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The University of Southern Mississippi

K-1 TEACHERS' VISUAL ARTS BELIEFS AND THEIR ROLE
IN THE EARLY CHILDHOOD CLASSROOM

by

Blythe Annette Goodman-Schanz

Abstract of a Dissertation
Submitted to the Graduate School
of The University of Southern Mississippi
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

May 2012

ABSTRACT

K-1 TEACHERS' VISUAL ARTS BELIEFS AND THEIR ROLE IN THE EARLY CHILDHOOD CLASSROOM

by Blythe Annette Goodman-Schanz

May 2012

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore and describe the visual arts beliefs and practices of eight K-1 teachers in four schools and in two different school districts in a southern state. Using a phenomenological framework (Creswell, 2007; Leedy & Ormrod, 2005), the research revealed the teachers' understandings of beliefs and how they applied them to their early childhood classrooms. Data were collected consisting of formal and informal interviews with the eight teachers. Interview data were analyzed using triangulation in phenomenological reflection suggested by van Manen (1990). The analysis yielded three major themes and three sub-themes. The first major theme, development of visual arts beliefs, was supported by the subtheme of academic training. The second major theme, demands of curriculum, was supported by two subthemes of professional development and administrative support. The third major theme, classroom practices, did not yield a subtheme. From analysis of data, descriptions of the teachers' individual understanding of their visual arts beliefs and practices were generated. Recommendations for future research included the present study to be extended with participants to be in another geographical region. In addition, more research to be conducted of male teachers' beliefs in K-1 was recommended.

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May 2012

DEDICATION

To my wonderful husband, Hans-Jörg, who has patiently waited the past six years for me to complete my dissertation.

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My deep appreciation goes to my eight participants: Carolyn, Gean, Jamie, Lilly, Martha, Shelly, Sue, and Valerie. Were it not for their time and willingness to share their own personal lived experiences, this dissertation would not have been possible.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Problem Statement

Mattil (1972) suggests the importance of how a teacher's personal experiences, beliefs, and knowledge affect the teaching practices of art education:

When we put our trust in our own experience and when we have strong positive views of *self*, we can afford to take chances and do not need to fear doing what seems right—even if it is new and different. It may take a long time to gain confidence, [*sic*] and it requires a lot of personal conviction... (p. 2)

Erik Erikson's theory of psychosocial development, concerning his first stage of trust versus mistrust, also supports Mattil's research that in order for teachers to feel secure, maintain self-control, and exhibit trust in their classrooms; teachers must have, hopefully, developed autonomy and initiative during their own early childhood years (Mooney, 2006). Just like children, if teachers have gained competence and confidence in the visual arts, their classroom environment will nurture children's creative growth and aesthetic development.

In general, elementary schools provide an art teacher or artist-in-residence to teach art education. Yet, ultimately the responsibility lies with the regular classroom teacher to provide meaningful experiences for children to enjoy the process of imagining, creating, and constructing something that expresses a part of themselves. Without extrinsic rewards and a pattern or prescribed method, a child that is allowed the freedom and satisfaction of creating something of his or her own design is fulfilling a primary goal of art education and moving toward a positive self-concept (Lowenfeld & Brittain, 1987).

The importance of the visual arts in American education was most recently recognized when it was included as a core academic subject in the Federal Government's No Child Left Behind Act of 2002 (Chapman, 2007). In addition to the expectations at the local school level, every state in the nation has some form of arts standards. Although the teaching of the visual arts is mandated and expected to be taught within the curriculum, this research will investigate the extent to which this is happening. For children to have developmental and constructivist art experiences on a regular basis in the early childhood classroom, the teacher must be not only knowledgeable in teaching the arts and value its many intrinsic attributes, he or she must have personal and positive experiences with the arts to be able to provide such pleasurable and expressive activities within the classroom (Bennett, 1923; Edwards, 2006; Taunton & Colbert, 2000). Teachers' beliefs, experiences and practices do have an impact on visual arts instruction in the classroom (Oreck, 2004).

Dehouske (2001) emphasizes the importance of a constructivist, experiential, and feminist pedagogical approach for pre-service and in-service early childhood education teachers to embrace the arts and aesthetics and explains how this approach can enhance self-expression and the value of aesthetic education in the classroom environment. She further emphasizes this point of her students that they "...cannot be sensitive to the art experiences of young children unless they themselves experience the elements of trust, risk, pleasure, and self-revelation that are central to the aesthetic creation" (p. 183).

What has happened in the past affects what we do in the present, as articulated by the truism "What we teach is who we are" (Bresler & Thompson, 2002, p. 157).

Teachers' beliefs are based on their personal, academic, and professional experiences and

these beliefs are what support the practices of teachers. Through their teacher training and professional development, most early childhood teachers are generally knowledgeable in the importance of visual arts and how it helps children with self-expression, creativity, aesthetic awareness, and curiosity. Typically, the academic coursework for pre-service and in-service teachers includes culturally and developmentally appropriate practices, knowledge of learning styles, and the influence of multiple intelligences on the learning environment. Yet, teachers seem a bit uneasy about providing such enriching experiences. These teachers have a fear of not knowing how to create and foster such an environment. For many teachers, it is simpler and easier to relegate intermittent teacher-directed, patterned “art” projects on Friday afternoons once the more significant subjects have been taught (Eisner, 1985; Gibson, 2003; Koster, 2001). Especially in the primary grades, cute decorative craft projects appear to be less complicated to “create” than more meaningful and challenging art experiences (Jalongo, 1999; Sussna, 2000). These activities that they may provide for their students appear to be reminiscent of their own school age art experiences. Research indicates that some teachers were chided when they were students for not following directions explicitly and were discouraged when their art project was not as beautiful and colorful compared to the teacher’s model and standards (Metcalf & Smith-Shank, 2001; Smith-Shank, 1993). Perhaps their academic careers have not provided them with the enriching experiences of self-confidence to have respect for one’s own creations, their peers, and art from cultures all over the globe (McKean, 2001; Zwirn & Graham, 2005). Since many pre-service and in-service teachers have not experienced a creative climate for the visual arts, it is difficult to establish, foster, and

maintain an aesthetic environment for their own students (Gibson, 2003; Kindler, 1996; Smith-Shank, 1993).

