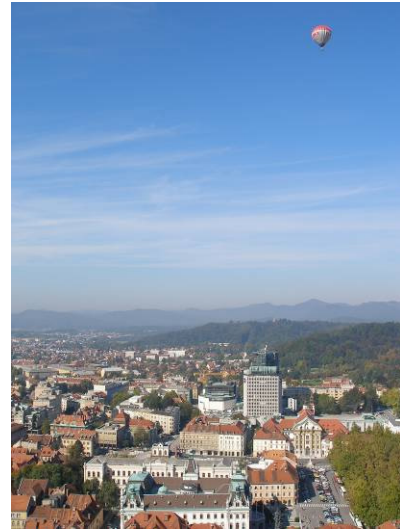
36. *Izola*. Photo taken October 2007, Izola, Slovenia.

fishing village on the coast with a population over 10,000 people which includes a large Italian minority population. Izola is located in the Primorska region of Slovenia, which is an officially bilingual area to serve the Italian minority who lived there prior to

the drawing of Slovene national borders. The old town center of Izola has medieval, Roman and Venetian architectural heritage, while the surrounding areas have experienced a modern suburban sprawl. The old town is set on a peninsula and consists of a maze of narrow alleys surrounding a hill which is topped with a 16th century church and bell tower. Izola is an attractive town for tourists due to its cement slab beach with a water

slide, its natural stone waterfront areas and the quaint atmosphere of the village including fresh seafood restaurants and a number of artist studios in the old town, which developed as part of a ceased project to rejuvenate the economy.

Ljubljana is the capitol city of Slovenia and is located fairly centrally in the country. As European cities are concerned it is small, with a population of under 300,000, but it supports a very active cosmopolitan cultural environment. The city has a long and diverse history and has gone by many names. Contemporary Ljubljana is the central point of action in Slovenia, so I spent a great deal of time there taking in cultural events, lectures and performances, visiting museums and attending functions. However, the commute became a burden on my finances, especially as the value of the U.S. dollar dropped in relation to the Euro.



37. *Ljubljana*. Photo taken October 2007.

Collectively, the price of fuel for the 140 mile round-trip, the nine Euro round-trip highway toll charge and the approximate parking fees of 8-12 Euros for the day, plus admission to events and other expenses impacted my access to Ljubljana culture.

Following the established structure, two narratives will be presented along with analysis of significant themes. The collection of Anya's narrative took place in Izola, which is where she has resided for most of her time in Slovenia. The collection of Heather's narrative took place in Ljubljana, where she has resided for the duration of her time in Slovenia.

Anya's Narrative

“To me it is music and food and clothing and the language of course, but being part of a culture means absorbing these things and taking them into your own lifestyle.”

-Anya

Background and profile.

Anya is a 42 year old female from India who has been living in Slovenia for the past six years and raising her two young children. I met Anya by chance in Spring 2007 when I came to Slovenia for a few days visit. I met her through her husband who is American and who began a conversation with me at a local restaurant because he heard my familiar accent. Anya became interested in participating in this inquiry after I had moved to Slovenia and reconnected with her in Fall 2007.

Anya's formal arts education study is in ceramics. She audited university courses so she wouldn't have to worry about grades. She continues to work in ceramics because she enjoys making things that are useful. Anya also enjoys playing the piano as a hobby.

Her intercultural experience includes three years in both Kuwait and Nigeria, six years in Slovenia, and 17 years in the U.S., which is the longest she has ever lived anywhere. Anya moved around a lot as a child because her father worked for the United Nations Food and Agricultural organization. She studied for her bachelor's degree in science at University of Wisconsin Lacross.

Cultural immersion and the institution.

Anya's immersion experience in Slovene culture was not directly institutionally affiliated. At the time of the interviews she was involved as a part-time student in Slovene language courses, but this was a relatively new development. Her husband

worked as a professor at a university in Slovenia. This is how they generate income but this was not their main reason for choosing to live as expatriates in this culture.

Past cultural immersion experience for Anya, on the other hand, was very much related to academic and governmental institutions. Her father's employment in the U.N.'s governmental missions dictated why she was in each culture. This also impacted where she attended school and in many ways how she was treated and encountered within the culture.

Anya's conception of what it means to be culturally immersed seems to have been deeply influenced by her father's perspectives on the educational value of intercultural experience and her own experiences of childhood and adult travel.

He thought that nothing else could deal with biases and stereotypes as well as travel. He said that once you travel you learn things that you could not learn sitting at home. So he put a lot of effort into taking us around.

She told me that like most of her siblings, she went to university in the U.S. because her father thought traveling was a critical part of education and wanted her to experience international study. So, although her narrative alludes to the institution of education playing a significant role in her cultural immersion experience, Anya's narrative also addresses a different sort of institution—the cultural institution and expectations of the family.

My parents are very disappointed that I didn't finish my Master's so now I don't have a PhD and they are disappointed that I am here, that I actually turned down a job offer and came here. Of course they want me to spend my time with the children, to always be there for the children, but my father is very worried that I will become a bitter housewife. I was talking with him on the phone about looking for jobs in Trieste and he suddenly said, "I think you ought to brush up on your microbiology. You know, Germany has a lot of openings." Turns out he wanted me to brush up on my microbiology because there are a lot of teaching positions in Poland and Germany and I'm thinking, you want me to go teach in Poland, Germany and leave the kids here? So they want me to have it all. For instance, if

I really had problems and I said, I'm walking out of this marriage they would say, oh, no, no, no, you can't. They want for me to stay in the framework, be a really Hindu woman, be very Indian and I guess it is because they don't see me. If they saw me I think they wouldn't be as concerned, but I'm always being advised on, oh, I hope you are wearing your clothes, your Indian clothes. I tell them, and they should know it, that I really enjoy wearing my Indian clothes, it's not something that I need to be told about. I think all of the time that I was in the U.S. and I was a student type person, going to work and wearing jeans. I think they still maintain memories of that. But, children are important, the family is important, but also don't let your mind go to waste, you must be reading science, discussing science. So my father is someone I would call very forward thinking, but the big disappointment is that I don't have a PhD and my sister doesn't have a PhD either.

Above, Anya mentions the aesthetic expression of personal adornment. Her Indian clothes are an expression of culture that is important to her identity. Interestingly, the act of wearing the cultural clothing is significant to her parents in their perception of their daughter, even if they don't actual see her wearing the clothes.

Many women are encouraged to go into the medical field; one of the reasons is that it is possible then to have a foot in both worlds, because as a doctor in India they can set up a private clinic. You stay at home, you can have a private clinic and take care of the children and do both, make money, be a doctor. So it is more and more that women are branching out into other fields, computer science and even things like history, philosophy, those were things that were just an accomplishment for a girl, another thing along with learning singing or dancing or other stuff, oh, she's going to be in literature or something they could add to the marriage resume.

Anya's narrative provides interesting insight into some of the pressures faced from the home culture when living abroad. In Anya's case there seems to be pressure to assure her family that she is maintaining her Indian identity. As she was talking I wondered how these tensions may develop in relation to internalized learning which may color the lens through which the non-native culture is observed. Since she had discussed her experience as an Indian female I asked Anya about the expectations for males.

A breadwinner, taking care of his immediate family as well as his parents, because we don't have, our social security system is the children, so the

expectation is that your sons will also be highly educated, successfully employed and financially able to take care of his parents and not just his own family. The girls, once they're married they belong to another family, of course it doesn't quite work that way with me, but traditionally that is the notion, that she belongs to another family and you don't have any claims upon her anymore. The only person you have claims on is your sons.

I think it is getting difficult to do both, since the male participation in the household is still pretty limited. It's no longer joint families, so women go to work, they come back and they do the housework and take care of the kids and everything. I don't think the average woman has a life for herself. It's probably not possible when all the time and energy is spent doing all this. But I see that women seem to be pushing aside the household thing as a backdrop, not their primary thing. So I think this is why many are eager to live in another culture because at least you don't get day to day criticisms from your neighbors and your mother-in-laws, you can wear jeans and a shirt and go to work and come back and feed the kids frozen food or whatever and it's not a problem. It's hard to say though, because I don't know many Indian women. But I think that women are changing and pursuing education more, not just to fulfill the marriage resume, but they are also doing it for themselves.

Anya's narrative reveals an interesting aspect of expatriate life; the freedoms offered by the distancing from the home culture's impositions. Later in the narrative, Anya also mentions the exchange for this freedom in terms of the discomfort associated with being an outsider immersed in the non-native culture.

Reflecting on my own experience, there is something alluring about the expatriate situation. The learning process that goes along with this circumstance, which involves learning about the home culture as well as the host culture, has developed facets of my identity. Being in the position of having to re-learn daily processes within an unfamiliar environment can result in what Maxine Greene might refer to as "wide awakeness" (Greene, 1995). Day to day living and interpersonal association offers an intensive learning experience while exploring the environment can present a concentrated series of new and enlightening aesthetic experiences.

Aesthetics and education.

This section pertains mostly to Anya's experience as a student in Kuwait, Nigeria and the United States. Although she doesn't speak about her education in direct aesthetic terms such as "art education," her narrative reveals a sense of place that incorporates aesthetic notions of beauty, sublime experience and ideological values which are considered here as axiological aesthetic discourse.

Since Anya had lived most of her life abroad, I was quite interested to hear her thoughts about what it means to learn about other cultures.

To me it is music and food and clothing and the language of course, but being part of a culture means absorbing these things and taking them into your own lifestyle. In terms of food, I think that is one big way of getting into someone's culture because it is a very warm way of entering a culture and the music, these are two of the main factors for me. When I cook, my primary style is Indian but I like many different styles of food, I like Japanese food and other oriental food and I like European food.

Here, Anya has indicated that cultural learning represents an internalization process, resulting in adaptation and perhaps a change in the character of the learner. Her focus in terms of aesthetic expression seems to be on the aesthetics of day to day life. She seems to perceive artistic qualities in common practices like dressing and eating.

I asked her to describe her experience with immersion in other cultures. She talked about the places she had lived in India, Arabic and African cultures and her interactions with the local people.

In Kuwait the things I remember are going to school and there were a lot of Indians in Kuwait so it was a school run by Indians with the Indian education system. They had a girl's school and a boy's school because of the Muslim country. One of the things I never figured out was—in the summer it was incredibly hot, right, and when we went to school we would have umbrellas just to keep the sun off and they were black umbrellas and I remember having Kuwaiti kids through stones at us. I have no idea why. Maybe it was because of the black umbrellas or because we were Indian kids, I don't know. Being a child I guess

you perceive things a little bit differently, but that was my experience with the Middle East culture and I came away from it thinking later on that it is not a culture I would choose to be part of again because it is very arrogant. I don't think it is a Middle Eastern phenomenon, I think it was a Kuwaiti phenomenon.

Organizing her thoughts chronologically, Anya's first intercultural experience was influenced by schooling. In the above excerpt she indicates that the school served as a segregating device on several levels: Nationality/ethnicity, curriculum and gender. These segregations appear to have converged in her memory and are presented here with a relationship between walking to the Indian school and being harassed by local children.

The next four passages are about Anya's experience of Kuwaiti culture.

When the Gulf War took place and there was a lot of talk about Kuwait and protecting the citizens of Kuwait, what I remember about Kuwaitis is that they are very, I wouldn't call it racist, but very...exclusive. If I remember correctly, you had to be Kuwaiti for generations back before you could be part of the society. You couldn't come in there and be a first generation, so I was thinking, wow, you are busy fighting for the rights of these people who are so exclusive.

As she talked I was thinking of the unique positions expatriates are in to understand world events. I remembered watching the second airplane fly into the tower on September 11, 2001 live on CNN International from my apartment in Abu Dhabi and then witnessing the reaction firsthand from the Arabic community afterward. The social dynamic changed overnight. I was somewhat surprised at the national arts center where I was taking sculpture classes, when the busy arts studio went completely quiet as I walked in the door and when I was later handed a cartoon of the Statue of Liberty in an abaya, just to see my reaction. Before that point I had not imagined that I was viewed in terms of my nationality—and with it such stealth animosity. Not much of a patriot normally, I just could not imagine how the United States had done something so terrible to offend these incredibly wealthy people who lived in unheard of luxury, especially since their wealth

relied on the labor of the less fortunate in a system that was sealed tight in allowing any change in status, regardless of hard work. Anya's narrative went on to touch upon some further observations with which I could relate.

I know that the Indians who came to live and work in Kuwait, a lot of them came in a menial capacity, I guess blue collar workers, a lot of housemaids and chauffeurs and nannies, that kind of stuff. A lot of cases of abuse, it was a case of a lot of people, their passports would get taken away and then people would end up showing up at the embassy with stories of physical abuse, sexual abuse, these kind of things. All of this put together, it kind of gave me, and again it was only Kuwait, I can't speak for everything else, but later on analyzing it I said, okay, that's a culture that, at least Kuwait, I wouldn't want to experience the Middle Eastern culture...perhaps in Bahrain or Dubai. But, for me I found it offensive and again we had a few Kuwaiti friends, but we didn't interact the way I'd assume friends would interact, but my father had a good relationship with the Kuwaitis.

It's just the arrogance and the money, it was amazing to me. That was a place where you could see these brand new cars, intact cars and kids would be playing with the rubber tires, setting them on fire and stuff. It wasn't done generally speaking, but there were many instances where a young guy would crash his car and there were stories where he would take a cab, go to the showroom and with cash purchase another car. Then this car would just be left. These are the stories I have heard about or seen. So, it left me to feel that yeah, they are a very arrogant, exclusive group and so I'm not easily sympathetic toward the Kuwaitis I suppose. But certainly it was a nice life, a very rich life; you could get anything you wanted.

Gold was amazingly cheap. The gold shops were without any bars, just glass doors with wooden frames. I don't remember if it was still practiced at that time, but it used to be punishment by getting your hand cut off, right. But I don't remember at that time what punishment was practiced, but whatever the reason or the punishment was it was apparently very effective because they could have these simple doors locking the jewelry shop where all this gold was on display. So I remember it was a wealthy country and fun living there, but I went back afterward to India for a year to study.

Although these last four passages don't directly examine aesthetic experience in light of encounters with artistic expressions, they do reflect upon Anya's past cultural immersion experience and reveal aspects of an axiological aesthetic in terms of cultural values.

Interestingly there is a sense of Anya's knowledge of this culture coming from sources

other than her personal experience, through third-party stories. I had heard many similar stories while I was living in the United Arab Emirates. There were reports in the newspaper of maids “falling” from high rise buildings, but nothing ever considered scandalous in the official word. I was aware of the unsatisfactory living conditions of many male, blue collar employees, but no one ever complained publicly. I was aware of many orphaned illegitimate children who I visited on one occasion and was told in a hushed manner that they were the babies of nannies and maids fathered by their local male bosses, but this was not spoken of officially. I was aware of the obvious ethnically caste labor system and yet the environment seemed somehow devoid of scandal. There were many, many stories passed word of mouth, but nothing ever surfaced under official scrutiny. It seemed as if the social control of institutional religious devotedness resulted in a luxurious aesthetic, shining back off the 24 karat gold in the jewelry shops and reflecting palm trees and sea views off the shimmering facades of tall glass skyscrapers.

Anya mentions awareness of her own changing perception over time as she discussed her experience in Nigeria.

When I was living in Nigeria as an adult that was when I really began to experience the culture, because in Kuwait I was a child and perceived things a lot through the family and was protected by the family. Lagos is the capitol city, huge, dirty, not rich like the Kuwaiti culture and dangerous, very, very dangerous place to be, at least for expatriate people. You never traveled alone in a car, you always traveled in a convoy. If you went to someone's house in the evening we were always in a group to go to each other's houses for dinner or whatever two or three cars would drive together. I really liked Lagos though, a typical city but very green, intense green. I think I liked it also because I became more aware of myself as a person and being a part of a different culture, so I took more enjoyment in being there. I went to school there in a Nigerian school and I got to know them better. I had some good Nigerian friends and it was fun.

Here, Anya mentions a difference in her educational situation which impacted her experience. She also notes the intense green of the environment as something that

permeated her memory, thus indicating a possible sublime aesthetic experience. In the next excerpt she discusses Nigerian culture in terms of personal adornment and then describes two performance-like scenarios that contributed to her imagination archive and sense of place.

I remember this one Nigerian woman walking and they have the sarongs and turbans and stuff, they're very majestic looking women. You could call them fat, but also very majestic looking. I remember one woman walking down this corridor and there was a young girl following her with a plate that had little tidbits of food. This woman was going somewhere but she was walking with this girl behind her and she would occasionally turn and take one and pop it into her mouth all the way to the elevator and going down, popping another little piece in her mouth.

I remember another instance where this American single guy, his name was Lourde, was standing in front of the house and I'm looking around and then suddenly I look and see Lourde spread out across the top of this car and this big black woman is slapping him. We all had these numbered parking spots and I think he had parked in his spot and he had blocked her car. She was pissed off and I was screaming, "Daddy, daddy come quick, Lourde is getting beaten up." And my father yells, "Hey, you can't do that he is U.N. personnel." She didn't care.

In the next two passages, Anya discusses aesthetic standards of beauty for women comparatively between Nigerian and Indian cultures.

I met one young Nigerian woman who told me that before she was married she was sent to a fattening house because in their culture a woman was considered healthy and able to bear children if she was a little more on the larger side, it is not the skinny ones who are considered suitable marriage and motherhood material.

That sort of fits in with our perspective in India to, that the young skinny girls are, well it's changed now, but generally its like, oh, she's too skinny is she going to be able to do the housework and bear children. You need somebody with a little meat on their bones.

As Anya was talking I connected her comments to similar experience I had had in Botswana, when I was teaching there for two years. I was told that women who were more robust in that culture were considered more beautiful in relation to an indication of

wealth. Similar to the stereotype of the man with the “trophy” woman on his arm sporting a Barbie doll type figure in my culture, a man whose wife was on the heavy side was the envy of his male friends.

Continuing chronologically along her historical path, Anya’s discussion moved from Nigeria to the United States.

I was alone in the U.S. being a student and I didn't feel being an Indian or an outsider and I think it was because I had already experience two other cultures I had met a lot of people through my father, a lot of Europeans and people from other nationalities. I was comfortable with that, so when I came to the U.S. I didn't feel strange, of course there were things to learn, day to day practices and stuff like pronunciation differences. I didn't feel terrifically like an outsider and in the U.S. university you very quickly find the international community so then you don't stick out.

Here, blending in with the community once again surfaces as a prevalent theme in Anya’s narrative.

I mostly had good experiences; I think I started to feel the Indian-ness of me more when I moved to Oskaloosa, this little town in Iowa, for a job. I didn't quite realize, coming from the international environment and the university where you kind of had your own little area to belong, I didn't realize that people did view me differently. Something about religion came up and the guy was surprised that I would be something other than a Christian. One comment my landlady made, they had a shop and they were very nice to me and one day I came back from work and she was showing somebody else the building as a possible renter and she introduced me and then I overheard her telling the young girl, oh, she's really nice, she's just like one of us. And I said, wait a minute, I'm just like one of you, and I thought that it was very funny that she would make that comment and have to point out that she is just like one of us. Then another experience, when we moved out of there, it was a small apartment, I had a \$200 deposit, I was expecting to get it back, I had cleaned up the place the way she wanted me too. I'm sure I missed a few things but I didn't get the money back, so finally my husband went to talk to her and she said that she had done a lot of soul searching, but she really didn't feel that she could give me the deposit back because she didn't feel that I had cleaned up the apartment as much as she had expected. I had spent about ten hours there, it was a small apartment. There was a small patch in the wall that I fixed, but I thought it was alright. She said, well, where she comes from they might think it's clean, but I don't think it's clean. When I heard it I was furious, what do you mean, where I come from I might think it is

clean enough. So those kinds of things came as a surprise, oh, they do view me differently.

Interestingly, Anya's narrative is concerned as much on her perspectives of how she is perceived within the non-native community as it is on her perceptions of the culture.

For a brief time there was another Indian couple in Oskaloosa and the woman was short and a little chubby and for me she looked ridiculous wearing shorts and T-shirts, but her daughter did not want her to come dressed in Indian clothes to pick her up at school. I did not always wear my Indian clothes often, but I did wear them and this woman would ask, don't you feel people are staring at you and I said, no I don't, either I don't care or I'm used to it or something, but I'm not aware of it, but she was very aware of the fact that people looked at her. But when I came to Slovenia, maybe it was my mental state, but I was very aware of people looking at me.

A theme which has begun to emerge strongly in this section of the narrative is the relationship between personal adornment standards of beauty and communal acceptance.

There also seems to be tension between personal adornment, cultural identity and cultural immersion.

Cultural aesthetic experience.

This section is devoted primarily to Anya's experience in Slovenia. At the beginning of our conversation, Anya had considered cultural learning as the day to day aesthetic of things like clothing and food. I asked her to expound upon how she learns about other cultures through food.

One time when we lived in Lucia we were out walking one day by the seaside and there is a guy there who has a greenhouse and he specializes in cactus. His house adjoins the greenhouse. He travels all around the world collecting plants. So he invited us in to his house and he had this little room he had this barroom that he had constructed out of stone and he proceeded to give us a taste of all the homemade rakja, it's a really strong liquor like schnapps and they make it out of fruits and herbs. So here we were with this guy we hardly knew then and we spent the afternoon and evening tasting all this stuff he had made, and of course he was

bringing out the prsut and olives and we talked, spoke English a little bit, it was out of the blue. So that is one way, over food.

Another example is driving along and coming to a little restaurant and stopping and its run by a family and they invite you in, it's just the whole atmosphere. Here in Slovenia, you're sitting outside and they say, here taste our wine. The other thing I find here is that people give you things from their gardens or orchards. This friend gave me kaki or homemade wine or homemade honey, I've been getting a lot of jars of honey. I rarely have to buy fruits. That didn't happen to me as much in the U.S., but it definitely happens here. In Slovenia that is something that stands out.

These answers indicate a social component and a sense of belonging or acceptance associated with the aesthetic of food culture for Anya. Also, both quotes provide examples of a sense of the *authentic*. Mentioned as homemade, or homegrown are schnapps, herbs, wine, the fruits and vegetables and honey. The themes of communal acceptance and food emerge as interrelated through much of the continuing narrative. Personal adornment is also a major theme in Anya's narrative in consideration of her adjustment and acceptance in the culture.

Anya discussed her adjustment when she first arrived to Slovenia, the way locals reacted to her and her self-consciousness about her appearance.

I became very aware here of the fact that I was Indian and people were looking at me and it really bothered me. I did not want to go to the grocery store by myself. I used to feel uncomfortable. It could have been the language thing, partly that, partly my state of mind and the other part was being stared at without having it made better with a smile. Too often it was just a direct stare. My husband's perspective was that people here are just more honest, they're interested in you, they look at you, and that's it, they don't try to hide it, they're not hypocritical and all that. But, it still got to me. Maybe if I was familiar with the language I would have been fine, but it was very difficult for me the first months to move about and talk to people and be alone somewhere.

I am wearing my Indian clothes more often in the summer. There are only a few times when I think, should I wear this, and those are times when I am reluctant to be stared at because I know that I am if I'm walking out in a sari or other clothes, the style, the colors, I just stand out. So sometimes I think about it too much I think, are people going to think I'm overdressed. Sometimes my husband will say,

why don't you wear this other outfit and it will be one that has some work done on it and I'll say, no way, it's too much, it's too fancy and they don't know the difference. You wear a silk sari as opposed to another sari and the effect is the same, so you may as well wear your nice, expensive sari.

As Anya was talking I began to relate her perspective to my experiences attempting to fit in with the different cultures in which I had lived, reflecting upon the subtle complexities of cultural codes in regards to personal adornment. Shopping for clothing at local stores often exposes cultural illiteracy, since the brands and styles available tend to have no semiotic significance. Considerations that are often automatic within the home culture come to light in terms of personal adornment and its relation to social class identity and social status indication. A cultural value of mine is revealed in that I don't like to think I consider clothing in terms of social class consciousness or that my identity is in any way attached to fashion. However, these attitudes are exposed and become important symbolic considerations in interpersonal relations when one is not familiar with the cultural norms.

So now, especially here in Izola I don't feel as strange, people have been very good to us and me and they are very appreciative, at least on the outside and they want to make contact, because I'm an Indian. People still have a high opinion of India as a spiritual country and so I am approached on that level quite often. Today a young woman I have seen many times asked me if I had read some book, I didn't even recognize the name and it turned out to be some spiritual person from India, I didn't even know it, so that kind of contact is made quite often. People want to tell me, hey, I've been to India and at first I was quite interested and then I find out of course it is this shipping, sailors who had traveled to India, but they were eager to tell me they had been to India and acknowledge the fact that they knew something about my country. So now it's not so bad, it's nice. People are open toward me and friendly toward me.

Anya provided some examples of interactions which made her feel accepted culturally.

There is another old woman here, she asked me if I was this guy's daughter who is a doctor from Ghana and he has been here many years and is very recognizable. So this woman asked me if I was this guy's daughter and I said, no, no, I'm from a different continent. But since then she is always very happy to see

me. Nothing more than stopping and saying hello, and then gone, but it is very nice. These are some of the same people who would stare me down when I first got here and now they will see me and say hello and talk, even though I don't understand enough Slovene. They will just talk to me and I can't even get a word in to say, I'm sorry I don't understand Slovene, they'll just keep talking, and I like that, those encounters make me feel more like belonging to a place.

And in the market there is an old lady in the corner and she rarely smiled at me in the beginning so I didn't buy stuff from her, but I slowly started to and now we are friendly to each other. Now in the summertime she will always give me extra flowers she has or another time she gave me a plant, or if you're buying something she will throw in some extra carrots, this kind of thing. Or the guy next to her, who I usually buy all the fruits from, if I don't have change he'll just be like, ok, come back tomorrow, I know you. It's nice to be a part of the community, that's my experience with this society.

I asked her how she learned about the Slovene culture. Interestingly, all three of the examples given were in relation to gifts of food.

I think it is interactions with people on many levels. I don't think it has necessarily been something strictly in the arts, music, whatever. One of the recent experiences I remember having here, we were out walking with the kids and we walked up on the piers by the fishing boats and so we saw a lot of people walking back with bags of fish, so we went over there thinking we could buy some fish directly from the boat. They had just come in and they were cleaning up their hold, so people were buying fish from them or at least taking fish from them. I asked the guy if he had mackerel and he said no, but he had sardines, so asked if I could buy a kilo of sardines and he gave me a bag of sardines and I asked how much and he said, oh, buy me a beer sometime. And I was like, oh, okay, I would like to if I see you and I recognize you or you recognize me somewhere, I would like to buy you a beer. He was sure he didn't want a payment for it, and for me that was one of the nice interactions.

Another time we were at the clinic in Lucia and there was this guy we had met, he had come to fix some appliance in our house, so we had met him once. He works for the hospital; he's a handyman for the clinic. We were walking past his building one day and just started to chat with him and he's also into making rakja and he pulls out one for me and says this is a women's drink and it is sweet and they make rakja from this little fruit, žižola, that is brown and it's green on the inside and it has a seed. But he gave a glass of žižola to me and to my husband a glass of this herb drink that was very, very bitter and he tasted it and made a face, then when the guy wasn't looking he threw it out. So this guy gave us a bottle of žižola for me to take home and we barely even know him, we see him sometimes and sometimes we acknowledge, other times not, but it was nice that he did that for us.

This old lady we met, it was a chance encounter, she saw my husband with our dog and a friend's dog that he was walking and she mistook him for the owner of that dog. She didn't speak any English, just Italian and Slovene, but she was very sprightly, very energetic sweet lady. She invited him for coffee, so he took her up on the invitation and went to her house and met her daughter and her husband and her son who he had already met at a local bar, and it was an encounter that turned out to be great, she became a good friend. She was someone who would ring the bell and come running up that stairs with a basket and say, here, I have some fruit and there is some turkey. Her son had a farm and she would bring me vegetables and say, here, and then off again. I think it is a great way to be welcomed into the culture. I remember these kind of encounters. You form a friendship, but these kind of encounters are what make up Slovenia.

I saw relevance in the topic of food, but in an attempt to also nudge the conversation into the direction of other artistic expressions, I asked Anya how she would describe Slovenia to someone from another place.

It is a naturally beautiful place. I would describe it as a friendly place, but I would qualify it by saying they are friendly to a certain point. They are very friendly to me and I have been very well received here. We had friends when we first came here who would come to visit us and we were very excited to have people come to visit us because we could show them things, like Hrastovlje the church, but also the old lady at the church. We took people there not only for the mural, but also for that old lady. She was great, the whole atmosphere around her was great. Or taking people to this little eating place in Koper, it is called Istrska Klet and I think people working close by stop there, there are only a few items on the menu, basic food, not very expensive, it is very good. We would take them there and the coffee shop culture, I like that all the people will take time out to have a cup of coffee and it's a daily thing. When my husband used to go to the bars more often when we lived in Lucia, he would be trying to leave and then there would be a glass of wine in front of him and people were always buying him a glass of wine. He would say, no I must go, but they would buy another round for them.

Here, Anya briefly mentions the mural in the church at Hrastovlje. According to tourist literature and the audio taped presentation provided at the church, the circa fourteenth-century Church of the Holy Trinity in Hrastovlje is endowed with medieval frescoes intended to assist in the conversion of the Slavs to Christianity, painted by the Istrian artist Janez Kasav (c. 15th century). The most noteworthy of the frescoes, *Dance of Death*

appears both on the wall of this church and in the museum in Koper, I am not sure which



38. *Hrastovlje church*. Photo taken October 2007, Hrastovlje, Slovenia.

is the original. This fresco includes a number of characters personifying kings to children, each accompanied by a skeleton toward the grave. The church and the frescoes are rich in history and meaning and were the focus of two trips for me to visit the church.

Anya's focus, on the other hand, is the environmental aesthetic surrounding her experience with the old lady who lived nearby and held the keys to the church. Her

conversation quickly turns back to social interactions and food culture. The next three excerpts continue in this vein.

Walking up and being able to pick figs right off the tree and be able to eat them right off the tree is great. When I lived in Lucia, you could go up a track and it's really beautiful because on the other side is the salt flats. I used to love to go up there and would pick figs and eat and go.

Another thing we used to take people to show them was the Vina Koper, the gas station type pumps that serve wine. And then the food, like the fish restaurants and even pizza. I liked pizza before I came here, but in the U.S. the pizza was so heavy with the thick crust and all the cheese, and when friends would give me a slice of pizza I would think, oh, how am I going to eat this and I would consume Coca-Cola between each bite, but here I like it with thin crust and so we take friends to have pizza.

When we have visitors we would definitely take them to Piran and show them the sites and eat at the fish restaurant and then of course we would take them to Koper to the pizzerias and the wine shop. When we first came to Slovenia to visit we took back with us bottles of wine because we said, this is amazing, it's not great wine, but it is decent wine and it's only a couple of dollars. But I think food was one of the great things we introduced people to.

I had also experienced very similar food and drink culture during my time in Slovenia. Anya's focus on this in her narrative gave me cause to reflect on these experiences and made me reconsider the significance of cuisine culture.

Not only were there different flavors and texture in foods like pizza and cheeseburgers or the traditional dishes that require hours of effort and care to prepare like potica, gibanica and bakala. There is also something significantly aesthetic in the everyday cultural practice of exchanging



39. Potica.

fresh fruits, vegetables and flowers and the societal practices and hospitality of conversation over prsut and homemade cheeses and wines.

Anya's discussing shifted to her experience in terms of music.

The other thing that we discovered was the music, and of course the Gypsy music. I wouldn't say it's Slovene, but it is Gypsy music and it is very well liked here and all over ex-Yugoslavia. There is this guy called Goran Bregovič and he is very well known around here and he has taken a lot of the old music and reset it, and he is very, very popular. I was surprised at the number of young people who liked the Gypsy music also, it came from friends who said hey, I think you would like this, and we were more open to foreign music anyway even before we came here and my husband went crazy with Balkan music and it was in the house, in the car, this Balkan music. I liked it but it was like, please, no, this is too much. So I was already familiar with it. But the other music just comes from local people who say, have you heard this, I'll give you a CD. I've never seen a concert except for this Vruja, they are an Istrian band.

I asked what the music communicated to her if she couldn't understand the language.

It is the sound, I like the raw sounds, the unrefined sounds, well I classify them as unrefined sounds. It is just the music, the rhythm, the voice, I don't like so much the rock thing. I like the energetic beats and all that, but it is the idea, knowing that it's old, that it's been around. For instance there is a song called "Ederlezzi" I think is the Gypsy version and the Slovene version is called "Đjurđjev Dan", a lot of young people know the song. I'm not sure I understand the meaning of the song, but I really like it. We have a collection of the same song sung in a number of different languages, Polish, Serbian, Slovene and I don't know, a bunch of other languages, all the same song. And I like that, the idea that something has

just been there for a long time. I like music in general, different kinds of music and I do care about the words and sometimes I think, if I knew the words maybe I wouldn't like it so much. So in a way it's nice not to be subject to the inanity of the lyrics and think, how nice, how sweet. But that's what I like about the old stuff here.

Here, Anya talks about the significance of the tradition to specific songs in the Gypsy musical culture. She indicates experiencing the aesthetic of the music on multiple levels. Her words also indicate a somewhat romantic response to the idea behind the music, her response to the beat of the music is emotional and her appeal to the tradition intellectual, considering the history of the poetry. I asked her to describe the process of learning about this culture on the intellectual side.

I'm not very good at reading non-fiction, but I did read a couple of the fiction books and it's a pity that a lot of the young people I think were forced to read this in school and so they reject it now, but a very well known writer is Vitomil Zupan and his most famous book is called "Minuet for Guitar" and in fact it has been made into a movie as well, which is quite good. When we saw it we just watched it in Slovene. I think in the beginning when I was here I was reading more literature, what was available in English anyway. Not just Slovene literature but the two Slovene authors I have read are Zupan and Ciril Kosmač, "A Day in the Spring" I can't remember his name, they are both translated into English. I really wish I had applied myself more to learn the language, followed a formal structured learning process. I never felt I had the money to take courses, so I just picked up Slovene from talking to people. We had a two-week course one time and that was it, after that it has always been interacting with friends. So, because of the language a lot of the literature is not available to me.

This was not the first I had heard about these authors, although I had not yet made time to find the books in English and read them. I had read about both Ciril Kosmač and Vitomil Zupan in a book which overviews the history and culture entitled *Slovenia and the Slovenes: A Small State and the New Europe* (2000). The authors provide an overview of the plot of both author's works, along with many others and indicate that there is a wealth of cultural meaning in Slovene literature. This is an area that I regretfully did not explore.

Menuet za Kitaro a 1975 book made into a film by Zupan, revolves around issues of World War II and the Spanish Civil War providing multiple perspectives on war, was a book that raised the eyebrows of the establishment, “because its character’s liberal politics combine with a realistic portrayal of the imperfections of the Partisan experience” (Gow & Carmichael, 2000, p. 81). The other book she mentions, *Pomladni Dan* from 1953 is concerned with the era between world wars as well as the present, and is also narrated from two different perspectives, “this device is used to explore the differences between truth and an accurate record of events over three periods” (Gow & Carmichael, 2000, p. 78).

Anya told me about the names of her children and how they were influenced by characters from the books and movies she had enjoyed. Her son was given a middle name, which she referred to as American-style, since Slovenes do not have middle names. She and her husband had decided on Savo, because of the River Sava and one of the favorite characters from a book, *Jasavo the Gypsy*.

It was amazing the reactions to the name, “Oh, but that’s a Serbian name. That’s a Serbian name, how could you...” They were shocked that we would want to give the child a Serbian name. They thought it could be problematic for the child later on, because it’s a Serbian name and then because people were saying this we first thought we would still give him the Serbian name, but then we thought, maybe they’re right and so we chose Hector which is also Balkan name, similar reaction, “No, but that’s a Muslim name, it doesn’t sound nice” ...Because these children were born here in Slovenia, it makes sense to give them a name that comes from here. But because it is a Muslim name they would be harassed perhaps, because Muslims are not very well received here. Bosnian Muslims are not very well received here. I definitely get a better reception than a Bosnian Muslim woman.

I have some friends who come from Serbia, Kosovo and Bosnia and I have been told that this is how they have been treated or how their friends have been treated. Also hearing comments from other people, the young women here say it is the men from Bosnia and Kosovo who make sexually loaded comments about women and who tend to mislead them and things like that. People who I expect to be very open and who are open to me, still say that about Bosnian men and they justify it

by saying the people who come here are coming from the underclass, these are the illiterate people, so what else can you expect. So I suppose you could say there is some truth in that because my reaction is I think it is not Bosnian men who are just like this, men generally, it depends, but they make comments.

The Ljubljana people are called Jaba, which means frog and they can tell the accent and one area from the other is criticized for being slow and stupid or lazy or something. I hear comments about all that, almost anything to make yourself stand out as special. People will tell you that the people on the coast are not as friendly or as open as when you go further in.

Here, Anya's narrative reveals the pressures of adopting prejudicial attitudes toward other groups in the process of being accepted socially by one group. I too had witnessed negative attitudes toward cultural others who were not long ago all part of the same country—former Yugoslavia. For example, on one occasion I was told that a repeated unsolicited call I was receiving from a man I did not know whom had a Slovene phone number, must be from a person from a Southern country. On another occasion, a movie in Slovene language that I asked my Slovene tutor to watch and explain to me, was deemed inappropriate due to adultery themes and labeled as a story about Serbians or Bosnians, not the way Slovenes behave. These reflections and others made me wonder about how my experience in Slovenia may have been different had I come with expectations of the culture that were colored by opinions of other ex-Yugoslavian cultures.

Second interview with Anya.

For our second interview, Anya and I first met for coffee and talked a bit more about her cultural experiences in the United States and Slovenia. I recorded the conversation to transcribe, but due to a microphone malfunction, most of the recording was inaudible. I recall that during this conversation Anya talked about her parent's concerns that she continue to cherish her Indian cultural ways of being, dressing and

thinking. She told me about how her American husband's knowledge of Indian philosophical texts had fueled her interest in him when they met in the United States. We talked about the concept of the exotic Orient. I mentioned the work of Edward Said on this topic who writes, "The Orient was almost a European invention, and had been since antiquity a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes, remarkable experiences...the Orient has helped to define Europe (or the West) as its contrasting image, idea, personality, experience" (Said, 1979, p. 1-2). She shared with me stories from some of her European or American friends who talked about becoming disillusioned after visiting India due to the intense poverty they had witnessed there.

Another thing she discussed was how she was noticed in Slovenia for her Indian appearance. She talked about having many odd interactions with locals which she attributed to her characteristic differences, but often enjoyed when Slovene acquaintances would many times

approach her wanting to share their knowledge of her culture with her in a friendly manner. I

witnessed this at later date, when Anya



40. *Langa*. Photo taken March 2008, Kranj, Slovenia.

accompanied me to a performance by a local Gypsy band: After our first interview, Anya had loaned me a collection of CD's of Roma or Gypsy music. I enjoyed the unique sound of the music and had been once before to see one local Gypsy band called *Langa* at a conference dinner. Due to her expressed interest in this musical genre, I thought Anya

might also enjoy Langa, and so I took her to see the band perform. After the concert, two of the band members joined us at our table and began talking with Anya. One, a Slovene, asked her where she was from and immediately told her about his positive experiences in India and with the Indian people. The other, a Slovenian Roma, asked to have his photo taken with Anja at the end of the night because he said that the Roma ancestry originates from India and thus he felt a connection with her in light of his heritage.

Once we had finished our coffee, we began the part of the interview where Anya was to share with me something indicative of her aesthetic experience in the Slovene culture. Anya told me that we were going to make sarma, a local regional cuisine. She wanted to share with me the entire process, so first she took me to the local open-air produce market, where she selected fresh vegetables from her familiar vendor. Next we went to the butcher shop to order the meats and to the grocery store in Izola to purchase additional items. The ingredients included: Cabbage soaked in brine for the wrapping; minced pork and beef mixture with egg, salt and pepper and rice partially cooked with bouillon and oil for the filling; and a sauce which included salted pork, parsley, onions sautéed together in oil, the top leaves of cabbage sliced up, tomato paste, water and corn starch.

Once we obtained all of the ingredients locally, we went to Anya's apartment in Isola. We prepared the sarma together in her kitchen which is small compared with U.S. norms, but orderly and has a very nice view of the Adriatic Sea. We followed a handwritten recipe which she had been given by one of her local friends in Slovene language. First we separated and filled the cabbage leafs with the filling mixture, then folded the leaf over, tucked in the edges and rolled it until each one was a self-contained

pillow that we stacked into the soup pot. Once we had made approximately a dozen of the stuffed cabbage leaves, we covered them with sauce and set the pot on to boil for 1.5 to 2 hours.

As we prepared and cooked the sarma, we continued to talk. She told me how she had been introduced to sarma at a Slovene friend's house. I asked her why she considers sarma an example of a cultural aesthetic expression.



41. Anya cooking sarma. Photo taken March 2008. Izola.

The first time I had sarma was at a friend's house, which of course was a very enjoyable time, and assumed it was a typical Slovene dish. Of course later I found out that it was a Serbian dish. I like sarma because it is a winter specialty and makes for a warm, inviting and substantial meal on a cold day. Sarma is interesting because it has become part of the Slovene cuisine. To me cultures are interesting for the various inputs (music, food, language and clothing) that go towards making it complex and layered. I think it makes for a rich culture.

I asked her why she decided to show me the market and the sarma making process as an example of how she has made meaning through aesthetic experience.

I have always been partial to farmers markets. One of the main attractions for me in Izola is the trznica. Although small it captures the essence of life in a small town. Saturday, especially in summer, is wonderfully vibrant with colors, sounds, smells of coffee, bread. There are two people from whom I primarily buy my produce. One of them is an older woman by the name of Violeta. When I was new here I did not buy from her because she seemed unfriendly. However eventually I did start and discovered that she was quite friendly. Often she will have a small bouquet of flowers for me because she knows I really enjoy them. She refers to herself as teta (aunt) when she sees my children. She has taught me a few Slovene words and sometimes will recommend ways of preparing salads. Also a friend of mine sells flowers in spring and part of summer. Invariably on Saturday mornings I am there along with other friends of hers and we have coffee. Definitely something I look forward to every year.

Anya shared some final thoughts about her initial experiences in Slovenia while the sarma was cooking. She said she felt like there was an unspoken social barrier that

she could not get across as a foreigner. This barrier continues to exist in terms of feeling like she and her husband have local friends, but are still held at a certain distance in terms of being part of their close social circle.

It seems like they take pleasure in it though, some Slovenes. They'll say, yeah, yeah, we Slovenes are really closed, and I'll say...wait a minute, I'm not sure you should be so happy about that. And they're also really proud of their language being so difficult...I could be completely wrong, but that is the kind of feeling I get...and maybe it is because they need to feel special because it is a small country, so limited and they are isolated in a way because they are at odds with the ex-Yugoslavs, they are odds with the Croatians usually, but they don't exactly fit into the E.U. either...I think they need to feel special and so perhaps this is how they express it.

Another thing with Slovenes that has been really disappointing is—with me they've been really good, their response to my husband as an American and me as an Indian has been very positive—but they are not so with other ex-Yugoslavs, the Bosnians or the Albanians. That is very disappointing and typical. It is such a small country, so full of warmth and people treat us so well, they are very nice and open and then you hear them talking about their neighbors and its, "Oh, Bosnians, or oh, Serbians, they are so rude and inhospitable." Mostly it is reserved for further south, but when we moved to Izola some acquaintance of ours, educated people; doctors and stuff, I liked them, but it was like, "Oh, how could you move to Izola. No. It is such a blue-collar town. All these people from Bosnia.." And the common complaint is that people have lived here for ten years and they don't want to speak Slovene—and I'm complimented for reciting Slovene numbers after seven years of living here. I think that is disappointing, but I guess it is the same as in India, you know, "Oh, Pakistanis..." But I like it here in Izola and I guess that means I fit in well with the blue-collar crowd.



42. *Sarma*. Photo taken March 2008, Izola, Slovenia.

Anya invited me to stay for dinner and eat sarma with her family, but unfortunately I had another obligation. She packed a very generous portion of the sarma in a bowl for me to take home. I shared some with my landlords who were very complimentary of the flavor and quite surprised that it had been made by an expatriate.

Significant themes in Anya's narrative.

Anya's narrative was primarily concerned with a cultural aesthetic derived from her everyday experience. The majority of references to forms of aesthetic expression were related to clothing, food, music and movies. Movies and literature often overlapped in terms of books that were turned into movies. Anya related cultural aesthetic experience to her social interactions and a sense of belong within the community. Interestingly, music and movies were not distanced in the way they were addressed. In other words, they were not seen in terms of high culture, popular culture or alternative culture. They were tied closely to her everyday use experience within the home.

Academic institutions were prominent in Anya's previous exposure to culture. Educational institutions continue to play a role in her current cultural experience, albeit a secondary role as the employer of her husband. The structure and role of society played by the academic institution seemed to influence her experience with the culture, especially in her childhood recollections. Anya's narrative indicates a link between access and exposure to culture that seemingly changed over time and context, more than it changed in relation to cultural context.

Anya's meaning making appears to be very personal and to take place mainly through insightful and explorative means. The forms of aesthetic expression she mentions, especially food and personal adornment, play a major role in her cultural interactions. Though intellectual, her learning is not closely related to academics. Anya's narrative indicates awareness not only to her learning about the culture through aesthetic expressions of the everyday, but also an awareness of how she is perceived as cultural Other—and how she perceives herself as cultural Other, in relation to aesthetic

expressions. Interestingly, she has spent the majority of her life as an expatriate yet maintains rooted in a home culture through the family.

Anya presented in the second interview how cuisine is a cultural aesthetic expression and how it has impacted her perceptions of culture. She mentions food in 14 different contexts within the narrative. Food is mentioned in the context of each culture she has resided, with the exception of Kuwait. Food is mentioned once in the context of her own family and cultural values and she makes only one mention of food in stories about each Nigeria and the United States. Thus, here I will provide further analysis of how Anya makes meaning of culture in Slovenia through her aesthetic experience with food.

Besides several excerpts in which she specifically states that there is a significant cultural meaning in food, she presents food as a form of aesthetic expression in four different contexts. Twice she mentions complete strangers breaking the ice and sharing conversation with her over offerings of homemade wine, schnapps, prsut, olives, etc. In this sense, the locals are sharing their culture with Anya as a form of personal culture or personal identity. A third reference to being given fish by a fisherman she didn't know also indicates inclusiveness in terms of productivity. Anya's access in interpersonal, her response is empathetic and her evaluation is sentimental in the sense the food represents a sharing of the cultural self. Thus her approach represents a semiotic aesthetic approach. Learning is indicated in terms of a responsive, participatory internalization of the aesthetic which is conveyed through explorative means.

Anya's narrative also discusses food aesthetics as symbolic of communal acceptance. Twice she talks about friends who bring her vegetables from their gardens, or

honey from their beehives. She also talks about the market woman, signifying a friendly acceptance over time by throwing in extra produce for free. In this sense the value is still sentimental, but also has economic significance.