According to Koster (2001), for teachers to create an atmosphere conducive to the visual arts, they must first understand themselves as artists and their own personal art abilities and experiences before being able to foster a classroom environment that nurtures the creative process and allow its impact on learning to develop and unfold. Teachers must envision themselves as creative. Jalongo and Stamp (1997) contend that the most effective early childhood teachers who facilitate the meaningful arts experiences: “(a) know how to share their enthusiasm for the arts and aesthetics, (b) continue to be avid learners in the arts, (c) focus on developing children’s creativity, and (d) strive to become more creative themselves” (p. 129). In addition, Colbert and Taunton (1992) emphasize three developmentally appropriate practices for the visual arts education of young children as stated in the National Art Education Association (NAEA) briefing paper. These three major guidelines are:

1. Children need many opportunities to create art.
2. Children need many opportunities to look at and talk about art.
3. Children need to become aware of art in their everyday lives. (p. 2)

For teachers to provide art experiences for their students, they themselves must first have had such active learning experiences (Dehouske, 2001; Katz & Chard, 2000; Koster 2001; Piscitelli, 2000). Many teachers, even those with good art training, feel they *cannot do art* as a result of little confidence in their art ability thereby directly affecting classroom practices. Unfortunately these teachers feel that they cannot produce art. Possibly, this was due to negative art experiences throughout their life. However, some

of these negative experiences have occurred in both the regular and art classrooms (Forrer, 2001), and these experiences can impact both art education in the classroom. As Grauer (1998) states in her case study of pre-service teachers' beliefs toward art education: "Ultimately, the beliefs of the individual teacher dictate what, or if, art education will take place" (p. 351). Hence, the first and very broad NAEA guideline that "children need many opportunities to create art" (Colbert & Taunton, 1992), is seldom embarked upon. Teachers need to realize that their greatest struggle to teach the visual arts may be the lack of self-confidence, knowledge, and skills to teach the visual arts.

The second NAEA guideline of "opportunities to look at and talk about art" (Colbert & Taunton, 1992) is often ignored in part due to limited funding, lack of teacher resources, time restraints, a greater emphasis on more academic subjects, pre-service teacher coursework, and in-service professional development (Barry & Townsend, 1995; Gibson, 2003; Oreck, 2004; Purnell & Gray, 2004).

The last and final guideline, "for children to become aware of art in their everyday lives" (Colbert & Taunton, 1992), relates to aesthetic development. Because aesthetics appertains to perception through the senses, the process needs to be nurtured through enriching classroom experiences. Such experiences can be supported through the Aesthetic Development Model (Kostelnik, Soderman, & Whiren, 2007) which involves two components: responsive and productive. The responsive experience is developed in art and nature through discovering, recognizing, and appreciating its beauty while also learning to articulate judgments and personal preferences. The productive experience allows children to create and express themselves in artistic activities and opportunities. Art in the everyday lives of children can be illustrated by the following description of a

rural 1936 Minnesota one-room schoolhouse teacher who weaved the aesthetic eye into the classroom (Read, 1956):

Children are taught to be conscious of beauty in all things. They endeavor to make their environment beautiful...they learn how to create through daily choices... arrangement...colour...they find in nature, in pictures, in sculpture, in architecture, and in manufactured articles...they experiment. In all social studies the contributions of art are studied. The teacher thinks of art as one of the areas of learning, developed through four approaches: namely the appreciative, the creative, the informational, and the technical. There is a well-adjusted balance between work designed to foster self-expression and opportunities to make art choices. All work is child-originated...much more imagination, much work for the development of mental images. (p. 239)

For children to learn to see beauty all around them, it takes a cognizant effort on the part of the adults to expose children to art as being an integral part of their normal surroundings (Jalongo, 1999). Carter (1993) underscores the role of the classroom teacher in art education of not only having a working philosophical understanding of appropriate activities, as well as how to support such experiences within the classroom. Carter (1993) posits that three triangulating aspects must exist for art education to grow and develop: (a) opportunity, (b) exposure, and (c) encouragement.

Audience

The potential audience for this study includes teacher educators, school administrators, staff development coordinators, as well as pre-service and

in-service classroom and art teachers. The arts provide opportunities to creatively construct not just one simple path to the right answer. The arts establish a creative venue in which to find many other ways to solve a problem or find a solution. This research will aid educators, administrators, and policy makers to understand the support needed for visual arts in the school setting.

Researcher's Perspective

Having been in the field of education for eighteen years ranging in experiences from being a substitute teacher and early childhood classroom educator to a college teacher education instructor and constantly striving to nurture a learning environment conducive to creative expression, I have seen the joy that comes from both children and adults when given the opportunities to create and express themselves in their own unique way. From my observation, it is the adults who enter into a project with much fear and trepidation and are in need of constant reassurance throughout the entire process. Children, if they have not experienced such freedom, may be slightly apprehensive initially. Yet, once they have seen their peers enjoying themselves, there is no stopping them. Teaching and facilitating such a climate is frequently different than those classrooms that I have observed and sometimes the schools where I have taught. That in itself makes me wonder, as I have viewed countless classrooms and listened to pre-service and in-service teachers discuss art, why are teachers not providing opportunities for children to create their own works of art?

Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this qualitative study conducted within the phenomenological tradition was to explore the visual arts beliefs and practices of eight K-1 teachers in four

schools and in two different school districts in a southern state. The following central research question was used to guide the study:

How do K-1 teachers in a southern state define their visual arts beliefs and apply them in the early childhood classroom?

The guiding sub-questions for this study included the following:

1. How do K-1 teachers in a southern state define their lived experiences of the visual arts?
2. What are the understandings of K-1 teachers in a southern state about how they learned to use the visual arts with their students?
3. What meaning do K-1 teachers in a southern state assign to their classroom practices that they believe represent their lived experiences of the visual arts?

CHAPTER II

RELATED LITERATURE

Theoretical Framework

Viktor Lowenfeld articulates that the goal of art education is: “not the art itself or the aesthetic product or the aesthetic experience, but rather the child who grows up more creatively and sensitively and applies his experience in the arts to whatever life situations may be applicable” (as cited in Michael, 1982, p. xix). Lowenfeld was not the first to emphasize the development of the whole child. In ancient Greece, art education was discussed in Plato’s *Republic* and Aristotle’s *Politics* as an invaluable aspect of a child’s development in becoming a contributing member of society (Efland, 1990).