Once, Anya mentions food in relation to an environmental aesthetic. She talks about hiking into the hills of Lucia and the ability to eat wild figs directly from the trees as indicative of a sense of place. Here there is an emotional response and a sublime sense of the occasion.

Finally, Anya talks about introducing aspects of what she has learned about the Slovene culture to friends through food three times. This includes the second interview for this inquiry, where she introduces me to sarma and the marketplace. In these cases, her actions indicate an internalization of these cultural aspects and a desire to transmit her learning to share it with others. In the case of sarma, this cuisine is symbolic for Anya in a number of ways. She discussed historical influences and interactions that resulted in the adaptation of the food from Serbian culture to Slovene culture. Furthermore she mentions a contradictory awareness of how this food is also representative of cultural biases and communal exclusion. Food as a cultural aesthetic expression is metaphoric to an organic sense of culture. Culture in this sense can be viewed as a product and process in relation to nature and growth and the reaping the bounty of hard work. The giving of food presents an attitude toward nourishing exchange, sharing and sustaining life, and the function of food as a reason to communicate, a necessity for life as well as an embellishment for a spiritual way of living.

Heather's Narrative

You can be physically in a culture and mentally not engaged at all with it and resisting engagement with it, I don't consider that immersion. You're sort of living side by side with the culture but you're not open to it.

-Heather

Background and profile.

Heather is a 39 year old female from the United States of America working as a translator in Slovenia as well as teaching English courses at a University in Ljubljana. She had resided in Slovenia for seven years at the time of our initial meeting, which was at a social club function for expatriates. Heather and her husband (also a translator and professor) were assisting with interpreting Slovene to English at a truffle hunting excursion and dinner. I gained her interest in participating in this inquiry as we talked about the focus of this research project.

Heather's formal arts education was in music performance, music pedagogy, and musicology. She began her study of piano and voice at the age of five. She studied toward a PhD in Musicology at Indiana University in Bloomington, but did not complete the degree. She has also taken university courses in folklore, music history and art history. Her informal artistic interests include a variety of crafts, photography and popular music.

Expressing interest in international travel to her parents as a teenager, Heather's intercultural experience has been related to music study and language teaching and translation in her adult life. She studied music for one year in Austria, taught English for one year in Slovakia, and now resides in Slovenia with her two primary school-aged children, running a translating business with her husband. She has also traveled

throughout Europe for visits of several weeks. Additional background information about Heather is provided in table 3.1.

Cultural immersion and the institution.

Heather's narrative was difficult to arrange into the established thematically ordered sub-sections. At the beginning, much of her narrative was less concerned with her own cultural interactions and more intellectually or academically derived and information focused. Although her narrative did not directly acknowledge institutional sources, there is a tone of confidence that the information stems from some form of knowledge-based authority or essential truth. However, toward the end of the first interview I was excited by how much I was learning about Slovene culture through Heather's narrative and how many of the words that I had read or heard previously were beginning to connect and develop meaning in light of Heather's experience.

Heather and I had discussed my inquiry on a previous occasion, and so the first interview was not the first conversation about this topic. Due in part to Heather's academic background in music and musicology, our conversation by-passed a number of the preliminary questions about arts and culture and went quickly into the philosophical questions underlying the aesthetic inquiry. I saw this as an evolution of the inquiry process, that ultimately the research question was guiding the inquiry into diverse territory. I also considered it a pragmatic approach to advancing the inquiry by effectively considering the wealth of prior knowledge and the unique interests of participants as individuals. Thus the headings will be more indicative of my focus for thematic analysis of the sub-section, than of the topic of the narrative itself.

To gain insight on how Heather's thoughts had been influenced by academic training, I began our conversation by asking her to discuss her research interests.

I got interested in how good a semantic system is music and how specifically can it communicate. How much can it really tell you about the composer or about the culture it comes from. Some people really claim that music is a language and that they can read it as a text and other people feel that that is not the case. I actually fell into the later category, I think music can be discussed allegorically and that it can certainly arouse feelings in people, but I don't think it is specific enough to say this is Czech music and that is German music and there is a difference. But people have believed this in the past and some people believe it now and so that was my question.

That's what I wanted to study in specific relation to the Czech, sort of reawakening movement that took place in the 19th century. So, I didn't actually finish this topic, but I found it frustrating too because there is a lot of literary theory that has made its way into musicology and so you really kind of have to fight your way through people who think you really can read a score as a text. And, at least in my opinion as a performing musician, that's not true. But, I wanted to write about this, I wanted to tease it out more and kind of study their point of view and see if I could prove it or disprove it or make any points about it.

Here, Heather seems to state her perspective quite directly; that there is no expression specific to culture communicated aesthetically in the form of music. She also mentions that the opposing point of view exists in musicology literature, stemming from literary theory and that it is problematic.

I encountered a related point of view from a Slovene pianist and music student with whom I spoke at a reception, after he had performed for the evening ceremony of the opening of the Slovenian European Union Presidency. He was of the opinion that music has a universal aesthetic, not determined in any way by culture. Although I am not an expert in the field of music, I found his opinion difficult to agree with and perhaps a bit Eurocentric. I thought that I had personally encountered diverse musical aesthetics that seemed to expand the boundaries of the beautiful. Examples from my own

experience would include musical genres originating from South America, Native North America, Middle East, Africa and Asia.

In *Emotion and Meaning in Music* (1956), composer and philosopher Leonard B. Meyer argued that music is a form of cultural language:

The languages and dialects of music are many. They vary from culture to culture, from epoch to epoch within the same culture, and even within a single epoch and culture....The organization of sound terms into a system of probability relationships, the limitations imposed upon the combining of sounds, and so forth are all common characteristics of musical language. It is to these that comparative musicology must turn if it is to make further progress in studying the music of different cultures. (Meyer, 1956, p.62-63)

Since Heather's musical research interests seemed closely related to my dissertation study, I asked her how she had planned to conduct her study.

*Well, my starting point really was the idea that Smetana, Bedřich Smetana a 19th century Czech composer, he wrote certain pieces of music that were considered real icons of Czech culture like *Má Vlast*, you may have heard of this [singing], you might have heard that tune sometime, it's familiar, but there is a series of six tone poems so they're orchestral pieces, there is no lyrics, right, and they're supposed to be about various aspects of Czech landscape and culture. So they have iconographic titles like *Má Vlast*, my country is the name of the series and then one of them is called *Vltava*, named for the river, another one is named after the castle, then one is about that king that goes to sleep and then he comes out of the mountain, I can't remember his name, but anyway, the one that is the river he described this with text, he discussed what it was and so you're on this river traveling through the countryside and you go past a peasant wedding and you come to the big cliff where the castle is on top and you see the castle and so he used these particular musical motifs to illustrate these things. The people who read the newspapers during that day and read his discussion of this and then went to hear the music, certainly heard and understood the things that he pointed out, so he basically wrote the text for them and they heard it the way he wrote it, you see what I mean, so it was sort of literary and musical. But now my idea is, could I play that for you and would you hear any of those things? Then of course my answer is no, you wouldn't. And another interesting things is another one of the*

tunes that is famous from here that has now even been taken over by Czechs and it has new lyrics put to it and they sing it as a Czech folk song, the tune actually came from Sweden where he lived and worked when he was younger and then he picked it up from a Swedish folk song and then he put it in his own music and now it's considered a Czech folk song. I just find all of that process so interesting so I wanted to work on it historically and musically and I wanted to read more about the theory of how you read music as a text and I really just wanted to find out what I thought. I wasn't sure when I started it and I'm still not because I haven't done the research. But that gives you an idea of where I would have started.

As I listened to her speak, I considered ways in which Smetana's interpretation and expression of his feelings and his thoughts might reflect his cultural concept in the music: How culture is reflected in the composer's notion of what a good music composition is to begin with. Does music tell us anything cultural in general? Perhaps not literally (depending of course how the concept of culture is understood), but maybe it alludes to something about the artist's culture at the time and/or how this particular piece of music has gained layers of significance to the concept of culture now.

Heather pointed out that the inspiration for the music reflected a cultural movement, as well as a political movement. I told Heather that I found these ideas relevant to the question of how we might learn about a culture through aesthetic means such as music. I shared with her that I was finding in my own experience at the time that the aesthetic message in the art forms was not a whole all by itself. Other factors contribute to the aesthetic experience and so they reinforce thinking about the topic, perhaps through a musical way of knowing which is different from other ways of knowing. I mentioned that the idea of aesthetic experience, as Dewey had seen it as a form of communication, can be expressed musically, visually, through dance, all kinds of ways that are different ways of knowing. But in the hierarchy of ways of knowing, presently they aren't as highly appreciated.

I think that is it, they do communicate something in some way, but with music, music ends up needing some linguistic mediation in order to communicate what it is the artist wanted it to mean.

Heather's statement indicated a theoretical perspective of principal intent, by which the meaning of art is determined by the artist's intention, or the artist's meaning is privileged as the most valid meaning. I asked Heather to clarify whether she thought it was a definite need that music be accompanied by language or if this just serves the purpose of reinforcing.

Or it just enhanced by it maybe. It doesn't necessarily need text; take the Smetana music as an example. Now in today's Czech society, little snippets from this music are used for things like when they start the news on TV, stuff like that, little tiny bits of it. And I think lots of Czech people know little tiny bits of that music and maybe don't even know where it comes from and probably don't know this original linguistic text that went along with it, that this is what I describe in this tone poem because it is more than a hundred years old; it's a hundred and fifty years old. But they know the music and they know that it's Czech. So at some point, it did what he wanted it to.

I suggested that this music may now serve as a unifying device for the Czech people.

So anybody that comes close to Czech culture and starts learning the language will also encounter this music somehow. They may not be aware of it either, but it will be part of their experience.

In the above excerpts, Dawn indicates that the principal intent of this music was to serve an instrumentalist, political function. In her initial description of the music however, Heather's description of the artist's principal intent (derived from a text) indicates a sentimental response, influenced by images, memories and emotions significant to the composer. She later makes reference to contextual connections, and goes on to point out that over time the same music appears to have taken on semiotic relevance to the culture for outsiders. Thus, there are multiple layers of meaning associated with this one piece of music for Heather.

Since we were on the topic of cultural identity, I asked Heather if she thinks this feeds into the Slavic ethnic identity as well.

Well that was part of it, part of the Czech awakening was also part of the pan-Slavic movement, like we're all Slavic brothers and this is how we're different from everybody else, and this is what makes us Slavic brothers. Smetana, he was a little bit too early for all that but Janáček was really into all of that. Janáček wrote all of the Slavic Glagolitic Mass is what it's called in English, he wrote what ends up to be kind of a linguistic mish-mash of old Slavic, but it was his idea to sort of bring Slavic back to its roots and have people singing it. Janáček was another really- I mean the Czech music scene was really interesting in terms of classical music intersecting with culture and politics and then becoming part of identity and then Janáček was kind of a weird composer in some ways. For him language was very important, which is why he used things like this Glagolitic, this old text, which like I said is kind of linguistically weird. I won't go into the reasons why for right now, but it doesn't really matter because what he did with it musically was very modern. He was more into the idea of pan-Slavic and Slavic brotherhood and this music is for all Slavs, not just for Czechs, more than Smetana who was more conservative and focused on a Bohemian, Czech, local identity.

The concept of ethnic identity construction and instrumentalist aesthetic notions had emerged as a point of interest in my experience in Slovenia as I was gaining a greater understanding of recent historical events in the region and the contemporary social dynamics. I was finding it to be quite a common experience that ethnicity was mentioned to me by the locals with whom I interacted; it seemed significant in respect to their interactions with one another and with other groups in the region.

Heather's reference to Slavic unity had brought to my mind the work of art nouveau artist Alphonse Mucha. I asked Heather if she was familiar with Mucha and whether she knew if his *Slavic Epic* was part of this movement.

Yeah, you can't avoid that if you ever got to Austria or the Czech Republic you have to encounter Mucha. You can't get away from him.

Yeah, it is, Janáček and Mucha were feeding into the same thing which had its expression in a lot of these other cultures too. There was some here in the south Slavic countries as well, some Slovenes really got into it for a while. There is

some intellectual cross-fertilization between the Slovenes and the Czechs actually when it came to linguistics too, because part of this was linguistics research. But yeah, Mucha, that Slavic allegory is a frieze isn't it, or is it a series of paintings, I don't remember?

Mucha's *Slav Epic*, which consists of 20 oversized canvases, has had an interesting history as a landmark painting. In its entirety, the *Slav Epic* was exhibited only briefly when completed in 1935. At that time it was largely ignored and seen as outdated for its



43. Alphonse Mucha, *Slav Epic* (1935). Images retrieved July 13, 2008 from: [http://www.muchafoundation.org /MGallery.aspx](http://www.muchafoundation.org/MGallery.aspx)

nationalist message and subject matter and its academic style. It was not exhibited again in its entirety until 1967, where it is still on display during the summer only in the remote

Czech village of Moravsky Krumlov. Plans for a specially built pavilion in Prague to permanently house the paintings are underway and the exhibition is intended to open in 2010 (Mucha, 2006).

The whole Slavic thing was just, you know, the 19th century was the era of national identity anyway. The Germans were undergoing the same thing at the same time. So, it seems to me to be just what was in the air. I know it sounds somewhat like an intellectual cop out, but I think it's true, because it's just what people in the academic circles and the artistic circles were doing then. It was just kind of exciting to say, here's our ancient myths, this is when the Kalevala was discovered, published, all these things and here's our ancient myth and here's what we still are today, sort of defining an identity—I mean they perceived it as rediscovering an identity, I think what they were really doing was defining an identity. But that's also open to debate, of course.

Here, Heather's descriptions again indicate an instrumentalist approach to understanding aesthetic experience. The discussion is organized in a way that tends to attribute the art forms mentioned to a limited range of socio-political movements categorized in terms of era. This way of structuring information is common to art history courses, thus implying to me a strong institutional influence in Heather's intellectual way of perceiving aesthetic experience.

Toward the end of the conversation, I asked Heather to look over the questions and answer anything that I hadn't asked for which she had an opinion. She responded directly to the question of what it means to be immersed in another culture. Here and in other places, I have reorganized the conversation to fit the structure of this section.

That's an interesting question. What does it mean? ... You can be physically in a culture and mentally not engaged at all with it and resisting engagement with it, I don't consider that immersion. You're sort of living side by side with the culture but you're not open to it. Different people are at different levels of openness so I don't know what it means to be immersed because does it also mean that you want to be that? I consider myself to be very open to Slovene culture but I have absolutely no desire to be Slovene. I don't want people to think I'm Slovene, I don't want to be a Slovenian citizen, I have permanent residency here, I actually applied for citizenship for practical reasons and didn't get it because I would

have had to have given up my American citizenship and I didn't want to, so I didn't do it. So I just have permanent residency. While I like it that my kids function well in this culture, I don't particularly care about whether they think they're Slovene or not either. So I would say that I'm not an immigrant in terms of not wanting to become Slovene in any way. If I live here for the rest of my life it will always be as an expat. But on the other hand I would say that I'm more immersed than a lot of people because I speak the language well and I cope with the system. I do everything Slovene, we don't go to American doctors and we're not in American education. We're doing it all in the local context and not planning to move away, so in a way I'm a lot more immersed than a lot of the expats I meet. Some people are, but most people are in and out for other reasons and they have to maintain some sense of separation because they know they're on their way somewhere else. They can't sort of emotionally commit to it.

I told Heather that I had asked myself this question quite consistently, because I had been spending a lot of time sitting in front of my computer while in Slovenia, working on this inquiry. I had been putting a conscious effort into get out to different events and to build relationships with locals, but a lot of my research involved talking with expatriates. The language also was proving to be an obstacle, although I had tried to get intensive training and had been getting tutoring.

I wonder about it too because I wonder how much other people's perception of your immersion is different from your own and what made me think of that is you said you spend a lot of time in front of the computer and of course so do I and my mother is always surprised at how much I know about what is going on in the United States. She'll say, I know you probably haven't heard about it but we're having a huge forest fire in California and I'll say, oh yeah, it's already such and such number of acres burned and I usually know more about it than she does and she's like, how do you know that and I say, well I read the news every day. I look at CNN's website and all these other things and I kind of know what's happening...so other people think I'm more immersed than I do because I stay in touch with home and they think of me as far away and gone.

My conversations with Heather were fruitful in posing challenges to the questions I was inquiring about as well as answering from her own perspective. She offered a valuable viewpoint with which I could relate and compare on the basis of shared home culture. It

was obvious to me that Heather had put a lot of effort and consideration into immersing herself into and learning about the Slovene culture.

Aesthetics and education.

To gain insight into her perceptions about the role of aesthetics in her own education, I asked Heather if she had perceived her learning about historical and political aspects of music as derived somehow through the art form, or whether it was maybe the historic aspects that led her to the art form.

I definitely started as a performer of music and an interpreter of music as written and I really perceived music as just music. The sort of cultural and historical layers only interested me much later. I spent ten years teaching piano lessons, competently explaining how to interpret Mozart and how to interpret Chopin and how to play jazz and how to do these different things, but not really, I didn't feel like I needed to know much about the history or interpretation or what people were saying about it, or the theory, although I was always good at music theory, but I never found analysis to be particularly useful except sometimes it would show you, okay, this chord is really interesting because he's been avoiding doing that three times and now he does it. It's very practical, nuts and bolts of how the music is put together, it doesn't have much to do with cultural trends or history or anything else.

I think that plenty of musicians are excellent musicians without any deeper understanding of any of the background. I don't think they really need it and I think I was too. I really took a turn away from performing to study musicology and it surprised me how far away it was because suddenly there were all these people telling me things about music that I was supposed to know and they had never performed any of it and they couldn't even perform it, they couldn't even play. They could push the button on the recorder but they couldn't really play anything and suddenly they were telling us, this means this and that means that, and you should never play it like this, and I thought that was kind of strange that they thought they could read 19th century concert reviews and then tell us how to play this music and as a performer I found that odd. As a student of musicology I understood the reflex, but it was really two different things. So, in terms of getting at music as an art form I don't think you need all of this stuff at all to appreciate and love music and to perform it and do all of those things, on the other hand it makes it interesting.

Here Heather begins to articulate from personal experience with the art form in relation to academia. She speaks in terms of a dichotomy between practical and theoretical knowledge. I asked her what it was that makes her appreciate the art form.

For its music, for its beauty, for the way it makes you feel as a performer, for the technical challenge of doing something that is physically hard and getting it right, making an instrument sound as beautiful as it can, and the beauty of it. It's like making something, you know, playing a piece of music well is a lot like, I don't know, making a pot and feeling really happy with how it looks when it's done and how it feels in the hands and it's physical for me.

Here, Heather privileges an aesthetic attained through the challenge presented by psychomotor learning over the aesthetic attained through cognitive and convergent means in regards to music performance. I asked Heather if she thought that there is a different attitude that goes into playing music from different cultures.

Sure, well there is a different attitude and art music is different from native music. Folk music is kind of, folk music is a slippery term because folk music is performative now too. Like here in Slovenia, there's a lot of folk music but hardly any of it is like, natural, and that means, it's not sung anymore by people at wakes at home when they lay out their dead. It's sung at performances in national costume in situations that are not natural. So it has moved into the realm of art music, although it is the folk music tradition but it's not really a living tradition the way it was a hundred years ago. And that's different from art music, I think. Music that kind of arises, like in our house we sing a lot and we just sing little ditties, we make up our own songs, we have like recitative back and forth, that's natural music but we're not performing it for anyone. We just do it because it's fun, you know, it's really just fun and that's different. I think folk music was like that too, folk music was done because it was part of life. You baked bread on Saturdays and you sang at wakes and everybody went caroling on Three Kings Day and that's just what was done. That kind of music is different than going up on stage and having everyone applaud and listen raptly and rattle their candy wrappers while you perform. That's really a different thing, they're different kinds of music to me. I'm not sure what the point of your question was, I think I may have missed the point.

I reminded her that she was separating music as an art form from the rest of the knowledge about the culture.

The art music I think is separable that way and this is what I was getting at, folk music is not and what we consider to be art music now used to be more a part of the culture and I think is more separate now, pop music maybe isn't. Pop music is performance but it still somehow relates to our everyday concerns, right? In the way that an orchestra concert doesn't? I would say. I don't think most people relate on a visceral level to what they hear an orchestra play although a lot of people may really relate to something they hear on the radio or some CD or something they have on their MP3 player. So pop music probably acts for us more like real music, I'm sort of out on a musicological limb here of course because people don't all agree with me on this, I do think that art music—well, people talk about the concert hall as a museum, you've probably heard this concept. I think in some ways that's true and the challenge for museum curators is always to find ways to try to make the art more relevant to people, so that they care about it, right? That's kind of the challenge for classical music too. I think it really is separable, that's why you have Japanese people being excellent performers of 19th century German music. The cultural relationship really isn't there anymore, or let's say there is an art music culture that is not rooted in any one physical place, maybe a mental space. That's what I think anyway.

I bounced the idea off Heather that if we looked at the structure of learning about the discipline and how that is different, something culturally derived that affects the end product may arise. I used the example of going through the educational system in Slovenia, which Heather had characterized as being a high pressure experience, requiring a great deal of background information. In this case, it might not be the piece itself but perhaps something in the process that affects the end product. Even something about the way the performer approaches the piece may be different and if we had an ear that was educated to that, then perhaps we would be able to pick that out.

Maybe, there are certain styles of music that are perhaps more comfortable to certain people, but its kind of dangerous to say that, like you would expect Americans to play jazz better than other nationalities...

Here I thought there might be a disconnection in how we understood each other. I hadn't qualified the ideas in terms of better or worse players, in my mind I had been considering the differences in context, process and approach, so I asked her to clarify.

I'm only suggesting that, I don't actually, maybe sometimes they do, you know, supposedly it's our music. Supposedly it comes from some fertile crossroads in the United States where we had these two cultures and they came together and they made jazz. So, maybe we're better at jazz, I don't know. Maybe certain Americans are better at jazz, maybe they're better at jazz in New Orleans. I wouldn't actually say that's true, but musical performance is kind of like being a songbird if you listen to people who you consider good and whose performance you like and then you copy them, you are also a good performer if you are physically capable of doing that. It's not as creative as painting a picture.

Her explanation sparked thoughts about how culture was a factor in jazz creation and not necessarily where it is now.

That's right, well a Brahms symphony was definitely rooted in 19th century Germany, but it isn't anymore. It's been sort of cut from those roots and now it belongs in a different sphere.

I brought up the phenomenon of the German composer Wilhelm Richard Wagner, since I had learned more about his life as a result of touring the Schloss Neuschwanstein in Bavaria. I suggested that if we situate him historically then there is a different story than if we just hear the music isolated from the context and all of the people and politics of the times.

Or you could be like one generation of Americans and you could associate it with Bugs Bunny and Elmer Fudd.

I mentioned that the generation she was referring to was my generation. Here Heather offers an interesting example of the re-appropriation of the context of high art to popular culture.

Well, my husband claims that his first and broadest exposure to classical music of all kinds including Wagner was the Warner Brothers cartoons and I think that's true, I mean he lived on a farm far away from any city and never was taken to a concert or shown a concert on TV or anything until high school and yet he heard classical music in the home when he saw cartoons. He learned to actually love the Wagner he heard in those cartoons and then he went and sought out Wagner and studied him and learned about this music later.

Music can be reinvented; the very same music can be reapplied and remapped on a new context and that's the thing you really can take music out of its original context and put it somewhere else and well, it's still the same music and still has the same musical value but that doesn't really, I don't think, it communicates that much.

And Elmer Fudd and Bugs Bunny, their creators of course new the original Wagner story and of course they riffed on that, they spoofed it, so adults that watched these cartoons and did know it got an extra layer of humor from it and kids enjoyed it anyway, even if they had no cultural reference at all, they hadn't even heard of Wagner, or adults who hadn't heard of Wagner still enjoyed it.

The Warner Brothers cartoon parody on Wagner's *Der Ring des Nibelungen* entitled,

What's Opera, Doc? from 1957, directed by

Chuck Jones, is aesthetically affective on a

number of levels. It is affective on a humorous

level due not only to its cartoon character

appearance, the one-liners of the characters and

the entertaining scenario, but also because it is

a referential spoof on a significant example of



44. Still from *What's Opera Doc?* (1957).

Image retrieved July 13, 2008 from:

http://www.animafest.hr/hr/uploads/images/svjetski_klasici/B_WhatsOperaDoc.jpg

high cultural art that has an attitude of seriousness. An additional consideration of the

culture surrounding this cartoon is the history of the era in which it was created and the

significance of cultural influences derived from Germany. For example, Walt Disney's

Cinderella castle was inspired by Schloss Neuschwanstein (which contains murals of

Wagner's operas commissioned by King Ludwig II) just after World War II. This was at

a time when Disney's cartoons were in high competition with Warner Brother's

animation studio (Barrier, 1999). *What's Opera Doc*, is considered an art form in its own

right. It was regarded as number one of the 50 greatest cartoons of all times in the

animation field in 1994 (Beck, 1994).

Returning the conversation to her personal experience outside of American culture I remembered that Heather had talked to me about how great it was to learn about art history in Vienna, Austria. I asked her to clarify what she was expressing about what she got out of being there in Vienna, rather than learning the information from books.

I was in Vienna in 1991 which was the bicentennial of Mozart's death, so it was one of those big Mozart years and we lived five minutes from St. Stephens in the center and they had the big requiem mass for Mozart that year, his death date is in December and they rang the bells on the church all night for this Mozart requiem and we were right there where it happened and somehow, especially when you're a young person, the place is significant to you. I had to say I hated history in school, I was good at mechanical stuff like math and music, but I didn't like history and I never got interested in history until I traveled. Going to places like this made me wonder, why does it look like this? Why did they build their buildings like this? Why is it called Radetsky Platz? And now I want to know. When I was in Tucson, Arizona surrounded by cactus, why did I care who Radetsky was? For me it wasn't relevant until I saw the place, and then it was. For me it was like being there in a classroom with three and a half meter high ceilings and these tall windows, chandeliers in the building and walking home through the first district of Vienna was just a very different emotional, cultural experience and so it made me wake up to stuff that I hadn't cared about when I was at home. For me the place really was significant, alright this really is the death place, this really is Brahms' grave, I'm standing right in front of it, he is buried right here, you know this really is where Freud lived, I'm standing in front of his house, and to me that was interesting. It made it more interesting to me, I wanted to know more about it.

Here, Heather talks about the significance of place in her motivation and retention of learning historical knowledge. The way she describes her sense of being in the place indicates an aesthetic experience associated with the circumstance: Learning is intensified by converging information gained through all the senses; the physical location of the body is coupled with the cognitive message that the self is sharing in a similar aesthetic experience with those who took part in events of the past in terms of seeing the same objects and navigating the same space; the imagination is engaged in the inquiry of

considering what it was like to be there in the past or to interact with historical figures, thus connecting information with lived experience.

In Slovenia, Heather often translates for musicologists. I asked her how music and translation are related for her.

Probably the relationship is in my personal interest in languages, I've always liked languages. As soon as I could in school I started taking foreign languages. When I was twelve I took Spanish and our neighbors all spoke Spanish because I grew up in Tucson. So that was my first foreign language and then I moved into German and the Slavic languages and I married a linguist so that kind of dragged me into languages even more.

The interesting thing is that my kids are now growing up bilingual and they are very competent bilinguals. They speak both languages equally well. I find that they are also musically talented and I wonder if one affects the other, specifically because I haven't made any effort to make them musical. I didn't do any early musical training with them other than just being musical myself. I really haven't tried to push them much for anything and my older daughter is actually pushing me. She's in choir and she's forcing me to give her piano lessons so, and they're both in dance and the younger one is probably naturally more talented than the older one but she's not pushing to actually do it yet but she's got a really good ear, she sings well. It's funny because I never planned to push them into that because I don't want to be a stage mother type. In fact I've kept the older one out of music school because I think the music schools here get too serious too fast, too early and I don't want it to break her spirit so I don't have her in it. Meanwhile she loves music, so that's good.

Here she began to talk about music in terms of the process of education. I asked Heather to clarify her thoughts on how music school in Slovenia might break her daughter's spirit.

Here in Slovenia they do music lessons different from in the United States. I wouldn't say that my spirit was broken, I really liked my music lessons when I was growing up. But I just had a private teacher and if I didn't like my teacher then my mom would find a different one that I liked better. The main goal was to enjoy what I was doing. My parents were never stage parents trying to make money off me or get me on TV or anything like that, it was low pressure. I just experienced music as a joyful, fun thing to do and I even learned I could make money with it, by the time I was 14 I was giving lessons to neighborhood kids and playing at weddings. I found a utility in it too.

So for me that was all good, then I come here to Slovenia and I find that there hardly exist these private teachers who just teach at their houses and you just go

to for an hour a week. It's all a music school and you have to audition just to get in and then they place you with a teacher in a theory class and these kids have to be there two afternoons a week and they have to do theory and its very high pressure because the whole goal is that you have to achieve this certain block of musical knowledge by the end of the year and you'll be tested on it and you'll have to perform. I just find that a little pushy because not everyone who wants to learn music wants to be a musical performer or to do that for a career and I think there should be some middle ground where you can just learn it for fun and not be pushed beyond what you might be patient enough to do. So, I haven't gotten her or really looked for a music school that would be less pushy.

Here, Heather's indicates that she doesn't agree with the high pressure approach to music education in which the objective is to perform. Later in the narrative she will discuss general education with a more positive perspective toward the benefits of educational pressure. I found it interesting that even though Heather was involved professionally in music, she privileges other forms of knowledge in regards to the requirement of pressure in the education process.

Cultural aesthetic experience.

I enjoyed the entire interview with Heather, however, during this next section of our first interview and during our second interview I learned a great deal about Slovenian culture from Heather that profoundly impacted my perspective. Also, her insight came at a time when I was reading theoretical perspectives on the same or similar topics, and so I consciously experienced a push forward in my own cultural understanding in certain directions.

Heather is not involved in music as a performer or instructor in Slovenia. However, keeping on a topic that she seemed rather comfortable and knowledgeable about, I asked her to tell me how she experiences the music of Slovenia.

When we first came to Slovenia [my husband] tried to encourage me to take an interest in Slovenian music and the sort of odd thing is that I never really did. Definitely not in the art music here and one of the reasons is the art music that I enjoy most personally as a performer and as a listener is 19th and early 20th century music and Slovenia seems to kind of have a hole in that regard. Well, and Slovenia is small enough that there aren't really that many composers anyway. There are only 2 million people now and a hundred years ago fewer than that here. They were dominated by the Austrians, so a lot of the music that was performed and taught in the music schools here was Austrian, German-Austrian. So there really wasn't a lot of classical music here and what I learned when we first got here, is I got this impression, and I still have this impression but not as strongly.

When I first came here I had this feeling that Slovenia is very avant garde, that the music was very avant garde, that it wasn't tonal that it wasn't really rooted in this 19th century sort of romantic ethos that I liked, that it was very intellectual and removed and atonal and stuff that I actually performed a lot, I did a lot of 20th century music in school but I never felt emotionally drawn to it like I did to other music. So, I never actually ever really liked it. Now that we have come to live in Slovenia, he would buy me music and say they told me that this is the best piano composer in Slovenia...I would play it and just kind of go, ugh...My musical access to Slovenia is through the pop music and the folk music and not through the classical music.

Here, she first takes an academic approach to describing the character of music in Slovenia, responding to the music primarily intellectually and evaluating it historically. Her expressed learning perceptions are comparative and problematic, in terms of the music not appealing to her taste. However, she does indicate she perceives an aesthetic character specific to the Slovene culture.

Next Heather took a brief turn in her narrative to talk about her aesthetic experience in terms of decorating. Interestingly she uses a reference to floral wallpaper; ironically one of the only references that Immanuel Kant used along with “music without text” to exemplify his aesthetic concept of free beauty (Hammermeister, 2002, p.26).

I also found that some of the interior decorating aesthetic struck me the same way. It was very austere, avant garde, you know, funny angles, like old houses that have been renovated and then they leave one beam exposed to look old. Everything else is like, slick, chrome, brand new and there's the one beam. That is

sort of how I perceive of the Slovene aesthetic and I find it a little weird. It doesn't fit me, I'm more of a floral wallpaper kind of person and if I have an old house I really want it to look old. I kind of want the house to look like what it is and so for me that is one of the things that informs my redecorating. We are actually looking for a place right now and we looked at a house that was built in around the same era as this one in the 1930s and the kitchen has a really sort of 1940's feel to it and I was thinking if I redecorated this place I would have fun with it and make it look like a 1940s kitchen. I would get one of those rounded refrigerators and put the black and white checked linoleum, just because I think it would be fun to remind people of how old the house is instead of hide it or instead of saying look how modern I am I have a slick chrome smart house where I push a button and everything happens. That's just not my aesthetic. But that was my impression of Slovenes and I've sort of moderated that now that I live here and I know people better.

In the next excerpt, she specifically states her learning as having an aesthetic dimension.

Aesthetically I think I have learned a lot, or at least linguistically about Slovenia through the pop music, which I like a lot. I find that the pop music is what they listen to, it's what speaks to today, it is maybe what I'm more interested in too and I listen to a lot of pop music here: Like Vlado Kreslin, like Magnifico, like Siddharta, all the groups that people know, all the different kinds, Laibach, whatever is on. I will put Laibach in another category, it's not pop music. Laibach is actually a good example of what I was meaning by this avant garde aesthetic. I think Slovenes like to be avant garde and Laibach was a really successful and to my taste, really interesting and entertaining example of what other people don't seem to do quite as successfully. I like Laibach's provocative,



45. *Laibach*. Image retrieved July 13, 2008 from: http://www.openmusic.ru/articles-respond-recenses/0292-laibach/0292-laibach_02.jpg

well NSK really, not just Laibach. Laibach is just the musical arm of NSK. I like the NSK approach it is interesting and I like what they say about themselves, what they say about Slovenia, I just find that interesting.

Vlado Kreslin, Magnifico and Siddharta are all popular musicians or musical groups in Slovenia who write and perform music in Slovene

language. Their music is heard often on radio stations within the country, mixed in with popular English music from the U.S. and U.K., as well as popular Italian and German

music. Laibach is a musical performance group from Slovenia that was highly popular in the 1980s. The group's name is taken from the word that German's used to refer to Ljubljana. Their music was somewhere between punk and popular rock music, as they remade a number of songs in their own style. Their performance skirted the line between music and performance art. According to Erjavec, who wrote about the group in terms of their early postmodern approach, "The group employed a totalitarian discourse, equated art with politics, quoted Hitler, praised law and order, denigrated artistic freedom—all in the name of art" (Erjavec, 2003, p.154). He states, "The public attitude toward the group was generally negative or ambiguous. Were they Nazis? Were they anti-Nazis? Were they a totalitarian group, or were they mocking the extant system?" (Erjavec, 2003, p. 153). He later answers, "...the members of Laibach were intellectuals...The Laibach group reversed such familiar perceptions of what an artist, art, freedom and artistic freedom are" (Erjavec, 2003, p. 155).

Well, okay, I don't think NSK is actually trying to say anything about Slovenia, they are trying not to, of course they do end up communicating about Slovenia because they have their own country. How much do you know about NSK? It's Neue Slowenische Kunst, so it's New Slovenian Art and they have their own country. One of the branches of NSK is that it is actually also an imaginary country and the people are citizens of this and they have passports. I just like it as a total artistic concept, a total aesthetic concept.

Neue Slowenische Kunst (NSK) was a group formed in 1984 that included Laibach as well as IRWIN (a visual arts group) and the Theater of the Sisters of Scipio Nasica (Erjavec, 2003, p. 151). Like Laibach, the group used a German name to make a political statement and raising questions of identity influence (Gržinić, 2003). "NSK projects revealed a new cultural context and contributed to the rapid disintegration of the aesthetics and ethical standards of communist cultural and identity" (Gržinić, 2003, p.

248). “In short, it behaved as a veritable political party. In 1990, it started to issue ‘NSK State’ passports, proclaiming NSK embassies and consulates in various European cities” (Erjavec, 2003, p. 152). These passports are still issued, instructions can be found on the internet at: <http://www.nskstate.com/state/passport.php>

Of additional interest, the IRWIN group’s *East Art Map* (2006) represents an extensive project to record the status of art production and historical issues of Eastern European Art (IRWIN, 2006). They explain:

In Eastern Europe (also known as the former communist countries of Europe, Eastern and Central Europe, the New Europe, etc.), there are, as a rule, no transparent structures organizing the kind of referential system for the art-historically significant events, artifacts and artist that would be accepted and respected outside the borders of a given country. What we encounter instead are systems closed within national borders, most often based on a rationale adapted to local needs...In addition, comparisons with the art and artists operating in the West at the same time are extremely rare. (IRWIN, 2006, p. 11)

The editors go on to explain the problems posed by the lack of such a collective written history, “it prevents and serious comprehension of the art as a whole that was created during socialist times...[is a] huge impediment for artists...presents a major block to communication among artists, critics and theoreticians from these countries” (IRWIN, 2006, p. 11). The *East Art Map* serves to document Eastern European art in the tradition of Western European art.

Another notable group of artists working in Slovenia earlier than NSK was OHO who was involved in performance art in the 1960s (Zabel, 1999). The OHO group

included the brothers Šalamun. These brothers are from the Primorska region. Andraž Šalamun continues to paint and I was able to attend an exhibition in Piran of his work and also saw several of his paintings in a Koper gallery, including a haunting image representative of a bison. Tomaž Šalamun is an accomplished poet, who, as it was explained to me in casual conversation by a Slovene woman, was so famous in the United States that the publishers of his books made certain to include the hats atop the letters in his name, as a sign of respect.

Returning to the narrative, I asked Heather if she thought the concept of NSK was a play on an identity notion because of Slovenia's having been influenced by so many different empires.

That's how I perceive it, as we can at least have this little imaginary space that's not really imaginary if you're a citizen, you don't believe it's imaginary, it has a passport, it has laws, a constitution, the stuff they wear, there are other NSK groups that I don't know much about. It started in the 80s, I think it was a culturally vulnerable time for Slovenia because it was in the 80s that they started all of this, even in the 70s. This is when in Yugoslavia the cracks were showing, it was starting to have inflation, people were getting tired of not being able to buy coffee at home and it was never terrible here the way that it was in places like Hungary and Czechoslovakia but there were limitations that people got tired of and I think my outsider's impression was that it was this play on, so what if we were our own place, or maybe we are our own place, or this is how we are our own place and we people who are part of NSK do not have to be beholden to any political system anywhere else because we are our own and I actually have a video you could borrow a DVD that shows some of the early Laibach and some of their concerts and some interview with them on TV which is great because, and its in English, and they just sit there looking solemn and the interviewer asks them some direct questions like you're asking me, like does it mean this or does it mean that, and they never answer any of them directly because they don't want to, they're just like, we just are. We are what we are.

I told Heather that I only knew about NSK from what I had read in books, as mentioned above. I asked her how she knew these things about them. Whether her knowledge came

through this video she spoke of, or through talking to people, or other experience with the work.

All of the above. I know people who know people, and that is another thing too, is that NSK members used to be very secretive about their identity. Of course the Laibach members sort of have to be known and people have to know who they are, but otherwise, being a member was an anonymous thing. People didn't want you to know that they were NSK member, so if you talk to people that I know who know the art scene they are like, yeah I know some people who are NSK and I'm like, who and they are, well...they don't tell you. So it is a little bit of a secret what it stands for, but they have a website that talks about the country and the passports, I think its still up and available. I looked at it a couple of years ago. From listening to the music I get an impression of what they are about.

Heather's comments made me think about a documentary I had seen at the Liffe Film Festival in Ljubljana called *Človeška ribica* or in English, *Human Fish*. The movie was



46. Movie poster for *Human Fish*. Photo taken November 2007, Ljubljana, Slovenia.

made over four-years by Peter Gratz, a German expatriate married to a Slovene woman. It didn't have English sub-titles, but I could follow it through the pictures, the audience reaction and the body language of the people speaking. I was absorbed by the way this film depicted his experience of the culture through a fragmented collage of images and sounds. I saw in the film Slovenia as I was experiencing it, with images of: landscapes, caves, humanfish (a type of cave

salamander), men playing accordions, families, festivals, drinking, painted eggs, lace making, artists working, manual labor, spiritualism, erotica, flags, political gatherings, graffiti, bands, dancing, vineyards, olive groves, cars, interpretive dance, brick streets, winding mountain roads, wine bottles, architecture, children playing, television shows, people in bars, horses, churches, sculptures, folk dancing, residential areas, grape harvesting, youth sitting together in groups on the grass, kurenti, the sea, images of socialism, academics speaking, cityscapes, etc. There were a number of Slovene philosophers interviewed for the movie, one of them was Slavoj Žižek. Žižek answered questions in English, characterizing Slovenes as withdrawn and exhibiting a self-enclosed pettiness. He claimed that Slovenes are narcissistic and see themselves as some great nation of culture and that this was something that they needed to get away from (Žižek, *Human Fish*, 2007).

It's funny, because I have that impression sometimes too, but I don't know if it is my own impression or whether I listen to too many people like Žižek tell me that. They do a lot of thinking about what it means to be Slovene.

I told Heather that from my experience (with the few Slovene's I had interacted with at that point, mostly in academia) they seemed really devoted to being experts. This meant to me that they had a very essentialist perspective of knowledge; that there is one way to know things and a hierarchical approach to knowledge. This was not my experience with the way knowledge and curriculum is approached these days in the United States.

That's true, yeah, and I find myself in conflict with that to some degree now that I have kids in school because at the school, even though they have supposedly just gone through school reform and modernized a lot of things, the school is still extremely hierarchical and so much about learn this by rote, parrot it back to me and be assessed on it and far less on learn this through experience and explain to me how you came to that solution. I find myself, even though my kid is only in 3rd grade, a little bit in conflict with that and I anticipate that to continue.

I added also that they didn't seem very much about competition, but Heather's experience gave me a different insight on the academic situation.

They cheat rampantly. They cheat rampantly all the way up through college and including academics that write papers plagiarize from other academics sometimes extensively. Sometimes this comes up because in our business what we do is translation and editing, we do a lot of editing and we have mostly academic clients who have gradually flocked to us because we produce good, publishable English. What they want to be able to do is have their articles published in English language journals because then somebody actually reads it besides the three other people who are interested in Slovenia. The funny thing is that it is not happening at the faculties, it comes to us, these people have already graduated and they've got their PhD's and they write this article and they'll send it to us and I will sit there and read it and they're writing in English so you will have to make three or four corrections in every line and then suddenly you don't correct anything for a whole page and you start thinking, this style is completely different and now they are using a term that they never introduced before and so you pick out a phrase and search it on the web and you find it and it is some researcher at NY State or something. And you're like, oh, and then you write back to them and politely say, you might want to credit this person for this, and they're like, oh, thank you very much. For them it is like this cooperative, and we've talked about this, it is almost like plagiarism is flattery, what is it... that imitation is the sincerest form of flattery? It's kind of like that and its kind of that Yugoslavia had a very closed academic system and within Yugoslavia, translation is part of the issue here, anybody within the Yugoslavian academic system who actually read outside research and understood it and then actually applied it inside, basically if they read something in German and then translated it to the Yugoslav context it was like that person was the originator of it. Because it was kind of a one-way street, they might reach out and grab something and bring it in but then it didn't really go out again. So it wasn't as though they were having ordinary exchanges with people at conferences every couple months where people would say hey that's my idea you stole that from me, they didn't have that kind of contact, we don't think. I mean we've have kind of constructed this because people really seem surprised when you say, you know you have to cite this. And I say you can't just go drift out and find something on the web and call it your own, but for them it doesn't seem as bad as it does to us.

My students at the university are shocked, when I tell them that you could get kicked out of school for plagiarizing in the United States. At Rice University, where my husband went, they made him sign a pledge at the very beginning not to cheat, not to plagiarize or cheat in any way and the students watched each other and the students would have the others kicked out. My students here can't believe this and I tell them, well, when you write something and put your name on it you are supposed to be the author of it and it's not something that they really understand the way we do, that's a big difference.

But already in 3rd grade my daughter sits next to this little boy who interestingly enough is half Japanese and half Slovene and they like each other, they are good friends. He has more trouble with Slovene than she does, they speak Japanese at home, and his mom and dad speak some English together, so he doesn't get as much Slovene. His dad isn't always here I think because he does robotics research in Kyoto. So sometimes he's here when they're there because the boy has to stay in school. They're an interesting family and the boy is really bright but he's not so good at Slovene, so now that he and my daughter are sitting next to each other and they had an assignment last week to write a story, so she sat and wrote a story, once upon a time...she wrote this whole thing in Slovene and he basically looked over her shoulder and copied the whole story, he doesn't care about being caught. I guess the teacher reprimanded him for it, she walked around and looked at the stories and she read my daughter's and read it and then she picked his up and said, how come I'm reading the same story twice. Which was interesting because I had the impression that a lot of time teachers just turned a blind eye to that kind of cheating. The students basically view it as us against them. Like if the students can conquer the teacher then they're happy, if we just do it with and for each other than that's okay and they don't compete amongst themselves that much. The parents find that the younger kids are competing more and they don't like it, they think these poor kids, they're not learning to work in a team they think that they have to out do the other one to get a good grade. And I think, well, shouldn't they compete with each other? So as an American I really come from a different point of view, I'm like, of course they're competing so I tell my daughter, put your page over it so he can't copy anymore and she's like, they don't like us to do that mom. It's really different, it's funny. I didn't expect that difference, but it's there.

Heather's story raised another interesting point about cultural identity. She described the boy as half Slovene and half Japanese. I told her that I had met a woman who described herself as half Italian because her great, great, great grandfather was Italian. I was thinking about the way that we describe ourselves with percentages in the U.S. but how I am American regardless of having ancestry from different ethnic groups in my genealogy. But the sense of being Slovene seemed to have a different precondition that I wasn't quite sure I grasped.

Well the person who calls herself half Italian might be queuing off the fact that there is a funny situation in Slovenia that Slovenia has two official minorities, that is the Italians and the Hungarians and nobody else counts as a minority even though there are bigger numbers.

I was fascinated by how in this system other groups were not accepted as Slovene, even over multiple generations. Furthermore, there are a lot of Bosnians, Serbians, Croats and other groups who were all once part of the same nation (Yugoslavia) and now they are here, but they are outsiders. Additionally, according to an article, “Ethnic Citizenship in the Slovenian State” (2005) when Yugoslavia dissolved and Slovenia became a nation-state in 1991 citizenship was granted based on ethnicity. “Permanent residents of Slovenia who ethnically originated in other republics of former Yugoslavia had to file an application to acquire Slovenian citizenship...” (Zorn, 2005, p. 135). The author explains that at that time 18,305 people were denied citizenship and these people were, “erased from the Registry of Permanent Residents” (Zorn, 2005, p. 135). She continues, “The Ministry carried out this secret erasure without any legal basis...legally and formally they were made equivalent to migrants who cross borders illegally...suddenly left without any rights” (Zorn, 2005, p. 135).