According to Saunders (1966), in 4th century B.C., the need for aesthetic development was conveyed in Aristotle’s explanation of the four main areas of education: (a) reading and writing, (b) gymnastic exercises, (c) music, and (d) drawing. He felt that children should be taught how to read, write, and draw not only for practicality, but also because these practices lead to even greater and worthwhile knowledge. Aristotle asserted that learning to draw was rewarding because it enabled children to appreciate the beauty of humanity (Saunders, 1966). The National Art Education Association (NAEA) guidelines state that children not only need many enriching and meaningful experiences to create, look at, and talk about art, but to gain a genuine and authentic aesthetic awareness of art surrounding them in their daily lives (Colbert & Taunton, 1992).

Pestalozzi

The importance of drawing did not gain significance in education until 19th century Germany. Johann Pestalozzi did not feel drawing was to express one’s self through

production or to gain an eye for nature's aesthetic beauty (Efland, 1990). Drawing to Pestalozzi was a means to an end. In other words, within the progression of drawing straight lines, curves, angles, geometric figures, and objects, to eventually the surrounding living forms of nature, drawing was a simple tool requiring no special technique on the part of the teacher in order for children to enhance perception and cognitive development (Efland, 1990).

Froebel

Friedrich Froebel was one of the first in early childhood education to recognize the value of art in learning (Brosterman, 1996). His gifts and occupations were materials for children to explore and manipulate into patterns and geometric designs and then, subsequently create their own patterns, figures, and objects. His first gift, six woolen balls from the primary (red, yellow, and blue) colors and secondary (orange, green, and purple) colors, was for his kindergarten students to explore color, shape, and counting (Brosterman, 1996). The seventh gift, parquetry, were flat pieces of wood or cardboard made into five geometric shapes consisting of a square and four triangles in varying sizes and angles (Brosterman, 1996). Children learned not only about geometry, but how shapes can be formed into pictures, which was only limited by their own creativity. The tenth gift was drawing, which helped develop children's observational skills using measurement, symmetry, and orientation. The drawing was done on a grooved slate initially then progressed to graph paper (Brosterman, 1996; Efland, 1990). Children used horizontal, vertical, and eventually diagonal and curved lines to copy examples, follow teachers' oral directions, and create their own patterns and designs (Brosterman, 1996; Efland, 1990). The use of paper in sewing, weaving, cutting, and folding was utilized for

children to create their own designs and geometric patterns. The final gift was modeling clay which through hands-on exploration, constructing, creating, observing, and experiencing; the child learned about the natural world and its aesthetic nature while bringing the child full circle back to the original gift, balls (Brosterman, 1996).

Montessori

Maria Montessori was one of the next to emphasize the use of the visual arts including drawing, watercolors, and modeling clay in her work with children in Italy at the turn of the 20th century (Montessori, 1965b). Montessori wrote that young children's cognitive development begins with learning through the senses and is fostered by nurturing their observational skills. Each child develops at his/her own rate and it is the teacher's role to be aware of when the child might need intervention based on an appropriate teachable moment (Montessori, 1965b). This seems to be the precursor to Vygotsky's zone of proximal development (ZPD).

For children to become observant and expressive, worthwhile experiences using relevant vocabulary to expand their knowledge and understanding need to be utilized in meaningful ways throughout the day (Montessori, 1965a). Like Froebel, Montessori's students initially learned drawing skills through lines, angles, and shapes, then progressed to personally-created designs. Montessori allowed children to use colored pencils, pens, and even watercolors to personalize their work (Montessori, 1965a). Children also drew inspiration from nature. They observed a unique pattern from underneath the microscope or looked in art books of masterpieces that would enhance their aesthetic imagination. Montessori (1965a) felt providing appropriate tools for children to explore and wonder created an atmosphere within themselves over time, enabling them to have an acute eye

to accurately illustrate what is being discovered. With peer and teacher support, quality art supplies, and the fostered development came the observational skills that enabled her students to feel competent and capable with drawing and painting. Montessori explained that this is possible, even “without a drawing teacher” (p. 315).

Vygotsky

Lev Vygotsky explains in his work that learning leads to development. Thus, *an active child and active social environment* are central to his social-cognitive theory of development (Berk & Winsler, 1995). Learning occurs through socio-cultural interaction with peers and adults, the influence of individual child’s cultural and the cross-cultural of society as a whole, along with language as a tool and vehicle for greater literacy, knowledge, and understanding of the world around us (Berk & Winsler, 1995).

Even though Vygotsky’s works oriented from his passion to create a better understanding of the needs of mentally, socially, physically and psychologically challenged children, his impact has had a profound impact on early childhood education (Berk & Winsler, 1995). Vygotsky’s research is also applicable to the arts (Wright, 2003). Like Vygotsky, Thompson (1997) declares that art, much like language should be taught in the manner that allows children to explore, interpret, and imagine what the possibilities are for self-expression, no matter the form it evolves into and how it matures. From a young age, children are holistically involved in the art experience. If the art experience involves language learning, language development, and social interaction between peers and adults, then this underscores Vygotsky’s belief in the growth and development of the whole child socially, emotionally, and cognitively (Bodrova & Leong, 1996).

Vygotsky believed that through play a tremendous amount of learning occurs (Vygotsky, 1978). Language is a key factor in this social situation. Children construct and develop knowledge through language. To provide opportunities for children to develop language, Vygotsky asserted, is an integral aspect of cognitive development. Vygotsky (1978) states that when a child plays, his zone of proximal development naturally occurs internally while fostering self-growth and that play, in and of itself, is a “major source of development” (p. 102). For example, when children are in the process of drawing, the senses are being developed through the conversations and social interactions with their peers. Therefore, if the naming of the work is to be expected, through this experience, at its completion, it will naturally occur (Vygotsky, 1978). Mooney (2006) notes, “It is important to recognize that using Vygotsky’s ZPD requires careful observation of children and good judgment about how best to support their learning” (p. 88). Thus, the early childhood educator must be cognizant of the appropriate timing, terminology, and necessity of scaffolding the student’s understanding of the visual arts. Mooney (2006) states through the encouragement of conversation, social interactions, and opportunities for children to work cooperatively together, then language development and learning occur.