I told Heather that I couldn't seem to put my finger on what it means to be Slovene, since this is an ethnic group that drifted into this region during the sixth and eighth centuries (Gow & Carmichael, 2000) but no one seems to know where they came from before that. I am apparently not the first to puzzle of this sense of ethnicity derived from language but also something unintelligible, since long before the nation-state of Slovenia existed in 1991 historians wrote: “Slovene history is a puzzle to the Englishman, who finds it hard to understand a struggle for liberty lasting over a thousand years in which scarcely a single incident of historical importance occurs. In fact, the most wonderful thing about the Slovenes is that they exist at all as a nation, after so many centuries of foreign rule” (Lovett, 1954, p. 229) and “A race of only one and a half

million people, they have resisted the bribes and threats, and emphatically retain their own language and culture” (Newman, 1945, p. 187). However, for me the question isn’t how the nationality has managed to survive, but understanding better how the people who make up the culture identify within it, especially if they identify as something other than Slovene. Heather continued to talk about the issue of ethnic groups from ex-Yugoslavian countries.

And they’re not an official minority. What it comes down to is language because Italians and Hungarians in places that are considered official minority regions, like on the coast you are close to the official Italian minority region, they are entitled to do all of their public administration in Italian for example and they have Italian in school. The extent to which they have that depends on where it is, in villages that are considered to be ethnically Italian; I think they have Italian all twelve years. Then in other places it is a four year program and in other places it is just an optional two years like anywhere else. I think the same is true with Hungarian but none of these privileges and support are extended to any other minority. So Bosnians or Croatians and Germans they don’t count as that. I’m not sure how that happened, I think it is inherited from Yugoslavia.

I asked Heather if she saw this issue playing out in any art forms and whether she perceived any form of minority identity or Slovene identity being expressed aesthetically.

Well, Slovenes really do a lot of navel gazing in their movies, but I haven’t seen a lot of Slovene movies. And they do a lot of soul searching about their relationship with the other Yugoslav nations because everyone is a little uncomfortable with what you mentioned, you know they’re outside but they’re not outside and they were part of the same country but now they’re not. Slovenes recognize the fact that they themselves tend to be kind of...I don’t want to use the word racist because that’s not right, they tend to be prejudiced against those people. Oh, Southerners, južnjak, just this word for Southerner it’s so dismissive, ja, južnaki. It just means Southerner, but if somebody says that they are already thinking of some guy that lives in Fužine and doesn’t have a job and carries a knife or he works on construction, I mean they’ve already got this big nasty stereotype. Which of course isn’t always true the irony is that then you meet Slovenes in everyday life whose names all end in ‘ič’ and anyone’s name that ends in ‘ič’ came from the south at some point. But if it was long enough ago that they have started spelling it with a nice Slovenian ‘č’ instead of a Bosnian ‘ć’ then I guess you’re Slovene now. It’s really funny because how certain families make that transition and others don’t I don’t know and it has to do with when they came

here. Slovenes kind of worry about this, they kind of work this concept over I think and it shows up in movies.

A movie that came out a couple of years ago it was called, "Kruh in Mleko" it means milk and bread and its got a famous actor in it and I don't remember his name, he's Bosnian, I think he's Bosnian anyway he is from the south and the actress is Slovene and he is Bosnian and it is about a love affair between a Slovenian woman and a Bosnian guy and how her family doesn't approve and all these funny little things that happen but it is an examination of these relationships and what brings them together, what tears them apart, how does their culturally inherited baggage interfere with their relationship, that's really what its about, "Kajmak in Marmelada" is the name of this movie, there's another one called "Kruh in Mleko." They're all food movies, that is a different one. Kajmak is a food, like a salty, buttery cheese, if you've had it, it's a spread, its good and that's a southern food, its not a native Slovenian food, and marmelada, marmalade jam is very Austrian and proper and the Slovenes grow their own grapes and fruit and they make jam. And so she's the jam and he's the kajmak and can you put these together on bread, maybe. So that's the concept of this movie and the movie is cute, it's light hearted, it is meant to be a comedy and it has a happy ending but it is a lot of picking apart this issue of are we the same or not and how are we different and I think they consider it a lot, especially in movies. It's a cute movie and you might be able to find it with sub-titles too. But I don't see enough Slovene movies, I don't have time. I wish I did because I like them and I find them informative. I go to the theaters whenever there is a new one and of course I rent them and watch them here.

In *Imagined Communities*, Benedict Anderson discusses the origins of national consciousness as a result of the convergent significance of language to capitalism and printed text, primarily religious texts. "...Print-capitalism created languages-of-power... in their origins, the fixing of print-languages and the differentiation of status between them were largely unselfconscious processes resulting from the explosive interaction between capitalism, technology and human linguistic diversity" (Anderson, 1991, p. 45). In other words, in order to spread the word to the masses for capitalistic gain, Latin lost dominance as the written text in favor of the spoken languages of various peoples. Thus printing in multiple languages contributed to the rise of nation-states comprised by language identities. In relation to the importance of getting languages set in print to

sustain them, the Slovenes celebrate 2008 as the Trubar Year. This is marked by an exhibition at the National Museum in Ljubljana honoring Primož Trubar (1508-1586) as the father of the written Slovene language.

Heather's two children speak Slovene language fluently, one was born here the other has lived her most of her life. I asked her if she thought it was possible for them to be considered Slovene.

If they have American parents, I don't know. All those questions are interesting to me and maybe some people would come here and live and not even give it a thought but I do because I think it is interesting.

I asked her how she thinks her daughter's identify.

Well, my eldest daughter says that she is Slovene and American and she likes being different from the other kids. But she likes fitting in, she likes being able to meld in and not have somebody know that she's different and she can meld in and have people not know that she's different. We've visibly shocked people who know her and don't know anything else, you know they just encounter her in school and then I say something in English to her and she just turns around and starts speaking English. You see their jaws drop because they don't expect her to be American, they really are surprised...I think my daughter enjoys being a stealth American. I think she kind of sees herself that way. My youngest is too little to care, she just likes her friend and likes her family. But she is very clear about what cultural language realm she is in, when she's in pre-school she speaks Slovene with everyone all the time and the instant I arrive it is only English with me, she never speaks Slovene with me. My oldest will do that while we are out, if it is to be polite to other people. But the youngest never does, English is mommy's language and there's no way I would speak Slovene to mommy—that just feels too strange to her. But I don't know if they really feel American because they don't live there and so how American can they really feel.

I asked if they like to participate in American culture like with movies and whether they seek that out to try to get a grip on a sense of being American.

I don't really know, they're still maybe too little to seek a lot of things out, they're sort of passive consumers but I actually go out of my way to provide stuff like that, so we watch Warners Brothers cartoons with them and we watch Muppet clips and Sesame Street and I have a lot of American children's books we have a shelf like this in there full of Slovene and another shelf filled with American books. I try to give them these aesthetic aspects—it really is an aesthetic

approach to American culture because they don't have the everyday school environment and they aren't with their cousins every weekend or whatever, although they like their cousins and whenever we go to America they get along great and they play together and it is like they're the same kind of kids. They don't find a lot of disjuncts, like they don't have trouble getting along with American kids. So, I feel like it's working so far, but all I feel like I can give them is my aesthetic approach.

I don't know what it is, but my kids know Dr. Suess and Shel Silverstein, they know Junie B., I don't know how familiar you are with the stuff that's popular in kids' literature today, they know Captain Underpants. These things that are popular with American kids now and they've seen some of the TV shows and things that those kids know, so when they go to the United States they don't seem too weird.



47. *Sesame Street* characters. Image retrieved July 13, 2008 from: <http://images.wikia.com/muppet/images/7/7d/Sesamecast.jpg>

I found it interesting that Heather's daughters were building both a Slovene and American identity through aesthetic cultural archives, which I consider an important part of how we interact in our culture.

Yeah, they do have it and I do that on purpose because I don't want them to be too weird when they go back to the United States...I secretly hope that they will do at least some of their secondary and tertiary education in the United States because I think it is superior and I think it just has more options. There is just more you can do in the United States than here. Slovenia is just small, it's just limiting for being small and they may want to do something that is taught perfectly adequately here, but they may just want a different perspective. Given that they are going to have a good—the Slovene secondary schools are pretty good in some ways, the kids come out with lots of facts at their disposal and pretty good study skills because they don't survive if they don't do that. I'd kind of like for them to have that and take it to the United States to have that more sort of mind opening, broadening, bigger approach to whatever discipline they like that they want to study. I'd like to see that happen, but I'm not going to force them to do that.

Heather had spoken earlier about popular music and I wanted to expand a bit more specifically on that conversation. Since she spoke Slovene I asked her about the lyrics,

what the poetry is about. I asked about one popular song in particular by Vlado Kreslin that I had heard on the radio repeatedly.

Dekle moje pojdi z menoj...Come with me my girl, come with me, dekle is already an old fashioned word, his music is very poetical. I have to tell you I like Vlado Kreslin because his lyrics are extremely poetic and not very popular in terms of they're not the way people talk today. He really influenced himself heavily by folk music, folk traditions and older language and also he comes from Prekmurje which is on the border of Hungary and he uses dialect features from there to give his music a really different character and several things about what he does are unique. I like his music partly for the poetry and sometimes it is so poetical that you can't really pin down what it means. You just sort of have to enjoy the words for what they are. In a way, Sting does this sometimes in English.

I don't know if you like Sting or if you listen to Sting, he is a little too techno-poppy nowadays for some people, but sometimes if you listen to his lyrics you're like what's that mean or why did he do that and you realize that he's just playing with language, he's not really saying anything. I think Vlado Kreslin does that sometimes too and he just enjoys what he can do with Slovene. But Slovene has all these inter dialect references that English doesn't have, because Sting is British and you hardly notice the difference when you listen to him as an American, I think. You don't even get the sense that he's strange unless it's "Englishman in New York" or something. Vlado Kreslin sticks out as different by his language, let me just put it that way. He self identifies as different. It is like someone from New Orleans who uses some kind of creole mixed in with English, he really is different. So Slovenes hear him that way, more than Americans hear Sting that way, if you know what I mean. So anyway, that one that you're asking about is "Girl come with me down to the river," this white dress that she's wearing and I think it's some reference to getting married, she would have been wearing a white dress, then again its come with me and I'm trying to remember how the verses go. The girls that are singing along with him are Katice and they are a pretty famous folk singing group here.

There's an expression that says when you get three Slovenes together you have a choir because all of Slovenia used to sing and that's sort of true. Now it is kind of fossilized but it was true a hundred years ago, everyone in Slovenia would sing and usually not with a lot of instruments but they would sing in parts which is somewhat unusual for folk music because folk music is often just unison. These Katice women they sing in a straight style like you would here in villages and you would hear in folk music, both when they sing with him and when they do real traditional folk music too, so that's why they sing like that. They really make a point of not having this art music warble, they make it straight on purpose and that's why they sound like that. He's bringing in a lot of stuff there with folk instruments and the mandolin and they're using the cimbalom with the hammer dulcimer. He even went and joined up with a lot of old guys folk musicians, he's got guys in his band that are like 70 years old that play with him because they

have these old traditions still alive, they know how to do it. So that's what I like about him is that he's just made his own way, his own very successful and popular blend of past and present. His own interpretation of his culture and I just think it is nice to listen to. I really like his music much more now that I know Slovene well because when I was first introduced to him I found his music a little slow. The one you mentioned is kind of upbeat and you can snap your fingers to it, but a lot of his music is just very slow. If you don't really listen to the lyrics it's not very interesting but if you also understand it then it is, I don't know, special. Then it really expresses what he is singing. I like his music. We are going to his concert next week.

Here, Heather brings up the merging of the past and present in contemporary folk music. Heather's response to this genre of music seems less intellectually/academically based and more empathetic or emotional than her previous response to Slovene classical music. She seems to experience the folk music on a more participatory, communal level. She places a sentimental and traditional value to the music and indicates cultural learning over time, through the poetic lyrics. This learning is not simply linguistic; in this case the language assists in the degree of enjoyment of the aesthetic experience.

Second interview with Heather.

Heather began our second interview by discussing some thoughts that had come to her about this inquiry since we had last met.

I know at our last interview I mentioned architecture and I learned something about myself just recently in respect to architecture that I had no concept of before and it has to do with my relationship to the culture here. I don't really follow architecture that much but I am connected with the field here because I do a lot of the translation and editing for the architecture museum, so I read the stuff they're writing right now. Recently I read a series of long architect biographies of the most prominent architects in Slovenia starting with Plečnik and going until today. The very interesting thing to me as I read and corrected those biographies was that my sense of each person's style was so completely—like I'd read one architect they'd list ten of his most famous works and then another architect and eight of those. Most of them were buildings I could call to mind and in almost every single case they were all buildings that I had thought about and admired or they were buildings that I had disliked actively. And right away when I recognized

the building I said oh, and he probably designed this and this and that, and I hadn't really known any of it, but somehow I had already subconsciously grabbed all of that and I just thought that was interesting because when I read it I was thinking, well I guess I have more of a sense of this than I think I do. I've never studied or read much about architecture, but I'm obviously queuing into something here that other Slovenes are seeing. Things they would point out about these architects were things I had noticed about them too. It was really funny too because the ones that I didn't like one building, I didn't like any of their buildings and others I admired many of their works. So, I guess that you can get subconscious impressions of a lot of things without trying, when you are in a place and just sort of observing it and then later you can get more information on that you can say, oh yeah, that jives with what I already know. So that's a new experience for me and now I know a lot more about architects in Slovenia than I used to because I just read these 20 pages recently. Other than that I don't have anything to say about architecture.

I told Heather that her point reminded me of something I had been reading recently from a dissertation about how people experience museums. The author was discussing how some museums present the work only for an elite group of people who already know a lot about the artifacts and can relate to the work due to their prior knowledge. What the author was trying to argue is that museum experiences should be more like what Heather had just explained about her architecture experience; people without prior knowledge should come to the museum and become interested in learning more about the artifacts, through aesthetic experience (Ramirez, 2006).

I have never focused on architecture although passively I am interested in it, but I think that partly because I am interested in buying a place, I walk around Ljubljana with my eyes in the sky and I look at all the buildings and all I do is look at them and think, that's pretty, that's not pretty and I realize that I've developed an aesthetic without even being aware of it actually. I was surprised that my instincts with each architect were so consistent when I saw their whole range of work that I either liked it or I didn't.

I asked Heather if she agrees with what the museum had to say about the architecture.

Every one of these architects was a great architect in the history of Slovenia because of whatever the cultural context. So they didn't try to differentiate and put values on one or the other, so there wasn't much to agree or disagree with because they were all great and unless you didn't agree that one was great, I

really didn't like the one who liked cars and privileged cars over pedestrians, I don't think that's good urban planning. But he was the right person, in the right place, at the right time. In the 1950s he was like, Mr. Architecture in Slovenia and so that was kind of a monopoly. If the party liked you were you were it, and if the party didn't like you it didn't matter how good you were, you weren't it, so he was kind of just it.

I mentioned my interest in how the art world is affected by politics.

Well, especially when Tito is in charge and it is the early years of Tito. I just don't like his architecture partly because it is associated with that period too probably. But the aesthetic was ugly as well in my opinion. It was also the same in the United States, and Switzerland, like concrete panel construction.

I asked her what she made of the phenomenon that there are so many cultural parallels between things that go on in the United States and other European countries and things that go on in Slovenia. I had begun to notice that Slovene cultural history seemed to correspond to many of the other most important shifts going on in the world in every era. Where other cultures might have one or two significant historical paradigm shifts during a certain era, Slovene cultural history alleges to be introducing similar innovations at the same time (or before, in some cases). I thought it might be just the way they write up their history, a kind of historical 'keeping up with the Jones'." But I thought maybe they really do pay attention to what is going on in the rest of the world and pick and choose the most innovative movements to bring to Slovenia.

I think that Yugoslavia, because Slovenia's most recent history before independence is Yugoslavia, and before that was the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes and before that was Austria-Hungary. They really were a nation of farmers even at the end of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, I think 81% of all Slovenes lived on farms at that time and even in the 40s and 50s it was still over 50%, even today it is more rural than a lot of other countries.

I think then when Yugoslavia got put together and they sort of wanted to industrialize, catch up, produce, prosper, go out beyond, then I do think that Tito looked both directions. Tito looked to the Soviet Union—also there are a lot of parallels between the Soviet Union and the United States if you look at that, and I do think that Yugoslavia was relatively open to both cultural trends and was

actually courted from both sides because both the Soviet Union and the United States wanted an ally in this region. This was a border region for the cold war and Yugoslavia played that game well and got financial help from both sides too. That is one of the reasons it could be a socialist paradise here when it was really pretty crappy in places like Ukraine and Belarus and places farther East. Yugoslavia was a lot better off, partly because Tito was good at playing his cards on both sides, I think. So they were a lot more open to trends from both sides as well. That may be why they kind of wanted to play catch up, Slovenes seem to be like that, competitive and they feel their smallness, so I guess they feel like it may be some way to import something.

All of the architects that I read about went to study someplace else. Another interesting thing in the narrative that the museum wrote was how they would go away to Vienna or to Paris or someplace else and then they would come back and invariably the museum's commentary would be, but then he was disappointed that he had wasted so much time in Vienna when he came back and studied with Plečnik or whoever the big guy of the era was, and realized how much better it was here at home and I wonder where that sort of dialogue comes from. It's not true of all of them though, they also profiled Boris Podreka, who actually works in Vienna and has a studio in Stuttgart, he is still alive and in his 70s I think. He is responsible for a big Plečnik revival in the 80's he did a big exhibition of his stuff in Paris, but he left Slovenia and wasn't even completely Slovene because his dad was Bosnian I think and he grew up in Trieste. So he is very mixed. I'm actually surprised they even included him because sometimes they make these things so insular that they don't include anyone who leaves, but they did include him and he's actually just finally getting some really big contracts built here in Slovenia after like 15 years of winning competitions and never having anything built, like Hotel Mons, it is kind of nice actually, it looks like a big glass cube, it's a nice hotel with a good restaurant, its green, the grass is tinted green. Right now they are getting ready to build a luxury apartment complex right in the center, right near the dragon bridge and those are his two biggest projects to be built here, but he's had a lot of buildings in Italy, Paris and other places.

I asked Heather if she had learned all of what she had just told me through translating.

Yeah, it kind of reinforced what I had subconsciously already knew about this architecture.

She then began to discuss the topic that she wanted to show me as an example of how she learns about the culture through aesthetic means. She decided to show me examples through children's literature.

So, my real show and tell topic I wanted to talk about is children's books. Because I have them at home mainly and because for me it is a way that I have

had access to the culture and its also interesting, I've brought a couple of American children's books with us too because I was thinking about how we have about half and half American books and Slovenian books for our kids, and I was thinking about what was different about them.

I wanted to show you classics from both areas, in Slovenia there are actually a lot of, probably the majority of children's books here, just like the adult literature, is translated. So they have some Maurice Sendak, they have some of these Eric Carl books translated, and all of the boiler plate, like kids equivalent of the Danielle Steele novels, the Disney paperbacks that come out all the time, they have translations of all those too. All the stuff that's really popular now, all the Harry Potter stuff got translated and released as soon as possible, so most children's literature exists here in translation from somewhere else. So if you looking at native children's literature and I was looking at it aesthetically also in terms of illustrations.

One of the things that seems to me to be a lack in Slovene children's literature because I haven't found very much, is picture books with sophisticated or relatively abstract art work or art work that is really intertwined with the story. I brought what I consider to be like that and these are all books that my kids like. Anyway, one that I'm going to show you, you've probably seen this one before, The Very Hungry Caterpillar, its one of my favorites from when I was a kid, I love it as a teaching book, I use it when I read to the Slovene kids here. I use it with my own kids and also with the children that I teach because it uses colors and numbers and the days of the week and the times of the day... One of the things I have always liked about this book is the physicality of it and the kids like how the pages are different sizes, how there are holes in where he eats and then just a collage technique which is really an interesting thing to look at, it is art work that the kids enjoy looking at and I like it too. I don't think you get tired of it, I've read this hundreds of times and I don't get tired of it. I think that is a mark of good art. So I like his books for that reason. I also brought Maurice Sendak, I'm a fan of Maurice Sendak, also his adult things because he has done a lot of stage design for operas and other things which are really wonderful, he is a really good opera designer. So, Where the Wild Things Are, if you know this book already then you probably already know something that my daughter was delighted to discover after we read this a hundred times or so, and that is the way the pictures are displayed with the text tells you a lot about how the story is structured. You start out with a lot of white space on the left and just a little picture on the right and these are his real world pictures...

I think that some of our American picture books are really fine works of art and this is why I'm showing you these first....[explains story and the gradual change of the illustration interacting with the text] ... This is quite masterful, but I've noticed this kind of thing in other children's books of American origin and I haven't seen anything where the illustrations and the story are so bounded

together here in Slovenia. I find that really a creative effort that I really love. Maybe it exists here, but I haven't seen it.

Heather began her presentation on children's literature with American stories then began to discuss Slovene stories, indicating a comparative approach to her learning—or at least a comparative analysis in the presentation of her learning. Her response to the American literature was fairly intellectual with an indication of sentimental value. Her aesthetic framework in analyzing the artwork in the books primarily took a formalist approach.

Now I have some stories we have really responded to and liked from Slovenia. Some of them are classical and old. This one is called (Slovene title) that means, My Umbrella Can be a Balloon, first published in 1955. I kind of brought these American ones that are older too for the same reason, because they're older books, not just in the last few years. This book is really interesting for a couple of reasons, primarily because it tells you a lot about childhood in Slovenia that you know this after you live here a little while, but the story itself does show this to some degree. In fact the first illustration is a really good example. This little girl, the main character of this book lives in a family dominated by adults, and you see what kind of adults they are by this picture. They aren't very nice and they scold her a lot. The illustrations in this book are very good and one of the interesting things about these illustrations is that these ones refer to Ljubljana specifically. So the book is kind of set in Ljubljana. So she's outside playing by herself and all of these adults, her mother, her father, her grandparents and her aunt all yell at her. Don't throw the ball too high, don't throw it in the street, don't drop it, don't lose it, they basically scold her. When I first read this book we hadn't been here very long and I didn't understand Slovenian very well and I didn't really understand why these people were so mean. Now that I've been here I have learned that people really do scold children a lot here. Scolding is a normal way of communicating with kids. This is a story about art and scolding that I will tell you to illustrate this. When my daughter was two I took her to a playgroup where they were supposed to do art together with other children their age and the parent or guardian was supposed to stay there with them to help them. So I took her to this group and most of the other children were there with grandmothers. There was one grandmother in particular that was worse than all the others. Every time her little grandson would do anything she would scold him because it was wrong. Especially in regard to art, the teacher would give them an elephant and they were supposed to decorate the elephant. The teacher was really good, she gave them all these creative ideas and lots of supplies, and we would play elephant and make elephant sounds and see an elephant cartoon for few minutes and then we would have our own elephants to make and most of the kids would get right to it. But this little boy would pick up a purple crayon and she would say, no, no, no its an elephant, you can't make it purple elephants are grey and he would be like,

sigh, and pick up a grey crayon and start coloring. She wanted him to always be right, she would look at the teacher like he's doing right, isn't he and the teacher would be like, just let him go, and was totally at odds with this grandmother, but the grandmother thought that she was being a good guardian and was always scolding him, sit up straight, use your right hand, only use one hand, color it grey not purple and I just felt really sorry for the boy because he never got to do anything without being scolded. I have seen lots of that since, so this book is about that. They all scold this little girl and she finally goes and hides under her umbrella...[tells the story and points out the landmarks of Ljubljana, the castle, skyscraper, Tivoli]...I was initially attracted to this book because it was set in Ljubljana, I didn't realize how sad the story is. [Story descriptions, girl loses ball, is scolded, flies to park with umbrella, finds flowers with magic hats that allow you to play with different jobs, plays with friends, finds her ball, picks a bunch of hats to take home, gives grumpy adults a hat to make them feel happy fulfilling some kind of desire, so they don't yell at her anymore, give the last hat to her little sister and is left without a hat, but says she has her umbrella and got her ball back]...It is really a sweet ending and I think that it is unusual for the Slovenian context because it didn't idealize childhood, it kind of looked at it the way it really is, a lot of these other books idealize it, it came out in 1955 but it is still very popular and people read it to their kids and everybody knows this story. So that's one of the reasons I chose this one to show you. I found it surprising at the end to find that she has a sister because she has all these grouchy grownups yelling at her and she goes off to play with her friends and you have the impression that she's an only child. But then at the end you get the impression that her sister is younger and is kept in this family even more and Yonka has kind of rescued her by bringing these hats for the whole family.

I told her that I found it interesting how she related the book to her own experience in Slovenia with people she had actually met. The children's books seemed to relate to aesthetics experience on several levels for Heather. She discusses the aesthetic of the illustrations in a formalist manner. She analyzes the relationship between the illustrations and text as an aesthetic device. She also talks about the story itself in a manner that indicates axiological aesthetics in terms of communal values.

People really do scold children here. Everybody thinks it is ok to scold children about how much clothing they're wearing with regard to the weather. If an adult is cold then they think that gives them the right to tell a child, put on your hat, put on your gloves, no matter how hot the child is, so when I take my kids to the park and they run around and get hot and dump their coats off in my lap I say, ok, just don't tell anyone I'm your mom because otherwise people are going to come over

and yell at me, why are you letting your kids run around without coats? They really think your kid is going to die of pneumonia or something.

I asked her whether she thought of it as the “takes a village to raise a child” kind of thing, or if she thought people just enjoy scolding.

They really seem to, that is my impression. They do think they have a right to protect the children, but it comes across to the kids as a lot of anger. So this Ella Perotzi, I like this author, I have some other things from her too. I think she really looked at these things from the kids’ perspective. She wasn’t the illustrator, that was Milanka Stupica. It was kind of the story, but also the story setting in Ljubljana that I wanted to show you because I think that’s kind of neat. There aren’t very many like that.

Here, Heather indicates that the sense of place in the story, the fact that it takes place in Ljubljana and depicts familiar sites in the story and the illustrations is significant. This suggests another context in which familiarity and connections between the imaginary aspects of the story and the lived world plays a role in the aesthetic experience of children’s literature for Heather. She expressed this concept previously in relation to the illustrative mechanisms used in *Where the Wild Things Are*, which signify the move from imaginative to the real for the boy in the story. Here however, the imaginative is the story and the real relates directly to the experience of the reader.

The other story by Ella Perotzi is something that everyone who comes to Slovenia ought to see because it tells you something culturally important about Slovenia. This is (Slovene title) which is unfortunately sometimes translated into English as The Slippery Cat, it actually means the slipper making cat. Now that you’ve been in Slovenia you know how everyone offers you slippers when you go in and now you’ve also found out that they wear slippers at school and pre-school and even at the hospitals and health centers, the workers actually change shoes and wear some sort of interior slippers as well, so slippers are really engrained into the society and this book is all about that, but it also includes scolding adults although in a less direct scolding manner. This is a very cute story too, this is this other illustrator Anska Grosnik Goric, I like her illustrations. Another weird thing is that a lot of the Slovenian picture books write the text all in capital letters because somehow they had the idea that this is easier for children to read. Although it probably isn’t and now days they don’t do that anymore, but in a lot of the older kids books they did. This was also in the 50’s when it was published.

The umbrella one is definitely her creation and I think this one is as well, this is not a folk story. This is culturally a very Slovenian picture and I'll explain why: You have your picture and here in the right corner there is a kozolec, a hay rack, and this is only known in this part of the world, Slovenia. This is one of their beehives, the colored beehive panels and the houses even look like the village houses here too. It starts out by saying in this little village everything was nice and tidy, all of the roofs were red and everything was clean, that is everything except the children, the children were untidy and one of the things they had a hard time doing is putting their slippers away... [tells the story of the children leaving their slippers around everywhere in disarray] there are all kinds of funny little things that you find out from the text, like when the kids go to breakfast they drink coffee, it says they all have bela kava, white coffee, but people do, its not real coffee, they make a brew with barley or other grains, or maybe cocoa, but this is a reference to a village tradition of making coffee, but its not real coffee, most adults didn't drink real coffee either because that was expensive, so anyway one day they woke up and looked for their slippers but couldn't find them, and every kid says to mommy, where are my slippers and she says, oh the cat must have taken them, and this happens to every kid in a row... [tells story, all the kids in the village have lost their slippers so they set off barefoot and cold through the woods to find their slippers, they find the cat in a house in the woods, she invites them in and she has repaired and cleaned all the slippers, except the littlest one's slippers which were too worn, the cat gives them a gentle scolding about putting things away and then promises to make special slippers for each child, tells about everyone's unique slippers that fit their characters, ends with a moral/question, who knows if the kids will now put their slippers away?] These are very popular stories and this one was just reprinted in 2001. But I remember reading that and having it reveal to me a lot about slippers and how important they really are because this was one of the first books we got when we came to Slovenia.

The wearing of slippers is a cultural act that is taken to new heights in Slovenia. The first time I entered a high school and noticed that all the students were wearing slippers I thought it was a type of special day. I later found that Slovenes think it is unhygienic to wear shoes indoors. Students are expected to wear slippers in school everyday. Furthermore, when visiting the residence of a local, an extra set of slippers will often be provided at the door. After giving the custom some thought, I began to appreciate the idea and wonder why it is not practiced more widely.

I asked Heather if she thought these books made her reflect upon things she already knew or made her interested in things that she looked into further.

Both, it depends on when we got the book in relation to when we first got here. This book was mystifying for a number of reasons, for one thing I wasn't used to the slipper thing yet and I didn't realize how pervasive it was, how they had it everywhere. I didn't realize how much children got scolded for things like putting away and staying dressed warmly, people all scold the kids for this and I didn't know that. Reading this book, I didn't know Slovene very well, so I used to learn the language by reading this. I used to read this to my kids and not know what it all said myself, I would just read it and I eventually learned what it all meant. I didn't look it up, I learn language intuitively, I don't spend time with the dictionary usually. You could read a page and understand about half of it and just look up one key word to help you with it and then just leave the rest, I'm a lazy language learner. I got this book when my oldest daughter was small and she hardly new any Slovene because we came here when she was one and she didn't have any Slovene babysitters and she didn't go to preschool until she was three, so it was my way to try to get us both into it a little bit. Anyway, I learned Slovene from this book and I also learned about slippers, which is an important Slovenian thing to know. So this one was an introduction to slippers and clothes and tidying up and how important it is to be tidy. People here really like their houses to be tidy and they're embarrassed if they're not. Especially if you go into a farm house, it is nice and tidy and clean inside.

I told Heather that I had noted how these books had served a number of aesthetic purposes. I included that they seem to have also played a role in acculturating her family and becoming something that the family shares in common.

I want my kids to have access to whatever all of the other Slovene kids have access to, so when they go to school and one of their friends mentions these characters my kids know who they are.

I told her that I had heard the saying about “the cat taking your slippers” from another acquaintance and asked her if she knew what was meant by that.

Well I think that it may be a very old folk expression, like if you can't find something, oh the cat must have taken it. We say the cat got your tongue, if we can't talk, and I think she decided to take that folk expression and make a story out of it. For me the children's books here are a way of acculturating my family I knew my kids would be going to school and didn't want them to be really out of touch. I just enjoy children's literature and I like reading with my kids so I've made a point collecting the classic children's books here in Slovenia, there's not much of it, like I said, Americans have more.

I mentioned how the aesthetics inherent in children's literature has become an expected part of society for children, but then as we get older the pictures disappear. We still enjoy the pictures, but they disappear.

There are some adult books that have pictures and you know illustrations were much more common in 19th century adult books. Maybe line drawings were cheaper to reproduce. Like Rudyard Kipling's books, he illustrated a lot of his adult books, I think. I think that the purpose of the art work changes. Why do they have pictures in children's literature? The most obvious answer is because children are preliterate and so you have to tell them the story in another way, but I think that a lot of people really care about the aesthetic impact of these stories too, which is why I mentioned these great American ones.



48. Mithraic shrine ruins. Photo taken February 2008, Ptuj, Slovenia.

I brought up the use of illustration in churches, the use of images to teach religion to the illiterate. Churches that are enriched with these images are held in the highest esteem for the aesthetic experience they offer while churches without art just seem kind of dry and practical.

Many of the ancient churches and religious shrines I visited in Slovenia were decorated with different forms of art that allowed me to lose myself in the aesthetic experience, fulfilling for me spiritual needs in a way that the organized religious ceremonies and sermons that take place in those same buildings does not. Notable examples include the paintings by Slavko Pengov in the Church of St. Martin at Lake Bled, the largest oil painting in the country in the Church of St. George crowning Piran, and the sculptures

unearthed from the 1st thru 4th centuries in the Mithras shrines near Ptuj. In the act of exploring the aesthetic experience, I also learned a great deal about history and religion.

Heather continued to present additional examples from her children's book collection.

I imagine that all of these books like Where the Wild Things Are and The Very Hungry Caterpillar are over 30 years old and they are just as popular today in the States as they ever were and I think it is because they are aesthetically persuasive. It is not just the text, or even primarily about the text. But there is something Slovene about Ella Pirozi in particular and Slovene's like them and they return to them. She wrote a lot and they are all different stories. She was focusing a bit on family relations and the relation between kids and adults and what kids responsibilities are. It is quite different from these, the Maurice Sendak one I think was one of the first to stories considered by child literature experts to deal with a conflict between the parent and the child from the child's perspective. The whole story is about his dealing with his anger with his mother. I think it is very advanced and the artwork to draw that draws the child into that imaginary world is really good for children. I think that these stories by Ella Pirozi are also



50. Where the Wild Things Are discussion. Photo taken February 2008, Ljubljana, Slovenia.

sympathetic with the children, she doesn't really give as much resolution between the children and parents as Sendak does. Her stories give you a sense that she cared very much for the children and they needed to be understood better by the adults around them. I think people have liked her stories because of that. But it was a bit more restrained way of saying that than Sendak was, he was kind of bit more wild. Slovenes are also more restrained, so I feel like her stories fit. So for another real aesthetic response I have another cat story. Cats are really culturally meaningful here in a positive way, than they are in the United States. In English you say you were being catty, you are gossiping, here if that expression is being used about someone it means they're sexy, like foxy. So if you say to somebody that someone is catty, they won't know what you mean...so this is another cat and this book I respond to largely because of the aesthetics, the story is silly, but I like the aesthetics and so does everybody else. This is another perennially popular book. One thing that this book tells you about is the socialist paradise. Another thing that is interesting about this is that Yelka Riechman is the illustrator and she is a very famous illustrator here. She draws illustrations that I feel really idealize childhood, all of the children are rosy and another thing you notice in these books is that if there are people they are all white, of course, and

in American literature tries to make it all colors even though no neighborhood really looks like that. Even when we were kids they started publishing things like that and none of us lived in neighborhoods like that, where one kid was Japanese and one kid was black and one kid was Mexican and one kids was white, they don't do that here. Everybody is white and all the people in the books are white too, so that is something that does not have to be taught here, although it will come, but not yet.

Heather's analysis of the multi-cultural diversity formula in American children's books struck me as humorous, but was also revealing of the different issues American's consider and have been considering for generations, as a multi-cultural nation of immigrants. I also thought about how traditional stories that are rooted in European heritage had been influenced and changed in their migration.

So this is Maček Muri, have you heard of him? There are two words that get used a lot for cat in Slovene, maček is boy cat like tom cat and muca is girl cat and they define cats always, they never just talk about oh there's a kitty, its always a muca or a maček. So you kind of have to say if it's a boy or a girl. I like the aesthetic of this book on several levels. I like the pictures and it is more of an integrated, the pictures with the stories. It also kind of shows what the idealized life was supposed to be like. I think this was published in the 70's. How everybody was happy in Yugoslavia, and what an ideal town is supposed to be like too. One thing that is nice aesthetically language-wise is that it plays on Slovene language a lot and specifically on these two words for cat. Also, it alternates between rhyme and prose, so the first page is in rhyme and the second is prose and the third back to rhyme all the way to the end. I'll try to translate a little bit. [Reads in Slovene and tells about the story] So when the clock bell rings in the morning Maček Muri wakes up, whips his eyes with his paws, lifts his tail and gets up right away. I have to tell you about some of the places he goes to because this is so funny. He decides to go to breakfast at the snack bar, little restaurant and these are like all these traditional restaurant names where they just say like, at the Smith's place. This is the way all the traditional restaurants are named here and this one is at the Happy Cow. Then after he does that he goes for a walk in Kitty City. Here he is reading the cat newspaper, he decides what to do, walks down main street and it says here that in kitty city they have only cat things and especially no dogs and if any dogs show up they have to wear a muzzle and since dogs don't like wearing a muzzle they never come to Kitty City. So along main street you only see cats. They go to the Kitty Market and they visit the Kitty Barber and they buy fish from the Kitty Sea, then they visit the mayor that everyone calls Big Cat. And this is stressed [explains the significance of the stress marks in Slovene language]. So whenever he comes out on the balcony and greets

the cats he always has some good news for them and he says that on Sunday morning in the park there is going to be a big sweepstakes and the grand prize is a cat in a bag, this is our pig in a poke, it means don't buy something that you haven't looked at, so this is a joke. One day he says today at 3 o'clock on the boulevard there is going to be a mouse motor derby and we ask the citizens please not to eat the contestants. So, he calls up his girlfriend and invites her to lunch at the Black Cat restaurant. This is the girl cat and she is very popular, boys call her all day but she would rather sleep in because it is so exhausting to get up in the morning. So again this all rhymes, and this is Muca Maca and she's sleepy, she's a real kitty Parisian, she very fancy, she likes to sleep in until evening and then maybe a little bit more, she doesn't like to get up too early. One of the other boys calls her up and says, how are you, the answer is, just okay, just so-so. She really does like Muri so she accepts his invitation to go to lunch. And this is the big cat criminal, he has been seized again for robbing a store, there's a bakery called Cat Tongue, there's a shoes store called the Puss n Boots shop, there's a lot of puns in here there's a jewelry store called Cat Tears where there is a necklace made out of cat pearls, I think this is cat's eye, and it was so beautiful and so expensive that every female cat that went by there cried when she looked at the display because she couldn't have it. He goes by the kitty bookstore and sees the book that was written by the chef from the restaurant he's going to and now he's looking forward to his lunch, he goes to the kitty barber to get his tail trim.



50. *Maček Muri* discussion. Photo taken February 2008, Ljubljana, Slovenia.

So anyway, he sees this guy who was trying to rob a store, but you'll see him again later. These are the kids at the kitty school and they are singing happy songs. They have about a thousand of these counting rhymes in Slovenian; we have two whole books of them. This is a play on those...they end in you are it. This author, I think it's a him, he makes up this counting rhyme for cats based on this Slovenian tradition of counting rhymes. So they are doing that at school, then this story, this cat jumps on top of the city bus and scares everybody on the bus and the police come and give him a fine because he was unlawfully hunting birds in the park. So we believe in social order. You're going to find out that being a criminal isn't so bad either, that it is all okay. Stink bombs are called dog bombs in Slovene and he's a cat and set off four dog bombs at the bank to rob the bank, but he didn't manage it, the police caught him. So the police will catch you if you do something wrong, but the cat will be back, he hasn't actually been punished, which is interesting in itself in this story. The only people in the bus are the retired barber, a music school teacher and Mia the cook and a maid who are all

coming home from their night work at the hotel. That's one thing I noticed about children's books here is that they aren't generally as kid oriented as ours are. This one has very adult themes, I'm surprised kids like it, but they do. So the bus driver and the conductor of the bus—and the music school teacher is a little bit artsy and weird, so when this thing happened on the bus she said, oh that must have been a flying saucer. Then they stop and say, no its not, it was only Felix, he was unlawfully hunting birds. So anyway they go to the restaurant and they have a very fine lunch which is very Slovene in its makeup, although it geared toward cats. You start out with soup, then you have your meat and potatoes and end up with coffee and crepes for dessert. So they sit out under the tree in the garden afterwards and they have a nice time. So, after they have their lunch she goes to visit her girlfriend who has two little kittens who have just come home from school and the girlfriend makes them perform, she says, sing her a song that you've learned at school. So the girl, and this is also very telling and true of Slovene culture, everyone expects the girls to behave and do what they're told and they forgive the boys for not being the same. But the girls are not allowed to be like that. So in the story, the girl sings something nice, then the boy has to be begged and doesn't want to do it then he stands up and says, the neighbor pokes holes in the bread and at our house we have fleas. So that's his rhyme. The visitor politely smiles but the mother is like, oh, I'm sorry and scolds him, where did you learn that? The girl tells on him and he's like, tattle tale. So she's the goody two shoes and he's bad and these kids even today play out these gender stereotype roles, really except for the girls that pinch at school. Then they have to go to bed, and it's the middle of the day, my kids have asked me why they have to go to bed, and I don't know. They drink their milk and go to bed and her bed is pink and his is blue, so the two grown up ladies sing them a kiddy lullaby. Then the next thing that happens is a soccer game, but I think the game is at night. Dad's not even here, which is the cultural norm here, dad's aren't very involved at home. Even if they love their wives and kids they aren't very hands on with the kids, they don't read them bedtime stories and such, this is the cultural norm.

Women are always telling me, oh, you're so lucky your husband cooks. I say, I don't consider these things luck, we work these things out between us. I am lucky that he is willing to do that because there are other guys that don't like that or don't know how, but I don't consider it a one in a million shot, there are other guys like that too, but not here. American guys from our generation and younger, I think are very helpful. Women here do almost every thing at home and almost everything with the kids. The only thing men and women do the same is work 40 hours. The men just come home and are like, feed me, I'm ready for my beer, I mean they're nice its not like they're all out at the bars all of the time or anything, but they don't do anything. I think this is changing also, but only among young people. So when they were putting the kids to bed there is a soccer game. The police man that took Combe to jail let him out because he is the best player. So he gets a get out of jail free pass because he has to play for their team and because he does they win. It's interesting that there is really a lot of detail about this game, who scored the first goal, when the crowd cheered, it really a very detailed

account of what it is like to go to a soccer game. It's a guy who wrote the book but girls like it too. They have a line of clothing out now too with these characters. This book is old too, from the 70's it is really part of the cultural fabric for kids today. So, this whole page is about the game, the home team finally wins and Maček Muri is out with his friend and says that was so exciting I've got to treat you to a cold milk. So they go to the kitty pub and they have a cold milk. After lunch they segregate and the guys go to the football game and the girls go do their girl things and they are separate. So they finally relax enjoying their milk and this is how his day came to a close. The girl went home to watch kitty television, one of the other cats have gone night hunting and the police have taken that cat back to jail and are playing cards with him. So everyone is having a good time. Muri goes back home to write and the mayor has asked him to write every important event that happens in Kitty City and he has been doing this for the past year and here it ends in rhyme again, so when all the houses go to sleep Muri drinks strong coffee and writes the kitty book and only at midnight he makes the last stroke and then goes to bed, winds up the alarm clock and sleeps until morning when the bell wakes him up again and you have the idea that the same day will repeat itself again and again. So it came out in '75 and this is the 13th reprint. I showed you this one because it has had cultural repercussions. Everyone in Slovenia knows these characters. Now they have these children's clothes, it's kind of like the Looney Tunes characters. There are a couple more books in this series, a TV show and a computer game, a whole line of stuff based on this book. It still strikes me as weird even after being here for a long time. I can't tell you what it tells me aesthetically about the culture but, I don't know. I don't know how much of my kids aesthetic opinion is theirs and how much is a reflection of mine. I don't try to make them believe what I believe but they don't have much exposure to things that I don't buy or introduce them to so I'm obviously a filter for them. They decided on their own that they don't like Barbie, they have both been given Barbies for gifts and they just think they're stupid. They are too little for Barbie. Everyone thinks that girls like Barbie and give them to them when they are three years old and all they do is bite their heads, they really aren't big enough to play with them. I got into Barbies when I was like 12 and partly because I was crafty and I liked to knit little tiny clothes for my Barbie dolls.

I found it intriguing how the children's stories touched upon adult issues and were a basis for us to talk about a whole range of cultural norms.

I will show you this because it is an historical story. It is not a folk story but the author was Fran Laostik he died in 1890 so it is a very old story. The illustrations are more recent, Irosa Piskanec is the illustrator, it is the 8th printing. It is a 19th century, Austria-Hungarian era story and it is about life in Slovenia when things were really bad and people were really poor. This was actually the era when my husband's parent left Slovenia because everybody farmed and if your farm wasn't producing or you had a bad year, you just didn't have enough to eat or anything.

That is what the story is about and the illustrations are interesting because they are sort of socialist realist, so they don't seem to fit the origin of the story, or what the story is about, but my kids really seem to like this story. The title of the story is Who Made Videk's Shirt? It's kind of magical, but it is not a Grimm's fairy tale, it is sort of a homegrown, Slovene tale. So here is Videk, the name is Vidas, little Vidas, it is an old name. [Tells the story about a widow with 7 kids who were very poor and couldn't afford food or clothing] Now this has to be explained because this is actually how people dressed their children, they basically when they were little kids they just dressed them in these night shirt sort of things and they would just run around in these shirts. I think they would put other clothes on over that, but they basically had this one item of clothing and if it was cold they would put pants on and a coat but a lot of kids ran around barefoot and they didn't have much. So only in the winter she had enough time to make shirts for the kids so they wouldn't have to run around naked and she would sew a new shirt for the oldest one and then all the shirts would be past down so little Vidas always had the oldest shirt, so his shirt was so thin that by the time he got it was basically falling apart. So he always had this miserable little shirt. [Tells the story about what a nice little boy he was, how caring about all living things, and his shirt started to fall off and the lamb asks about his shirt, gives him some of his wool to make a new shirt, then the thorn bush cards the wool and then the spiders make thread out of it, then a crab cuts the fabric and a bird sews it together, and now has a beautiful new shirt and his brothers and sisters were in awe of the shirt].



51. *Who Made Videk's Shirt* discussion. Photo taken February 2008, Ljubljana, Slovenia.

Heather even provided her own comparative analysis of her presentation.

This is giving you an impression of how the books here are different from ours. One thing I think I've notice in Slovenian children's books is that they reinforce Slovenian-ness in some way. American children's books by and large don't, except by accident. I think the American books, it is



52. Heather's book presentation. Photo taken February 2008, Ljubljana, Slovenia.

such a large market and such a huge place, and we all know we are American; we aren't setting ourselves in contrast to anyone else. The American books are all about teaching kids things they need to know about counting, colors, little didactic things in an amusing and fun way. And these books are really about Slovene culture and behavior and people. They do have literature like ours, but a lot of it is translated, the ABC's and numbers books are not very Slovene specific. I think that Slovene children's literature has always had a lot of translated literature in it and people who take it upon themselves to write and illustrate Slovene books want to promote Slovenian-ness. That is one of their goals. I wanted to mention Dr. Seuss as being very American, they've got an American sort of way of approaching things.

The hierarchical relationships between adults and children are maintained more in these Slovene books than they are in American books. The line is crossed more in American books, like The Cat in the Hat, at the end the mother comes in and the mother says "what did you do" and he leaves it a question, "well what would you say if your mother asked you?" And you think the kids are probably going to lie, I don't think they would do that in one of these books here. I noticed also that there is no tradition of parents and children fighting during adolescence. It happens, but it is not culturally the norm and they don't quite get it when it seems to be an American tradition and they wonder why. So that's my show and tell. I hope its aesthetic enough because I always come back to language.