In his research, Vygotsky came to the understanding that the process of creating a piece of art originates from not only a purposeful and physical action, but from an internal and holistic origin (Vygotsky, 1971). Educators cannot teach the creativity, but they can provide the classroom environment that includes an understanding of how to support the learning, growth, and development that fosters the effort of creating. This foundation is what lays the groundwork for “organizing our conscious, which leads us

toward art, we insure a priori the success or failure of the work of art” (Vygotsky, 1971, pp. 256-257).

Gardner

Howard Gardner’s eight multiple intelligences are comprised of musical, bodily-kinesthetic, logical-mathematical, linguistic, spatial, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and naturalistic and everyone exhibits all of these in varying proportions (Cornett, 2007; Edwards, 2006; Gardner, 2006). Gardner (2006) observes that most school settings cater to the linguistic and logical-mathematical intelligences to teach content.

In the area of art education, Gardner emphasizes the young child’s need to develop the “use of symbols and symbolic systems” as part of his/her development as an artist (Gardner, 1993, p. 129). In his research, Gardner, like Vygotsky, stresses that children develop socially and emotionally if they are able to interact and collaborate with others. They become more adept at self-monitoring and become autonomous individuals (Gardner, 1993). From the outside, creating a work of art may appear to be “intensely private and individual,” but in reality, its formation and progression are interdependent on the artist or child in this case, along with the social interactions from enriching language experiences and developing an inventiveness with art techniques (Wolf, 1989, p. 148). Creating, observing, and thinking about a work of art “remains the cornerstone of all pedagogical efforts,” in order for the early childhood educator to meet the needs of children’s multiple intelligences in the visual arts (Gardner, 1989, pp. 164-165).

Reggio Emilia

In the Italian region of Emilia Romagna where the theoretical base of art education meets research, the arts are central to children’s learning in the schools of

Reggio Emilia. The infant centers and preschools for children age three to six have opened the doors of appropriate guidance and teaching strategies to American early childhood educators. This regional Italian educational system has been such a sharp contrast from what has been thought of in American schools as almost immensely *child-centered* approach in fear of disrupting the creative flow (Gandini, 1997).

Hendrick (1997) makes a comparative discussion between the American approach and the Reggio Emilia Approach (REA) that involves teachers' attitudes about children, creativity, and what embodies effective teaching strategies. American early childhood educators are astute to the role that developmentally appropriate practices plays, but it may also impede a child's growth and development as a learner because there is an expectation of underachievement. In contrast, the REA centers around the expectations that children's learning should be based on enriching, thought provoking, real life experiences which foster greater personal independence. Like Montessori, the REA fosters a child's skill of observation and aesthetic awareness. Art is a language for expressing and communicating ideas in graphic and visual ways, especially for young children who have not learned to read and write (Hendrick, 1997). The Reggio teachers are comfortable scaffolding at appropriate times by discussing, modeling, or teaching specific skills and techniques. Children in American schools, on the other hand, experience a *hands-off* approach, out of concern that it may impede the creative process. Through the transcribing of discussions and conversations between the teachers and the children, Reggio teachers are able to bring back to the children ideas about a possible project. Traditionally, in the American approach to meeting mandated curriculum standards, teachers may take students' interests into consideration, with the majority of

the learning activities and experiences being teacher-directed and created, and quite likely retrieved from a thematic file of related ideas (Hendrick, 1997).

Like Gardner's Multiple Intelligences, what must be understood about the REA, is that children do not learn everything in one simple way. There is not just one way to read, imagine, speak, think, write, draw, or create. Whereas children come to school with the capacity and desire to express themselves in their own individual way, they can easily be robbed of the joy by their peers and adults in their life, the classroom environment, and the society they live in (Gandini, 1997).

Loris Malaguzzi, who helped establish Reggio Emilia, believed children have at least a hundred languages in which to express themselves and that it is not only the responsibility of the teachers, parents, the community, but also the children themselves to wonder, discover, learn, imagine, and create their own knowledge cooperatively through the incredible world surrounding them (Edwards, Gandini, & Forman, 1998).

Table 1

Theorists and philosophical support of art

Theorists	Philosophical Support of Art
Johann Pestalozzi	Believed drawing is means to an end for children to enhance perception and cognitive development
Friedrich Froebel	Recognized value of art in learning through manipulation and exploration of age appropriate materials

Table 1 (continued).

Theorists	Philosophical Support of Art
Maria Montessori	Emphasized the use of visual arts including drawing, watercolors, and modeling clay
Lev Vygotsky	Research work is applicable to the arts and he believed that children are holistically involved through the language of the art experience
Howard Gardner	Believed in creating and thinking about a work of art through child interaction and collaboration with others
Reggio Emilia	Emphasized the arts are central to children's learning, as art is graphic and visual and is one of many languages for expressing and communicating ideas and thoughts

Review of the Related Literature

In reviewing the research of the visual arts in elementary education, a number of studies were found about pre-service and in-service teachers' beliefs. Of these, two studies dealing with pre-service teachers' attitudes will be reviewed in this section with the remaining studies examining in-service teachers' beliefs.

Pre-service teachers' studies

Grauer (1998) conducted research in British Columbia of both generalist and art specialist pre-service teachers' beliefs about art education and its effect in their practicum experiences. The majority of the pre-service teachers' beliefs influenced their practicum classroom experience accordingly, except in the cases where their *supporting* teacher's beliefs were not congruent with theirs. Even with the academic knowledge of the art curriculum guides, Grauer (1998) found that the classroom teachers' beliefs about

teaching and learning art is the primary decision to implement art education, if any, into the curriculum.

Gibson (2003) studied Australian pre-service teachers in a longitudinal study exploring their attitudes about art and art education. This research specifically examined the visual arts regarding: (a) their prior experiences, (b) their existing knowledge, (c) their beliefs, (d) their attitudes, and (e) their perceptions and interests (p. 111). At the beginning of the study, the majority of the pre-service teachers felt *somewhat confident* about teaching the visual arts in a primary school setting. In the open-ended response area of the study, one respondent wrote, “I wasn’t very good at it [art] myself! How can I teach it to someone else?” (p. 118). Two years later, the majority of the pre-service teachers felt *more confident* about teaching the visual arts to their future primary students. Although the participants’ increased their level of confidence to teach art during their practicum experience congruent with the two university Visual Arts courses, some still had reservations about their ability to comfortably teach art. Another participant stated, “I’m still not good at it...you can’t just make yourself creative...a million great resources wouldn’t help this” (Gibson, 2003, p. 119).

In-service teachers’ studies

Purnell and Gray (2004) surveyed third through fifth grade teachers in southwestern Pennsylvania about the integration of the arts into classroom instruction. For at-risk children and those with special needs, 96% of the teachers believed arts integration would benefit their learning. 63% felt academic standards were met by arts integration while 100% of the respondents perceived children’s learning styles were met by arts integration. This study also found 94% of the teachers surveyed used art projects

to evaluate students' understanding (Purnell & Gray, 2004). However, for the teachers to be able to integrate the arts into their curriculum, there were several concerns noted. The most significant finding being the lack of time for teachers to plan both individually and with other teachers (Purnell & Gray, 2004).

Kowalchuk and Stone (2003) conducted a study of both pre-service and in-service classroom teachers' attitudes toward art. The pre-service teachers appeared to have a personal connection and respect for art including creating their own works of art. Yet, when expected to bridge the arts-based knowledge that they know is important for children's learning, the pre-service teachers' responses indicated that they were hesitant and unsure of how to integrate the arts experience into the curriculum. In contrast, the in-service teachers' willingness to integrate the arts is not as pronounced, based primarily on academic pressures, lack of time for planning classroom art experiences, and limited resources. The researchers have suggested that the pre-service teachers gain a better understanding of how to emphasize and integrate art instruction into the curriculum. Kowalchuk and Stone (2003) further recommend that while both in-service and pre-service teachers need the opportunities to become more comfortable discussing, viewing, and experiencing art and art making, those same opportunities for their students need to also be provided. Most importantly, the study asserts the call for teachers to "realize the impact of the visual world on daily life" (p. 153) and how to better showcase the worthiness of art in the classroom (Kowalchuk & Stone, 2003).

Bresler (1992) examined K-3 teachers' visual arts teaching practices in three Illinois elementary schools for a three-year case study. Semi-structured interviews, observations, and documents were the sources of data collection. The results of this study

indicated that there is a significant need for establishing and continuing staff development, sufficient resources, and materials. While pre-service teachers were found to need a greater emphasis placed on understanding the importance of art in the school setting, the study concluded that they also need to learn how to integrate appropriate art skills and knowledge.

Barry and Townsend (1995) studied 100 primary teachers in 16 elementary schools located in Auckland, New Zealand. The investigators used a survey instrument including open-ended questions along with interviewing to collect their data. Generally, the teachers' attitudes towards teaching art were "positive and enthusiastic" (p. 61) and even more so with teachers who had greater art proficiency and skills or a specific role pertaining to art in the school setting. The two major areas of concern expressed by the teachers were teacher training and the availability of resources. Results indicated classroom teachers expressed a strong need to receive greater "in-service" training, as well as needing to have had in-depth pre-service training. The second concern involved lack of art supplies and the supportive resources of those associated with the field of art (Barry & Townsend, 1995, p. 61).

Apple (1993) surveyed 25 elementary teachers at a school in the Northeast about their attitudes toward art and how much time was dedicated to teaching it in the classroom. While 100% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that art is an appropriate component of the elementary content areas and 88% integrate it into their classroom, yet only two hours or less is the amount of time 60% of the teachers actually devote to art on a weekly basis. Results indicated that in order for teachers to act upon the strong belief that art is a necessity, not a "frill" (p. 29) in the school setting and for it to

be taught, classroom teachers must: (a) have a strong foundation in the educational significance of art, art history, and art appreciation, and (b) have a positive disposition about art. Apple (1993) also ascertains that the 60% of teachers who did not spend more than two hours per week on art may contribute it to the following explanations: (a) lack of time in the school day, (b) inadequate art supplies and resources, (c) a working knowledge of art techniques and, (d) how to appropriately integrate art activities (p. 32).

Oreck (2004) conducted a mixed-method study of 423 K-12 teachers about their attitude towards teaching art and applying it to their classroom practices. There are three areas of recommendations that Oreck drew from his research:

1. Teachers need ongoing support for their own creative and artistic development.
2. Professional development should help teachers recognize and articulate the impact of arts on students.
3. School and district administrators should make in-service arts workshops a higher priority for teachers. (pp. 66-67)

Thus, to have the support of the administration, not necessarily just staff development, is what is needed to for teachers to feel they can teach art well and from the heart, once the internal motivation is present (Oreck, 2004).

The last study, of six New York City elementary school teachers solidifies how ultimately, the teachers themselves bear the sole responsibility to provide meaningful arts experiences integrated into the curriculum (Oreck, 2000). He found in this qualitative phase of the research, that teachers view art as a natural part of their own lives that is seamlessly woven into their teaching. The teachers also believe in having high

expectations for their students. Furthermore, these teachers do not treat art as an isolated content area. Art is not only a segue into other subjects, but frequently is used as the focal point of integrated projects (Oreck, 2000).

Table 2

Summary of Related Literature Studies

Study	Teachers	Major Emphasis of Study
Grauer (1998)	Pre-service	Pre-service teachers' study beliefs about art
Gibson (2003)	Pre-service	Pre-service teachers' longitudinal study of art and art education
Purnell & Gray (2004)	In-service	In-service teachers' study of integration of arts into classroom instruction
Kowalchuk & Stone (2003)	In-service and Pre-service	In-service and Pre-service teachers' study of attitudes toward art
Bresler (1992)	In-service	In-service teachers' study of visual arts teaching practices
Barry & Townsend (1995)	In-service	In-service teachers' study of attitudes toward teaching art
Apple (1993)	In-service	In-service teachers' study of attitudes toward art and time dedicated to teaching it

Table 2 (continued).

Study	Teachers	Major Emphasis of Study
Oreck (2004)	In-service	In-service teachers' study attitudes toward teaching art and applying to classroom practices

Summary of Literature and Indicators for Further Research

The literature related to the present study supports the idea that teachers' beliefs and personal experiences are strong indicators of the visual arts being taught in the elementary classroom (Gibson, 2003; Grauer, 1998). Factors that affect the lessening of arts integration include: (a) lack of time, (b) funding resources, (c) teachers' personal knowledge, and (d) their experiences in the visual arts (Kowalchuk & Stone, 2003; Purnell & Gray, 2004). The research reviewed tends to concentrate on using quantitative methods with occasional open-ended responses and interviews supporting some of the surveying instruments (Kowalchuk & Stone, 2003; Oreck, 2000, 2004; Gibson, 2003).