In the above excerpts, Heather refers to the objectives of the Slovene children's books as the promotion of Slovenian-ness. In comparison to viewing children's books in terms of cultural ideology, Robert Sutherland discusses children's books in relation to political ideology:

Like other writers, authors of children's books are inescapably influenced by their views and assumptions when selecting what goes into the work (and what does not), when developing plot and character, determining the nature of conflicts and their resolutions, casting and depicting heroes and villains, evoking readers' emotional responses, eliciting readers' judgments, finding ways to illustrate their themes, and pointing morals. The books thus express their authors' ideologies (whether consciously or unconsciously, openly or indirectly). To publish books which express one's ideology is in essence to promulgate one's values. To

promulgate one's values by sending a potentially influential book into public arenas already bristling with divergent, competing, and sometimes violently opposed ideologies is a political act. Seen in this light, the author's views *are* the author's politics; and the books expressing these views, when made accessible to the public, become purveyors of these politics, and potentially persuasive.

(Sutherland, 1985, p. 143-44).

I include this here because the arguments for both points of view are related. To view children's literature as an expression of political ideology or an expression of cultural ideology, one must still consider the cultural contributors that have developed the values of the ideology of the author, as well as those that allow the message to be recognized and related to by the reader.

Significant themes in Heather's narrative.

In this narrative Heather's understanding of Slovene culture appears deep and varied. Her language skills and work as a translator appear to contribute to her meaning making process by conveying information in a wide-variety of fields, including aesthetic expressions. Heather's experience as a parent exposes her directly to the structural social systems of the culture. Her access and exposure in these capacities allow her great insight into the meaning of Slovene culture.

Heather seemed to experience cultural aesthetics predominantly on an intellectual level. Her approach to artistic meaning tended toward a framework of principal intent. Her account of cultural aesthetic expression seemed highly academically influenced. This is evidential in her music background and her work as a translator for university

departments and museums. Thus, the role of the institution is highly present in Heather's cultural immersion in Slovenia. Institutional aspects were discussed in Heather's narrative comparatively, in relation to her music education and her experience with Slovene academic institutions through her children. Also her study abroad experience in Vienna, which was discussed in terms of learning through aesthetic experience, exemplified institutional influence in relation to cultural immersion.

Heather's narrative indicated a high level of exposure and access to cultural information via academic and professional channels. Heather's language proficiency increases her access extensively. Interpersonal interaction with Slovene locals was indicated but not highlighted in the narrative. Meaning making of cultural systems and social institutions in which she is involved through her children is also a significant theme.

The role of cultural arts/aesthetic cultural expressions in Heather's learning process through intercultural immersion developed into several major themes in the narrative. Comparative learning was indicated in her analysis of the aesthetic qualities of children's books in the U.S. and Slovenia, as well as emergent learning indicated in her accounts of initial encounters with the cultural stories. Informational learning was apparent from excerpts about architectural aesthetics derived through translated texts. Furthermore, Heather's proficiency with the language, active and self-motivated exploration of popular culture and literature and insightful observation of cultural aesthetic characteristics indicate internalization and responsive, participatory processes.

Forms of aesthetic expression that emerged prominently within the narrative in relation to meaning making and culture were music, movies, interior design, architecture

and children's literature (illustrations and stories). Classic music and architecture were discussed in an academic and high art vein, while popular music and the remaining forms listed were referred to in a common culture manner.

CHAPTER V

Conclusions

In this section I will offer little summary, instead the focus of the discussion will be on further implications of the data, beyond what has been presented in the analysis. Theoretical assertions will be reflected upon and considered in terms of how the data has captured my imagination and enriched the meaning of initial premises. Further insight into lessons learned and paths considered during the study will be disclosed. Arising questions will be posed and implications to broader issues stemming from the research topic will be discussed in terms of what meaning is intended to be derived from this research for wider audiences.

Theory pertaining to the meaning of concepts on which this study is based was extensively discussed in the second chapter of this dissertation. The theory presented, coupled with new insights posed by data collection, analysis and reflection has stimulated my imagination to rethink my own understanding of concepts. This is particularly the case with the concept of culture. One reason the concept of culture may be so difficult to define is because the nature of the concept does not lend itself to just one meaning. I considered multiple metaphors to develop insight into what meaning I had gained about the notion of culture through the aesthetic expressions I had encountered while conducting this research. Metaphors spanned from the material to the intangible and were useful in helping gain a better grasp of my perspective and the relationship between the abstract/conceptual and material world.

I considered the tension between the historical and contemporary aspects of culture being like the medieval city of Izola, where I lived in Slovenia while gathering

narratives. In Izola, layers upon layers of aesthetic change were intermingled as elements of the city were built upon one another and mixed together over time to create a holistically different aesthetic, holistically different city, and holistically different culture. Remnants of the past survive intact and are still inhabited in new ways. While some remnants of the past are considered valuable and in the process of being excavated, others are still just below the surface acting as a base upon which the new has been built—and perhaps torn down and then repeatedly built over time. Furthermore, some elements of the city indicate eclectic influences while others exhibit local innovation. This metaphor offers a good depiction of culture in its historical sense, but there are additional aspects to the concept of culture that it does not adequately address.

Another metaphor I considered had a less static and less sheltering essence than a city; depicting culture as vital and fluid. This metaphor came to mind as I noticed, and aesthetically experienced the qualities and differences through breathing—taking in the musty air of the catacombs in medieval and Gothic cathedrals was an experience apart from deeply inhaling the fresh, crisp air at the top of the Zugspitz in Germany. The air we breathe and share with all other existence can serve as a metaphor for aspects of culture that circulate a shared sense of humanity. The air may carry an aesthetic experience, like the fragrance of a mimosa within the vicinity of a grove of trees, the smoky filled haze of a Koper coffee shop, or the unmistakable freshness of the sea in the coastal town of Izola. These examples render the air distinct and noticeably different in context. Furthermore, while the air we have taken in to our lungs exists within us, it is ours. Our bodies thrive on the necessity of filling our chests to feed our hearts, muscles and minds. As we exhale we give the air back to the world—slightly changed in chemistry for a moment it

becomes breathable again in re-circulation. The musty air taken in while exploring the crypt beneath a great cathedral, spanning eras in its construction in Köln, Germany, can be overwhelming when considering that the particles we breathe today, which run through our bodies, we share in some ways with other beings who existed on this planet long before us and may have even been remembered as saints; embodying the supernatural of holy spirituality on Earth. Like air, culture is there, it is vital to our experience, it can carry a multitude of essences and yet it is not perceivable to capture in a dissertation.

These and other metaphors offer different lenses through which to understand culture. Metaphors correspond to the concept of culture in this way—it is not a matter of which is better or worse, they are just different. Perhaps these and other metaphorical examples can and should be considered together, as possibilities for different contexts.

This research may offer little for those who seek concise answers to simplify experience to a single essence or statement of truth. Admittedly, it is possible to choose to view experience through just one perspective. However, this research demonstrates that finding ways to allow for pluralistic perceptions of experience and incorporate multiple lenses enhances the quality of experiential meaning. In other words, one conclusion of this study is that there is validity in meaning making that evolves from varied, individualistic understandings of what represents cultural aesthetic expression, what constitutes aesthetic experience and what role these understandings have in the meaning that is derived through cultural immersion experience.

According to theorists who focus on narrative methodology, consideration of the individual's experience must be made in relation to time, environment and relationships,

so that the context and experience inform one another (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Phillion, 2002; He, 2003). Two main narrative studies were consulted as models to gain insight in respect to analysis and findings. For example, in her book *Narrative Inquiry in a Multicultural Landscape: Multicultural Teaching and Learning*, JoAnn Phillion based interpretations of meaning on situated-ness. She is interested in the experience of individuals and the context in which the experience takes place (Phillion, 2002). Perceiving memories as a form of data, Phillion interlaced space, place and time with her own interaction and participant's statements. She used narrative elements to address her own perplexities, reveal intimate thoughts and expose her own faults and failings in the process (Phillion, 2002). Furthermore, in *A River Forever Flowing: Cross-Cultural Lives and Identities in the Multicultural Landscape* (2003), Ming Fang He adopts a cross-cultural narrative approach to address the concept of cross-cultural identity, questioning static notions of culture and identity. She achieves this as a life-based narrative inquiry, by collecting lived-narratives from several people and uniting them as author, with attention to aesthetic aspects, into one story. The significant meaning of events is understood in He's work, in relation to the aesthetic narrative whole. As models of multicultural narrative inquiry, both He's and Phillion's examples, as well as others previously discussed were consulted to determine the narrative approach to interweaving data and findings for the final analysis of this study.

Among the purposes and contributions of this narrative inquiry is that it serves to document the participants' experiences as individuals in relation to time, environment, relationships and other contextual factors; providing a glance into the rich experiences of a group of contemporary expatriates. The study then goes further, to focus on and

examine aesthetic aspects of their experiences contextually. When considered in its broadest form, this study is set on a variety of planes: There is the physical plane specific to three distinctive geographic locations on the planet Earth. In relation to the geographical is the political plane, as stipulated by national boundaries decided upon by the powers that be and drawn on the most current and most widely-accepted maps of the world. Of great significance is also the anthropological plane, in the spirit of ethnographic and intercultural inquiry; and the sociological plane, pertaining to the significance of social institutions such as the arts and the role of aesthetics in other social institutions. Furthermore, the psychological plane plays a role in regards to the individual's learning process in creative, cognitive, emotional and somatic respects. Finally, the study takes place on a conceptual plane in terms of awareness to the interpretive process of reflective meaning-making which creates a circuitous influence back to the planes aforementioned, through narrative dissemination.

From the broadest geographic perspective, this study depicts an intercontinental and international inquiry which is of some importance in terms of the complexities of the setting. These complexities have been addressed in the beginning of each section. However, the geographic locations of the study do not in themselves adequately express the meaningful focus of the inquiry. Thus, I found no point in organizing any further analysis in relation to nation-states, since the aesthetic experience each participant disclosed was informative not on nation-state level, but unique to that individual's situational context. Participants' experiences seemed driven in many ways by the individual's prior experience and current situation, including their perspectives on what it means to be immersed in a culture and the length of their immersion term. In other words,

as a narrative inquiry about meaning making through aesthetic experience, this study presents much richer meaning than presenting information about certain countries. The richest meaning has been mined from the personal perspectives shared by the participants on a conceptual level, while also considering the impact of other factors such as geography in terms of setting. My main concern in analyzing the narratives included in this study was with the conceptual fruits derived from the narratives, as indicated in the previous analysis. An additional consideration has been the influence that the perspectives of participants have had on my own ethnographic journey across two continents, three countries and multiple cultures in the space of two years.

As a narrative inquiry, this research was able to reach beyond the initially research questions. Participant's stories of their lived experience guided the research into new and unforeseen areas of relevance and significance. Each participant expanded my thinking in different directions—sometimes taking me further along paths I had considered, other times leading the inquiry down an unpredicted stream. Thus the inquiry was not limited by the framework presented by the research questions—only focused by the research questions and encouraged to grow.

Findings

What has been attempted in this dissertation is a narrative inquiry enriched by ethnographic methodological practices, guided by the research questions which are restated below. The narratives included in this dissertation attest significant evidence to suggest that intercultural literacy is developed in part through aesthetic forms of cultural exchange for this set of participants. Certainly multiple understandings exist regarding

the meanings of concepts such as aesthetics, artistic expression, culture and cultural immersion. This inquiry does not argue in favor of any one universal definition for any of these terms. The research questions that guided this inquiry grappled with how these concepts relate to and develop meaning.

- a) What are participants' understandings of cultural arts/aesthetic cultural expressions in their own and other cultures?
- b) What is the nature of participants' exposure and access to cultural arts/aesthetic cultural expressions while undergoing a cultural immersion process?
- c) What are participants' understandings of the role of the cultural arts/aesthetic cultural expressions in their learning process through intercultural immersion?
- d) Given the experience of cultural immersion, what are participants' understandings of the role of cultural arts in the process of learning?

Participant narratives were presented in the rawest form possible in order to preserve the integrity of the participants' voices. Furthermore, my analysis and experiential commentary is woven through and intermingled with the data. This was done in an attempt to limit the length of the dissertation while providing the most thorough analysis. The data and analysis presented in the previous chapter elaborate insightfully on the above research questions, as well as pose further questions for additional research to proceed, thus many of the insights already discussed will not be re-presented here.

Additional insights developed upon cross-analysis of the narratives. One finding is that there are many different ways of reading cultural aesthetics and that these were often intermingled. Due to the theoretical standpoint taken, culture was not approached as

a fixed concept and participants were not perceived of as coming from a culturally determined fixed point of reference. However, even with these complexities accounted for, diversity in terms of meaning making and approaches to the reading of cultural aesthetics emerged as a significant theme. Examples from the analysis of narratives include indications of stereotypical readings, identity development readings, hegemonic and social class readings, historical and political readings and postmodern readings. In addition, participants' readings of cultural aesthetics in relation to experience often shifted in context multiple times within one interview. For example, Emma began the initial interview questioning what race meant on the background information form and then went on to directly identify and refer to herself in terms of how she should adorn herself as a "white girl" in Tanzania and Morocco.

Another insight pertained to the multitude of ways in which aesthetics were understood and communicated. In my view, cultural aesthetics refers to aesthetic preferences which are attributed by the observer to be significant or characteristic in some way of their experience and meaning of the respective culture, or the concept of culture in general. This view was often communicated to participants when they asked for clarification of terms and participants were encouraged to contribute to this perspective in expansive ways if necessary. Thus, the narratives provided examples of aesthetics of place, which included: nature, spatial atmosphere and planning, place in terms of anthropological history, architecture and interior space, public art, monuments, and public nature spaces. Aesthetics of high culture and contemporary art included references to museum art, theater, dance, symphony, opera, poetry, classical music, art galleries, film festivals, graphics festivals, biennales, performance art and installations

while the aesthetics of traditional art included folk art and music, craft and traditional dress. Aesthetics of contemporary popular culture were talked about in terms of popular music, movies and television shows, while the aesthetics of youth and alternative culture was present in discussions of underground/student art forms and graffiti. Furthermore, the aesthetics of living was discussed in terms of standard of living, way of life, interactions, foods, names, identity, personal adornment, ceremonies and celebrations, religious expressions, and the home. This is significant because these varied responses indicate that individuals took notice of different forms of aesthetic expression (forms of aesthetic expression that were often situationally determined). One observation is that female participants in this sample spoke more frequently about issues of personal adornment than male participants. Another observation is that, with the exception of Stephen and the beginning of Heather's narrative, this group of participants discussed the impact of their learning through popular culture and daily life culture forms of aesthetic expression more often than they referred to forms of high culture like that found in museums or studied in university courses. This may indicate that these forms bear greater importance for a sense of cultural adaptation and the feeling of sharing common ground with the people of the host country. Furthermore participants were able to relate these diverse forms of expression to aesthetic experience and elaborate upon their personal aesthetic experience in ways that indicated significant meaning making and learning experiences on a daily basis, within their workplaces and homes. These findings are in alignment with statements presented in the literature review, especially from Dewey, Greene and Eisner, relating aesthetic experience to education via lived experience.

What has been learned in regards to culture through aesthetic means? As documented in the previous pages of analysis, participant responses demonstrate that through attentiveness to aesthetic aspects of culture, a sensibility for the culture builds within the context of the immersion situation. For example, in both Pirkka's and Heather's narratives, some surprise was directly expressed in finding that experience of aesthetic expressions had played a significant role in their cultural meaning making. Furthermore, Heather disclosed additional examples of how she was using aesthetic expressions as an approach to keep her own children in touch with American culture while they were being raised in Slovenia.

Participants tended to draw on prior experience, often comparing and contrasting their current experience with their perceptions and memories of past experiences. A tendency to build upon similarities was evident, while there were also indications of epiphanic moments and occurrences of reformulating expectations in light of experiential disjunctions. The narratives in this dissertation offer momentous examples of transformative experiences in which participants may have expressed surprise in light of changes in their identification with the host culture and their own identities.

Many of the participants were looking for a sense of belonging and acceptance within the community. Mung's, Lara's and Anya's narratives all focused on finding a sense of belonging and developing deeper respect for the community. Mung discussed a change in his perceptions of American culture through his exposure to square dancing, while Lara's epiphany was in relation to a theatrical presentation of the work of a German author by a visiting Brazilian theater group to which she had personal ties, and Anya perceived positive aspects of community through the exchange of literary

knowledge and the sharing of cultural cuisine. One additional observation however, is that the acceptance being sought was not necessarily as a conforming member of the society. The narratives indicated a tendency to want to be accepted with acknowledgment of the differences and diversity the participant presented within the community. There appeared to be a significant tension between maintaining home culture identity and adapting identity through experiences in the host culture to understand the self within that context. Interest in aesthetic expressions seemed to be influenced by this tension. For example, Anya's narrative indicated pressures to conform to an appreciation of aesthetic expression that was approved of by the dominant class. As evident in her discussion of music, literature and foods considered aspects of sub-culture (Gypsy culture and now ex-Yugoslavian states), this pressure intimately impacted her experience, even influencing the naming of her children.

The collecting and analyzing of these narratives took me on a meaningful journey, both vicariously and first hand. As a result of my own cultural immersion experience, I experienced the process of growth to such a degree of intensity that I was often aware of it in myself, almost as it is taking place. Through cultural immersion, participants (including myself) met people and had experiences that opened doors and altered their paths in significant ways. Reflecting on Stephen's narrative as a superlative example; Stephen directly acknowledge and described how he perceived aspects of his identity as a direct accumulation of cultural immersion experiences.

Participants characterized cultural immersion in terms of the challenges of being subjected to intense daily life problem-solving activities as a result of being outside of the familiarity of their home cultures. At times, participants demonstrated a tendency to try to

familiarize and adapt their new experience to their own cultural expectations. At other times participants took delight in and were allured by the strangeness of new experience and reassessed their ability to understand completely.

Participants talked about connections they made to their past experience and education which reinforced and revised learning from the past. This indicates that there is a tendency to re-establish education's importance and relevance beyond accumulation of credentials for work. For example, Emma's and Mung's narratives focused on cultural aesthetic experience that occurred outside of the degree program that sponsored their initial travel and study. Mung's narrative in particular explored the meaning and dynamics of family and community in the host culture context. Anya's narrative presented a great deal of meaning making that seemed to be pursued specifically to enhance her and her family's quality of life.

What has been learned is interdisciplinary and extends broadly into the realms of: History, politics, religion, economics, art, values, morals, societal norms, adaptation strategy, geography, language, grammar, identity, alternative solutions to life, forms of expression, cultural archive expansion, references to draw on, the nature of experience itself, ways to deal with ambiguity, marginalization, social awkwardness and physical discomfort, to name a few. Foremost, the narratives represent not only learning specific to respective cultures, but also learning in its broadest sense—culture as our unifying inheritance from humanity. I consider this significant in that it indicates that learning through aesthetic means is justifiable. The issue this raises however, is the complexity involved in shifting our approach to curriculum to effectively utilize aesthetic ways of knowing. As derived from the literature review, especially in the work of Dewey, Greene

and Eisner in regards to curriculum in U.S., understanding the value in aesthetic forms of knowledge requires a paradigm shift in the value structure underlying the purpose of the formal curriculum.

Limitations

As a qualitative study, this research does not aim to develop any universal conclusions or to narrowly define aspects of culture. Due to the personal nature of the narratives and the small sample size, this research is not generalized to an entire population. The intended result of this inquiry is to add insight into how the cultural arts fit into the complex equation of intercultural immersion and to provide a fuller context for further research to develop (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000).

A noteworthy format related limitation lies in the presenting of narratives in written form. Non-verbal communication and expression of emotional emphasis are often lost in the translation from face to face interview to written document. Stephen's narrative is a case in which the written format is easily interpreted as demonstrating less emotional investment than was the case in person to person contact. Recollection of contextual meanings gained through non-verbal and voice related cues was taken into consideration in the analysis process, but may not be evident to readers.

Implications

From the data presented in this study, inferences can be drawn that although not generalizable, enrich understanding of learning in multiple ways. The findings of this research can be useful well beyond the specific research questions posed and can be applied to broader issues in the field of curriculum studies and beyond. Discussion has already ensued in this chapter regarding the meaning of this research methodologically

and theoretically. The dissertation will now conclude by addressing implications of this research for curriculum studies, education discourse in the fields of arts and cultural studies, and the discourse on learning in formal and informal contexts.

Implications for Curriculum Studies

The results of this study contribute to the discourse regarding how learning is perceived through cultural aesthetic expressions during the cultural immersion process by revealing some of the complex aspects of the meaning making process and presenting examples from lived-experience of how cross-cultural complexities are navigated by a diverse sample of individuals in relation to cultural aesthetic expressions. This study is significant because little research has been conducted on how cultural meaning is perceived through artistic/aesthetic expressions, especially in regards to educational curriculum and intercultural understanding. The literature reviewed on the topics of aesthetics and education pointed out how this topic of study is regarded as marginalized in academic settings, yet is highly important to consider for the furthering of our society. The study is also significant as an example of narrative research into aesthetic experience, a field of study which is dominated by theoretical inquiry.

The cultural component of this inquiry is important in the way it addressed issues of equity and diversity from a number of different angles. The topic explicitly explored learning about other cultures through experiencing diversity first-hand. It took a different approach from most research into cultural immersion by focusing on the process via the role of cultural arts and aesthetic expressions. Cultural arts and aesthetic expressions are representative of a diverse array of phenomenon that serve as a communicative medium in the process of meaning making during cultural immersion. Utilizing cultural arts as a

broad concept invited inclusion of aesthetic expressions from cultural groups who may be marginalized within a dominant cultural group or hegemonic situation. This facilitates understanding of the complexity of cultural relations within cultures, rather than accepting a flat and stereotypical perception of culture that is based on superficially exhibited cultural spectacles or only the institutionally approved official statements (although these influences are ever-present).

Through my theoretical framework and literature review, I have critically examined current educational theory in the arts, the education field, and in institutional efforts to internationalize. This research builds a case for a more pluralistic worldview to be associated with the concept of art and aesthetic ways of knowing in education settings and the need for greater attention to the study of complexities and conditions of aesthetic approaches to understanding culture within the formal education curriculum. This could take a multitude of forms, additional research and contextual consideration would be necessary in order to provide firm recommendations. However, some initial brainstorming suggestions might include committing to an intentional focus on aesthetic experience within the learning process encountered in domestic education programs as well as developing something along the lines of mentor guided, independent cultural exchanges focused on aesthetic experience that involve the participant in the planning and assessment process of their learning program in an empowering and responsible manner.

Additionally, I intend to continue this investigation through further research and practice as a teacher in higher education and secondary-level education. Using an interdisciplinary approach, I intend to involve students in examining conceptual matters and

issues of equity and diversity through their own personal, experiential cultural and aesthetic inquiries. This study adds insight into how the cultural arts fit into the complex equation of intercultural immersion to provide a fuller context for further research to proceed. Professionals in several fields including education, international education, aesthetics and the arts, can benefit from this data to establish further understanding of how individuals learn from and about other societies through cultural arts.

Arts and Cultural Studies Education

This research allows a broad and inclusive meaning of aesthetic expression to thrive through acceptance of participants' perspectives and creative interests. In consideration of pluralistic view points, attempts were made to avoid imposing limiting categorizations on the understanding of aesthetic expression, in terms of artificial dichotomies such as art vs. craft, or high art vs. naïve art for example. The data thus indicated that participants' views of aesthetic expression, in terms of learning about the culture in which they were living were more closely related to their everyday experience, communal acceptance and their own varied interests, rather than to the limited art canon that is most often strictly adhered to as educational in schools. While this finding exposes possible irrelevance of the school canon in the particular context of this study and the cultural immersion experience presented by this group of participants, it does not and should not deny the importance of the art canon taught in school contexts. This research may, however, stimulate further consideration of educational attention to the interconnectedness of daily living on an individuals learning, as well as the communal forces related to the process of art production/consumption, the system of official art

promotion and the phenomenon of art appreciation on a cultural level. Additionally, this research may raise concerns for a revised approach to addressing the issue of aesthetic forms of knowledge in formal education.

Learning in Formal and Informal Contexts

Education is a concept that can be as limited or expansive as the mindset of the individual or group involved, seeks to realize. It is within the mindset of expansiveness that this research explored the concept of learning as it takes place outside of the formal, institutionalized curriculum—as well as how it relates to the formal curriculum. Since learning beyond what is presented in the formal curriculum seems to have been all but illegitimized as *education*, this research demonstrates that in regards to cultural immersion, it is actually the setting where the greatest learning and growth can take place.

Perhaps the greatest problems facing the education system are: Subscribing to the limited information exchange that has come to be understood as *education* within the formal curriculum and placing the full accountability for learning on the shoulders of teachers within such a narrowly focused institution. Being aware of and actively involved in the expansiveness of our own education should be a personal choice as well as an educational goal. Nevertheless, it is a choice that seems obfuscated by various oppressive factors acting within society and thus is often not made. The institutional curriculum does serve an important purpose, but will always present limitations on education that the individual is capable of overcoming and expanding for personal fulfillment.

Outside of the formal curriculum is where we live and learn for the majority of our lives—the place that is referred to as “the real world” in schools, for which the drudgery of classroom exercises and disciplinary practices are supposedly geared to prepare us. As is the case in this study, the world outside of the institution is a space filled with ambiguity and uncertainty, where we are supposed to be able to prove the worth of what we have learned in the formal schooling curriculum. Ironically, however, we often end up finding little of what we actually learn in the formal curriculum relevant to apply beyond its own purposes.

Outside of the formal curriculum is a space for authentically purposeful, personal educational pursuit. Demanding of pure self-efficacy and independent judgment, it is where the intrinsic inquiry that is necessary to initiate momentum and motivate an individual to learn, even to learn within the formal curriculum, is derived—yet it is all but ignored as a source and resource by educators and students alike. This research indicates that innovative ways of thinking about education should be adopted outside of institutional pursuits by the learners themselves, in order to advance toward a more expansive concept of education.

As is the case in this study, scholars and educators can support and model learners efforts to reconceptualize their own education. They can do this by expanding their own perceptions on education, focusing on their own role as learners and rejecting the role of teacher as information authority. This would involve cherishing learning that takes place outside of the formal curriculum for themselves and reflecting on it as a form of practice and acknowledging that there is valuable education beyond the institution and encourage other learners to seek and apply knowledge gained outside of the formal curriculum.

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APPENDIX A

Participant Background Questionnaire & Interview Questions

Number given by researcher: _____ Date: _____

Personal Demographics-

Name: _____ Age: _____

Occupation: _____ Gender: _____ Race/Ethnicity: _____

Country of Birth: _____ Citizenship: _____

Country of mother's birth: _____ Country of father's birth: _____

Number of siblings: _____

Socioeconomics: Would your family's income be considered (circle one):

poor lower middle middle upper middle upper

Education (high school, BS, MS, Doctorate). If currently in school, please state what type of program: _____

Languages (begin with primary): _____

Religious orientation: _____ circle one: practicing or non-practicing

Art Demographics- Include all forms of cultural artistic expression (visual, performance, music, media arts, poetry, storytelling, crafts, popular culture, etc.) as “art.”

Formal- Art courses/training:

Informal- Personal artistic pursuits/exposure:

Intercultural Demographics- (*Use back of sheet if necessary*)

Countries visited/ resided: length of stay: Reason for visit:

List travel by other members of your family. (*Use back if necessary*):

Relation: When: Where: Reason:

Please list courses you have taken that address cultural issues (*Use back of sheet if necessary*):

First Interview Questions

Questions that arose from the Demographic questionnaire. Based on the background information you provided please tell me more about.....

Describe your exposure to other cultures. Provide specific examples.

Describe your experience you have had abroad. Include stories of highlights.

What were the low points?

Describe experience you have had with people from other cultures. Include stories of specific interactions.

How would you describe the cultures to which you have been exposed?

How would you critique the cultures to which you have been exposed?

Describe specific experiences that have helped develop your opinion.

Describe your purpose and personal reasons for coming to this country.

Describe your interaction with host country nationals in this country.

Describe your interaction with host country nationals prior to arrival in this country.

How important do you think it is to learn the native language(s) of this country?

How important is it in other countries to which you have or will travel?

How do you think someone should behave when in another culture?

Has your own behavior changed as a result of you experience in this culture?

Has any behavior of host country nationals surprised you?

What does it mean to learn about another culture?

What does it mean to be immersed in another culture?

How would you define the cultural arts of your own culture?

How would you say the cultural arts define the identity of your culture?

Describe your exposure to cultural arts in your own culture.

What impact have cultural arts had on your life?

How would you describe your attitude toward cultural art forms in your own culture? What are your preferences/what do you respond to, and why?

Do you have a favorite (artist/art form)?

Describe your exposure to cultural arts from other cultures prior to your experience here.

Describe your family's attitudes/exposure to cultural arts.

How would you describe your attitude toward the cultural arts of other cultures? Explain.

What would you say you have learned about other cultures through your exposure to their cultural arts?

Provide specific examples.

What do you think people from other cultures could learn about your culture through the cultural art expressions? Explain.

How would you describe the cultural arts of this culture? Explain.

Would you say you have had more or less accessibility to the cultural arts in this culture since you have been here than you did before? Explain.

What did you know about the cultural arts of this culture prior to coming here?

Have you learned anything new since arriving?

List the types of cultural arts to which you have been exposed since you have arrived here.

Describe the specific circumstances of exposures to cultural arts since arriving.

Would you say you had any preconceptions about this culture prior to your arrival? If so, how did you come about those ideas?

How would you say your exposure to cultural arts has impacted your experience/learning about this culture? Provide specific examples.

Would you consider anything you have learned from exposure to cultural arts as education? Explain.

For the next interview, in two to three weeks, please plan to meet me somewhere where you can show me something about your experience with the cultural arts of this culture.

Second Interview Questions

Describe the highlights of your intercultural experience since we last met.

Describe any additional exposure, reactions, attitudes in relation to the cultural arts since our last meeting.

Describe any changes in your perceptions about culture or art since we last met that may have resulted from, or are relevant to this study.

Describe any changes in your self/ attitudes /learning since we last met.

What has been most difficult to adjust to in terms of your intercultural immersion?

Has anyone you have been in contact with influenced your exposure/experience with regards to cultural arts in any way?

Please present something for me to understand visually regarding your experience with the cultural arts in this culture. Explain to me how and why you respond to this, what you learn from it, your history of exposure to it, etc.

Third Interview Questions

What would you say you have learned about this culture so far?

How does this experience compare/contrast with previous cultural experiences you've had?

What do you like about the experience you are having?

What do you not like about the experience?

What, if anything, would you say you have learned about yourself?

Would you say you have learned anything about your own culture?

What do you perceive as the greatest difference between your culture and this one?

What do you perceive as the greatest similarity?

How would you say characteristics of the culture/people are communicated through the cultural arts?

Provide specific examples.

How would you describe this culture's identity as expressed through the specific cultural arts to which you have been exposed?

How strongly do you think this culture expresses itself through its cultural arts? Explain.

What, if any, perceptions you have about this culture have changed as a result of your exposure to the cultural arts?

How does anything you learned transfer to your perceptions about education in general?

Would you say there have been any major turning points, challenges or experiences that have resulted in substantial change during/ or as a result of your intercultural experience?

Would you say that participation in this study has heightened your awareness and exposure to cultural art forms, more than would normally be the case?

Is there anything additional you would like to add to this research study?

Is there anything you would like to clarify?

Interview Questions (for host-country nationals)

Note: These questions are tentative, since your unique experience will ultimately determine the content of the conversation.

Questions arising from the Demographic questionnaire: Based on the background information you provided please tell me more about.....

How do you think someone should behave when in another culture?
How important do you think it is for an expatriate to learn the native language(s) of this country?
What does it mean to learn about another culture?
What would you expect someone know about your culture before coming to live here?
What would you expect someone learn as a result of living here?
Has any behavior of expatriates in this country surprised you?

Discuss your exposure to the cultural arts/aesthetic expressions of your own culture.
How would you define the cultural arts of your own culture?
How strongly do you think this culture expresses itself through its cultural arts? Explain.
How would you describe your attitude toward cultural art forms in your own culture: What are your preferences/what do you respond to, and why?
How would you say the cultural arts define the identity of your culture?
What do you think people from other cultures could learn about your culture through the cultural art expressions? Explain.

Describe your exposure to other cultures. Provide specific examples.
Describe experience you have had with people from other cultures. Include stories of specific interactions.
How would you describe the cultures to which you have been exposed?
How would you critique the cultures to which you have been exposed?
Describe specific experiences that have helped develop your opinion.
Describe your exposure to cultural arts from other cultures.
How would you describe your attitude toward the cultural arts of other cultures? Explain.
How would you say characteristics of the culture/people are communicated through their cultural arts?

APPENDIX B

Revised Participant Background and Interview Questions

Participant Background

Please fill out to the best of your recollection, no official documentation is necessary.

Date: _____

Personal Demographics-

Name: _____ Age: _____

Occupation: _____ Gender: _____ Race/Ethnicity: _____

Country of Birth: _____ Citizenship: _____

Country of mother's birth: _____ Country of father's birth: _____

Number of siblings: _____

Socioeconomics: Would your family's income be considered (circle one):
poor lower middle middle upper middle upper

Education (high school, BS, MS, Doctorate). If currently in school, please state what type of program: _____

Languages (begin with primary): _____

Religious orientation: _____ circle one: practicing or non-practicing

Art Demographics- Include all forms of cultural artistic expression (visual, performance, music, media arts, poetry, storytelling, crafts, popular culture, etc.) as "art."

Formal- Art courses/training:

Informal- Personal artistic pursuits/exposure:

Intercultural Demographics- *(Use back of sheet if necessary)*

Countries visited/ resided: _____ length of stay: _____ Reason for visit: _____

List travel by other members of your family. *(Use back if necessary):*

Relation: _____ When: _____ Where: _____ Reason: _____

Please list courses you have taken that address cultural

First Interview Questions

Questions that arose from the Demographic questionnaire. Based on the background information you provided please tell me more about.....

Describe your exposure and experience with other cultures. Include stories of highlights and low points.

How would you describe the cultures to which you have been exposed?

Describe specific experiences that have helped develop your opinion.

Describe your purpose and personal reasons for coming to this country.

Describe your interaction with host country nationals in this country.

Describe your interaction with host country nationals prior to arrival in this country.

How do you think someone should behave when in another culture?

Has your own behavior changed as a result of you experience in this culture?

Has any behavior of host country nationals surprised you?

What does it mean to learn about another culture?

What does it mean to be immersed in another culture?

How would you describe your understanding of how the cultural arts express the aesthetics of your own culture?

How would you describe your attitude toward cultural art forms in your own culture? What are your preferences/what do you respond to, and why? Do you have a favorite (artist/art form)?

What do you think people from other cultures could learn about your culture through the cultural art expressions? Explain.

How would you describe the arts and aesthetics of this culture? Explain.

How would you describe your accessibility to the arts in this culture?

Describe the specific circumstances of exposures to cultural arts since arriving.

What did you know about the cultural arts of this culture prior to coming here and have you learned anything new since arriving?

Would you say you had any preconceptions about this culture prior to your arrival? If so, how did you come about those ideas?

What would you say is the role aesthetic experience has played in your cultural immersion experience?

Can you provide specific examples?

Would you consider anything you have learned from exposure to cultural arts as education? Explain.

For the next interview, in two to three weeks, please plan to meet me somewhere where you can show me something about your experience with the cultural arts of this culture.

Second Interview Questions

Describe the highlights of your intercultural experience since we last met.

Describe any additional exposure, reactions, attitudes in relation to the cultural arts since our last meeting.

Describe any changes in your perceptions of culture or art since we last met that may have resulted from, or are relevant to this study.

Has anyone you have been in contact with influenced your exposure/experience with regards to cultural arts in any way?

Please present something for me to understand visually regarding your experience with the cultural arts in this culture. Explain to me how and why you respond to this, what you learn from it, your history of exposure to it, etc.

Third Interview Questions

Is there anything additional you would like to add to this research study?

Is there anything you would like to clarify?

Further questions will be based on previous conversations.

APPENDIX C

Concept Definitions and Codes (as deemed necessary)

I. Art Forms

1. ART

1. **Visual Art** (Painting, sculpture, drawing, installation, etc.)
2. **Music**
3. **Dance**
4. **Theatrical Drama**
5. **Television Drama**
6. **Cinematic Drama**
7. **Architecture**
8. **Craft**
9. **Tourist art**
10. **Kitsch**
11. **Outsider Art**
12. **Folk Art**
13. **Performance Art**
14. **Fashion**
15. **Interior Design**
16. **Graphic Design**
17. **Photography**
18. **Sequential Art**
19. **Other**

2. AESTHETIC EXPRESSION

1. **Ceremonial**
2. **Spiritual/Religious**
3. **Traditional Dress**
4. **Personal Decorum** (Hairstyles, tattoos, piercing, clothing styles, etc.)
5. **Graffiti**
6. **Cuisine**
7. **Other**

II. Characteristics of Cultural Art/Aesthetic Expression

1. ART AS COMMON CULTURE

1. **Popular Culture**
2. **Family Culture**
3. **Personal Culture**
4. **Pass Time**

2. ART AS REMOVED
 1. Temporal/ Historical
 2. High Art
 3. Traditional Art
 4. Academic
 5. Economic

III. Type of Cultural Art/Aesthetic Expression

1. INDIVIDUALISTIC

1. Political
2. Spiritual
3. Personal Identity
4. Ethnic Identity
5. Gender Identity
6. Historic Identity

2. COLLECTIVE

1. Political
2. Spiritual
3. Cultural Identity
4. Ethnic Identity
5. Gender Identity
6. Historic Identity

3. SOCIO/ECONOMIC PLACEMENT OF ART/EXPRESSION

1. Employment/Revenue
2. Hobby/Decorative
3. Territorial
4. Ceremonial/ Mystical
5. Political
6. Institutional

4. ACADEMIC

1. Formal Structure
2. Criticism
3. History
4. Practice
5. Creative Expression
6. Pleasure/Therapeutic

IV. Respondents Perceptions of Art/Aesthetic Expression

A. ACCESS

Referring to the context by which the participant acquired access to the aesthetic expression.

1. Tourist
2. Academic
3. Professional
4. Interpersonal
5. Influential
6. Situational
7. Integrated Culture (referring to sub-cultural contexts)
8. Inherent (within the participants own culture)

B. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT RESPONSE

The acknowledgment response refers to the context by which the aesthetic expression is acknowledged as an aesthetic expression.

1. Empathic Response

Characterized by the ability to identify with the art/expression.

2. Emotional Response

Characterized by association with a stated feeling.

3. Academic Response

Characterized by association with formally acquired knowledge.

4. Intellectual Response

Characterized by association with an intellectual response.

5. Pragmatic Response

Characterized by association with practicality/ functionality.

6. Romantic Response

Characterized by unfounded notions, unrelated to authentic experience.

C. EVALUATIVE RESPONSE

The evaluative response refers to context in which the aesthetic expression is perceived of as valuable.

1. Economic

Value is based in economics.

2. Sentimental

Based on importance attachments to its symbolic representations.

3. Historical

Based on importance attachments to its placement in the past

4. Cultural

Based on the fact that it might be used to tell us something about the cultures in which it was made and subsequently preserved.

5. Religious

Valued by virtue of its relation to the Divine, holy or sacred.

6. Ethical

Valued for making a moral or ethical statement.

7. Inherent

The experience is valuable in itself, not because it leads to something else that is valuable.

8. Consequential

Value depends upon fulfilling a particular function such as teaching or bringing about emotional release.

9. Tradition

Based in social tradition.

V. Perceptual Framework

A. AESTHETIC THEORY

1. Essentialist

Belief that a single essence characterized the objects of all judgments of goodness, namely, the quality of goodness itself.

2. Mimetic

Imitation Art Theory, considered correct from ancient times until the 19th century, focuses on the objective properties of art work. It is also referred to as an object centered theory of art. The idea that art mimics the visible world, artworks represent or reflect objects and organisms in the physical environment. Artistic imitations of worldly reality may take literal or idealized forms.

3. Instrumentalist

Instrumentalism emphasizes the use of art as an instrument for furthering moral, religious, social or political points of view. *Instrumentalism* is the ground of judgment that locates the goodness of an artwork in its capacity to serve an institution, an institution that is more important than art. Using this theory, artworks may be judged by their effectiveness in influencing the thought and actions of individuals and society.

4. Formalist

Corresponding to the requirement of beauty or harmony, an artwork is good to the extent that its parts cooperate, reinforce each other, and join to form a perfect unity. A point of view rising to the defense of modern abstract art. Points out that properties such as color, shape, pitch, rhythm, rhyme, and camera angles are exclusively important in aesthetic experience assessment. The creative application of the formal properties like the elements and principals of design used in a work are important in themselves.

5. Expressivist

A complex 20th century movement elemented by the urge to express moods accurately even if the descriptive content had to be distorted to do so. According to this standard of value, an artwork should be judged by its capacity to communicate feelings and ideas honestly, vividly, and forcefully.

6. Open Concept

No theory can adequately account for all variations in art due to an overlapping succession of minor changes and major revolutions of style, content, values, and purposes. Art cannot be defined. Works of art are so immensely various- paintings, sculptures, poems and novels, songs and dances, operas and orchestral works, cathedrals and warehouses- that it seems quite impossible that there could be a set of essential properties that they all share. New kinds of painting, new kinds of music, make their appearance, and subvert all previous conceptions of painting and music. New art forms, such as photography and cinema, are invented, and so all previous conceptions of art have to be discarded.

7. Institutional

Defining art by placing it in a context where the public has been elevated to position of equal importance to the artist. This artworld public shares in the responsibility of producing the art. In this theory: A work of art in the classificatory sense is (1) an artifact (2) a set of the aspects of which has had conferred upon it the status of candidate for appreciation by some person or persons acting on behalf of a certain social institution (the artworld).

8. Bio-Evolutionary

An ethological view presumes that art contributes something essential to the human being who makes or responds to it – not in the usual sense of being good for his soul or pleasurable for his mind and spirit (though these benefits are not denied), but beneficial for biological fitness. It is the interplay of natural faculties and cultural influences that account for the richness, diversity, complexity and unique attributes of art and aesthetics around the world.

9. Art Within Traditions

Theory which relies upon talk about art as both a necessary and sufficient condition in defining art, stipulates that artifacts not talked about are only potential works of art; they do not count as art until they are talked or written about within aesthetic traditions that is, within the traditions of history, criticism, and theory.

10. Principal Intent

Artistic action (an all other human action) can only be understood if we know what is being attempted. We may look at any piece of artwork and reflect upon the artist's principal intent.

11. Art by Destination/ Transformation

Naturalized objects which become works of art in the classificatory sense are artifactualized without the use of tools-artifactuality is conferred on the object rather than worked on it. This means that natural objects which become works of art acquire their artifactuality at the same time that the status of candidate for appreciation is conferred on them. The presumption is that if it is art, it is in a museum collection somewhere.

B. CRITICAL THEORY

1. Contextual

Contextual theory insists that understanding the *context* in which an object or event is created and experienced is essential if we are to perceive it correctly. The work of art is understood as the product of a distinctive mixture of factors- religious, philosophical, political, and economic- which predominate in a certain period or place.

2. Phenomenological

The phenomenological critic endeavors to experience the distinctively aesthetic (as opposed to literary, religious, and economic) properties of the art object. Interpretation is the business of explaining, or making explicit, what has been phenomenologically perceived, the aesthetic object and the aesthetic experience are subjective through and through. The only relevant objects are those which, in one way or another, make their appearance felt.

3. Marxist

Art expresses, in part, the historically limited perceptions of each particular society and period. To this extent art is ideological, for it disguises reality. On the other hand, art is recognized as art, in this way it can also reveal the *unreality* of the ideological world. Explains the form and content by referring to the economic, political and ideological relationships within which they are set. Looks for patterns and relationships that art shares with other social creations, and evaluates art on the basis of its historical role and its contribution to furthering social ideals.

4. Feminist

The work of art is considered in terms of its bearing on the status and changing roles of women, the interactions between art and gender, the exclusiveness or inclusiveness of the art-historical canon, the oppression or exploitation of women, the functions of patriarchy or matriarchy in an artist's expression, sexist representations of women, and the distinctive perceptions of women in various periods and cultures.

5. Pluralist

An acceptance of the position that multiple perspectives should prevail over adherence to singular styles, theories or canons of art, rejects hierarchical values obtaining across cultures.

6. Universalism

A *universal* explanation- an explanation that suits everyone, always...an explanation is contingent on (a) the meaning of the work at a certain time, and (b) the understanding (or capacity for understanding) of a particular public.

7. Deconstructionist

Disparate, frequently conflicting meanings exist within a single text or artwork. The meaning of the work changes according to the critic's needs, and no final or authoritative

reading is possible. We cannot understand works of art, if by understanding we mean getting at the single correct interpretation of them.

8. Semiotic

The semiotic critic focuses on the codes or conventions that govern the inherent meanings and cultural interpretations of artworks. We never, according to this line of thinking, encounter the referent itself, only further meanings, in an endless chain of meanings.

VI. Experiential Learning & Meaning Making

A. EXPRESSED LEARNING PERCEPTIONS

1. Transformative

- a) Indicative of emergent intellectual growth, emotional growth and/or emotional intelligence growth.
- b) Affective, attributing to a change of attitude, awareness and willingness to understand.

2. Reinforcement

- a) Cognitive application to prior knowledge.
- b) Affective assimilation of prior knowledge to new context.

3. Comparative

- a) Relating through similarities.
- b) Divergent, relating through contrasts and differences.
- c) Prioritizing.

4. Convergent

- a) Pulling ideas together to develop holistic comprehension.
- b) Analysis and organization of ideas.
- c) Synthesis, using pattern recognition to create new meaning.

5. Critical

Pertaining to re-examination of the native culture.

6. Problematic

Pertaining to criticism of the non-native culture.

7. Informational

- a) Cognitive, knowledge-based learning.
- b) Cognitive, factual knowledge recall.

8. Psycho-motor/Psycho-somatic

- a) Pertaining to habitual and/or refined motor skills
- b) Pertaining to physical coordination
- c) Pertaining to physical health and well-being

9. Evaluative

- a) Re-assessing value.
- b) Indicative of tolerance.
- c) Indicative of judgment.
- d) Indicative of acceptance.
- e) Indicative of commitment.

10. Responsive

- a) Participatory.
- b) Pertaining to satisfaction and increased motivation.

11. Internalization

- a) Indicative of adaptation, adjustment, assimilation.
- b) Resulting in a characteristic change in the identity of the learner.

B. CONVEYANCE OF KNOWLEDGE

1. Transmissive

Instructor guided.

2. Explorative

Self-guided, inquiry characterized by curiosity, problem-solving, and exploration.

3. Intuitive

- a) Subconscious absorption.
- b) Habit formation.

4. Insightful

Result of reflection, creative expression, astute observation.