Previous research of pre-service teachers has found that teacher training appears to lack in preparing teachers for teaching and integrating art in the elementary classroom (Apple, 1993; Barry & Townsend, 1995; Bresler, 1992; Gibson, 2003; Grauer, 1998; Kowalchuk & Stone, 2003). Therefore, the present study focuses on the need to have a better understanding of how classroom teachers can become better prepared to have a personal motivation and respect for art. A working theoretical knowledge of art and its impact in the classroom, as well as the practical and innovative skill of being able to integrate the arts into the students' everyday lives is a necessity as well for pre-service

teachers (Apple, 1993; Barry & Townsend, 1995; Bresler, 1992; Gibson, 2003; Grauer, 1998; Kowalchuk & Stone, 2003).

Earlier studies have highlighted how teachers' beliefs are generally positive about the importance of art yet there are multiple factors that impede the depth and breadth of the visual arts in the everyday classroom learning environment (Apple, 1993; Barry & Townsend, 1995; Bresler, 1992; Gibson, 2003; Grauer, 1998; Kowalchuk & Stone, 2003; Purnell & Gray, 2004). The previously discussed research of in-service teachers' perspectives on art have been primarily studied with quantitative methodology (Apple, 1993; Barry & Townsend, 1995; Gibson, 2003; Grauer, 1998; Kowalchuk & Stone, 2003; Oreck, 2004; Purnell & Gray, 2004) with only one of the studies using purely qualitative data collection methods (Bresler, 1992).

Children learn to speak by speaking, think by thinking, write by writing, read by reading, draw by drawing, paint by painting, and create by creating. Children learn to communicate by being able to feel safe and secure in their classroom and knowing that however they represent and express themselves it is their right as a living and imaginative human being. In conclusion, Cohen and Gainer (1995), identify the value of the visual arts as:

Art functions as a language because it is a communication system in which visual statements clarify ideas and stimulate further ones. Necessary to this communication is a process involving selection and organization of ideas and application of those ideas to art media. This process can help children to learn about themselves, learn to think, learn to see, and learn about feelings. The total educational process will profit from such understandings (pp. xvii-xix).

CHAPTER III
METHODOLOGY
Research Design

Language and text are the vehicles by which, humans remember, reflect, discuss, analyze, and understand our lived experiences or phenomena. According to van Manen (1990), ...“this starting point of phenomenological research is largely a matter of identifying what it is that deeply interests you or me and of identifying this interest as a true phenomenon, i.e., as some experience that human beings live through” (p. 40). This present study came from my personal experiences of teaching primary age children that include the integration of the visual arts in the early childhood curriculum and how the *whole child* seems to have been forgotten due to the over shadowing of test scores and rigid curriculum mandates. A qualitative research design “that attempts to understand participants’ perspectives and views of social realities” (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005, p. 139) will be a suitable method for investigating the proposed topic as will be further described in the next section. This study attempted to explore the following question: With the expectations of increasing test scores and an ever narrowing curriculum, how do eight K-1 teachers in a southern state define their visual arts beliefs and apply them in the early childhood classroom?

According to Merriam (1998), in education there are five recognizable types of qualitative studies: basic or generic qualitative study, case study, ethnography, grounded theory, and phenomenology. All of these qualitative research designs embody the same attributes: “the goal of eliciting understanding and meaning, the researcher as primary

instrument of data collection and analysis, the use of fieldwork, an active orientation to analysis, and findings that are richly descriptive” (p. 11).

A major aspect of doing phenomenological research is that the topic is of significant personal interest and meaning to the researcher, as well as emotionally and intellectually engaging (Leedy, 1997, p. 161). The interest to do this proposed research grows from my personal phenomenon as an early childhood teacher and a wonder of how my classroom practices have been influenced by my lived experiences in the visual arts. According to Leedy (1997), the purpose of phenomenological research is an

...attempt to understand what a specific experience is like by describing it as it is found in concrete situations and as it appears to the people who are living it.... the researcher often has personal experience while simultaneously examining the experience through the eyes of other participants...[in] hope to gain a better understanding of the meaning an experience has for others, as well as for themselves. (p. 161)

This study explored how K-1 teachers lived experiences in the visual arts are represented in the early childhood classroom. The following research questions will be answered in this study:

How do K-1 teachers in a southern state define their visual arts beliefs and apply them in the early childhood classroom?

The guiding sub-questions for this study included the following:

1. How do K-1 teachers in a southern state define their lived experiences of the visual arts?
2. What are the understandings of K-1 teachers in a southern state about

how they learned to use the visual arts with their students?

3. What meaning do K-1 teachers in a southern state assign to their classroom practices that they believe represent their lived experiences of the visual arts?

Participants and Settings

The eight participants teach at several elementary schools in a southern state. For anonymity of the participants, schools, and districts, pseudonyms were created and used throughout the study. The names selected were: Carolyn, Gean, Jamie, Lilly, Martha, Shelly, Sue, and Valerie. The participants were chosen based on purposeful or criterion sampling. Patton (1990) describes criterion sampling as participants who are “information-rich because they may reveal major system weaknesses that become target of opportunity for program or system improvement” (p. 177). Informative participants are chosen based on their knowledge and experiences of the phenomenon being studied (Creswell, 2007; Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). All eight of the participants attended their tertiary training in the southern state where the study was conducted. Four of the participants taught kindergarten while the remaining four were first grade teachers at the time of the study (see Table 3). For additional anonymity of the eight participants, each of the four schools were assigned pseudonyms. Each school in the two districts, had varying visual art programs (see Table 4). On the state’s Department of Education website, the county district’s reported total enrollment for the 2007-2008 school year was 7853 students. At the suburban school, the enrollment for kindergarten and first grade was 765 students. Approximately 65% were listed as “White” on the Department of Education’s Office of Research and Statistics homepage.

Table 3

Participant Characteristics

Pseudonym/ Age	Ethnicity	Family Profile	Years of Experience/ Current Assignment	Highest Earned Degree ^a /Certification ^b
Carolyn/33	European American	Married, no children	6 years/kindergarten	Bachelor's/ Regular Ed PK-K, Special Ed K-12
Gean/43	African American	Married, one grown child	19 years/ first grade	Bachelor's (Master's)/ Elementary Ed K-6
Jamie/49	European American	Married, two grown children, two school age children	20 years/ kindergarten	Master's (Specialist)/ Special Ed K-12, Elementary Ed K-3
Lilly/54	European American	Married, one grown daughter	18 years/first grade	Master's/ Elementary Ed K-3
Martha/64	European American	Married, two grown children	20 years/ kindergarten	Master's/Elementary Ed K-3 & 1-9; Home Economics 7-12
Shelly/25	African American	Married, two children	2 years/kindergarten	Bachelor's/ Elementary Ed PK-K
Sue/47	European American	Married, two sons	26 years/first grade	Master's/ Elementary Ed K-8, NBCEC/G
Valerie/37	European American	Married, two children	15.5 years/first grade	Bachelor's/Elementary Ed K-3, 4-8; Reading K-12

Note. ^a Enrollment in a graduate program indicated by (level of degree)

^b Ed: Education, PK: Pre-Kindergarten, K: Kindergarten, NBCEC/G: National Board Certified Early Childhood/Generalist

The rural elementary school population for pre-kindergarten through fifth grade was 683 students with 88% categorized as “White” on the State Department of Education Office of Research and Statistics homepage. The city district’s enrollment for the same year was 4,484 students with an estimated 92% categorized as “Black” (see Table 5).

Data Collection

Prior to data collection, The Human Subject Protection Review Committee of The University of Southern Mississippi approved the study in Appendix A. The superintendent of one school district received a written explanation of the study in Appendix B. Both superintendents gave written permission to conduct the study in their respective districts. All four principals gave their verbal permission to conduct the interviews and observations at their respective schools. Each participant signed an informed consent form in Appendix C, which explained the purpose and procedures of the study. This form provided details about confidentiality and measures taken to protect the anonymity of participants. Each participant was given a copy of the signed consent form.

Table 4

School Characteristics

City/County School District	School Name	Grades Taught	2008-2009 Enrollment	Student Ethnicity	District/School Specific Information
City	Henrietta Pittsford Elementary	K-5	389	95% Black, 4% Hispanic, 1% White	No pull out Art Class is available. Teachers do have access to a district-wide monthly art lesson that comes boxed by grade level and ready to use.
City	Sutherland Elementary	PK-5	592	79% Black, 18% White, 2% Asian, 1% Hispanic	
County	Magnolia Lane Primary	K-1	809	61% White, 32% Black, 5% Hispanic, 3% Asian	Art Class on a five-day rotation and is in the ninth year of participating in a statewide initiative to integrate and infuse the arts into the curriculum.
County	Winter Park Elementary	PK-5	707	90% White, 9% Black, 1% Hispanic	Art Class on a six-day rotation

Table 5

Paired Kindergarten and First Grade Participants' School Characteristics

Pseudonym/ Current Assignment	City/County School District	School Name	Grades Taught	District/School Specific Information
Carolyn/ kindergarten Gean/first grade	City	Henrietta Pittsford Elementary	K-5	No pull out Art Class is available. Teachers do have access to a district-wide monthly art lesson that comes boxed by grade level and ready to use.
Lilly/first grade Shelly/ kindergarten	City	Sutherland Elementary	PK-5	No pull out Art Class is available. Teachers do have access to a district-wide monthly art lesson that comes boxed by grade level and ready to use.
Martha/ kindergarten Sue/first grade	County	Magnolia Lane Primary	K-1	Art Class on a five-day rotation and is in the ninth year of participating in a statewide initiative to integrate and infuse the arts into the curriculum.
Jamie/ kindergarten Valerie/first grade	County	Winter Park Elementary	K-5	Art Class on a six-day rotation.

Interviews

Prior to each participant's interview and observation, a convenient time was arranged for us to meet. The chosen participants each had a pseudonym created before

the interviewing began. The interviews took place at each participant's school, either in an empty classroom or in a private room. All of the interviews took place during school hours except for two of the participants. Upon each participant's agreement, all formal interviews were taped recorded. I created an initial interview protocol (see Appendix D) for the first semi-structured interviews. While the initial interview questions acted as a guide for gaining an understanding of the participants' lived experiences, it would frequently lead to more probing questions that helped provide a deep background knowledge for the experiences of each participant.

As I listened to the interviews and read the transcriptions, I began to formulate questions that were geared specifically to a participant in order to gain a better understanding of her individual experiences in the visual arts. Therefore, after the first interviews, the protocol of each participant was dissimilar.

Moustakas (1994) emphasizes the importance of the Epoche process, which was employed while conducting the initial and subsequent interviews. The researcher must "be completely open, receptive, and naïve in listening to and hearing research participants describe their experience of the phenomenon being investigated" (p. 22). As the sole researcher, throughout the interview process I had to be aware of the participants' facial expressions and body language, questions they may ask, and the possibility of deviating from the initial protocol of questions (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005, p. 139).

Each participant's two interviews varied in length from thirty to ninety minutes. Informal interview conversations occurred, not only at the purposeful sampling stage, but also throughout the study itself. Notes from these conversations were taken afterwards as part of the data collection process.

Observations

The second source of data collection was conducted in the form of classroom observations of the participants. The observation times were scheduled at the participants' convenience during instructional time with her students. Each participant was observed for approximately two hours. Creswell (2007) emphasizes this may initially involve my role as a complete observer and then progress to complete participant. An observational protocol was used as a method for recording notes in addition to field notes that are both descriptive and narrative of the observation sessions (pp. 134-135).

Documents

The third source of data collected were any documents that the participants may deem of significance to my study. Suggestions included parent newsletters or students' work. Other artifacts included items found within the school site. Eisner (1998) describes the researcher's imaginative ability to use such artifacts as data to support the meaning of the research (p. 185).

Data Analysis

Data analysis began in initial stages of data collection and continued throughout the study. After each interview, transcriptions of the individual interviews were completed. A constant comparative method begins with an initial experience, statement, or phrase found in the interviews, observations, field notes, or documents and is compared to another experience in the same data that leads to preliminary categories being compared within and to each other and one another (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 1998). Eventually the categories became themes and were coded to achieve in-depth,

highly descriptive, and rich illustrations of all the participants' lived experiences of the visual arts.

Verification Procedures

Creswell (2007) describes eight procedures of qualitative research of which the researcher needs to utilize at least two in his/her study. At least three of these were implemented in this study. The first was member checks by the participants. The transcripts of the interviews were made available to each participant to check for accuracy. The themes found in the interviews were provided to the participants for any additional insight into the descriptions, none of whom made any changes to the transcriptions.

The second verification was triangulation, the use of multiple sources of data collected from interviews, observations, and documents used as evidence to support the study (Creswell, 2007). In the phenomenological tradition, the interviews are where the majority of the data is collected while the observations and documents help support the participants' sharing of their lived experiences.

The third verification procedure I used was Peer Review. A colleague who did a phenomenological study for her dissertation reviewed my data interpretations and contributed feedback on the analysis and results (Creswell, 2007).

The fourth verification employed was the "rich, thick description" of each participant in order for the reader to "transfer information to other settings" and if the findings may be aligned to the lived experiences of similar participants or situations (Creswell, 2007, p. 207).

Role of the Researcher

My role as the sole researcher involved collecting and analyzing the data in addition to conducting the interviews and observations and completing the transcriptions of the interviews. Merriam (1998) states that the qualitative researcher must embody the following traits throughout to maintain the integrity of the study: an enormous tolerance for ambiguity; sensitivity to the participants, an awareness of the setting, and the data collection process and analysis; and to be a good communicator via his/her auditory, oral, and visual skills (p. 20-22). I strengthened and honed these traits to the best of my ability and through the support of my committee throughout this study.

Ethical Considerations

When my proposal was approved, my Human Subjects Review application was submitted to Internal Review Board at The University of Southern Mississippi. Included in the application was the letter of permission by the administrators at the two local school districts in which I did my study. A letter of request to the two district level administrators obtaining permission to do my study was submitted, in addition to the Informed Consent Form for the participants (Appendix C) to sign. Confidentiality was maintained by using pseudonyms for the participants, individual schools and both districts. Other than myself, only the transcriber and a peer reviewer had access to the data throughout the research process. All cassette tapes, transcribed interviews, and field notes were secured for the duration of the study in the researcher's home and the tapes will be destroyed upon completion of the study.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

The following summaries are comprised from the interview and observation data of the eight participants in this qualitative study. Following a description of each teacher and her lived experiences is a précis of her understanding of the visual arts.

Synopses of Individual Teachers

Carolyn

Carolyn was new to the teaching profession. After graduating with a bachelor's in marketing, she worked for three years in the business world and decided that she would rather teach. With her love of children and wanting to make a difference, Carolyn felt teaching would be rewarding to both her and her students. The quickest way for her to get into the classroom was by completing a second bachelor's degree in early childhood education within three semesters. Upon her December graduation, she taught three year olds for one semester at a private preschool. In the fall, she accepted a position in a public school setting to teach special education to three and four year olds. After four years, Carolyn began to teach kindergarten in a regular education classroom. She has taught kindergarten for two years and greatly desires expanding her certification area through third grade. Her special education enables her to teach up through fourth grade, while her regular education certification limits her to pre-kindergarten and kindergarten. Even though she and her husband have not yet started a family and she has a very active life outside of her teaching responsibilities, Carolyn was unsure of how much time and effort earning her Masters would necessitate. The hesitation of attending graduate school is similar to Carolyn's ambiguous experiences with the visual arts. Her experiences are

mainly derived from her elementary private schooling. Coloring and duplicating the teacher's sample of a predetermined project are the most prevalent childhood memories she has of art. Throughout her academic career, there was no obvious emphasis on creativity or individuality. In both bachelor degree programs, Carolyn recollects only taking one art course. While pursuing her early childhood education degree, the assignments that required artistic or creative abilities, Carolyn elicited the help of her friends in completing them. Consequently, the belief of being able to think creatively, to create art and regard oneself as an artist has not developed or been fostered in Carolyn. It is with this same uncertainty lies her knowledge of the visual arts.

When Carolyn began teaching the three and four year olds in her special education classroom at a kindergarten through second Grade primary school, she believed art was something fun to do, a way to pass the time, and a way for her students to learn. She felt that using different materials such as crayons or paint would enhance their learning and develop their fine motor skills. In her third year at this school, a grant was awarded to the school that enabled the hiring of a part-time art teacher, who became full-time the following year. Even though Carolyn's students were not involved in the art classes, she began to see how art had a positive impact on the students. She stated in our first interview how the children that didn't seem to learn in traditional ways were able to "learn things through their art and they can express their ideas." She also conveyed that if schools "incorporate a lot of art and have someone that really knows what's going on and loves it, [art] can teach these children so many things." In both interviews, Carolyn expressed several times about the lack of supplies, resources, and time restraints when trying to provide art experiences into her kindergarten classroom.

A second area Carolyn commented on was her own lack of skills and knowledge about teaching art and her inability to be creative, which impeded her from fostering the visual arts into the classroom experiences.

Summary of Carolyn's understanding of the visual arts. When she initially began teaching Carolyn held the belief that art in her special education classroom was an every day activity that was suppose to be fun. With the introduction of an art teacher in her first school district to the changing of her grade level, school, and district; Carolyn was able to comprehend and understand the value of art in the development of the child as a learner and human being.

Gean

When Gean did her student teaching in kindergarten and fourth grade, she thought she wanted to teach fourth grade. Before passing all of her NTE (National Teacher Examinations) to become a certified teacher, Gean took a job as a kindergarten assistant in a local district near where she had attended high school. After about three months of hands-on experience, the classroom teacher moved out of state. The opportunity arose for Gean to have her own classroom and as she professed in our second interview, “ it just felt like that was where I was suppose to be.” Within the same district she began her teaching career over 18 years ago, tremendous change has transpired in how she has been able to teach and how she is now expected to teach. In Gean's experiences with the visual arts, her growth has taken a different course compared to what has occurred in her district. Growing up in a rural community through elementary school and then moving to a small university town, Gean's exposure to the visual arts was negligible. During high school, there was an opportunity to take an art class, but with only a limited amount of

electives available that had to fit into her schedule, she chose to take two other courses. In retrospect, she felt that her creativity would have been “boosted a little bit” if she had more opportunities to participate in art. When she went away to an in-state university for her Bachelor’s degree in Elementary Education, her awareness and understanding of the visual arts expanded through her coursework. She was not only required to take an art class for elementary students, but in her children’s literature, reading, and math classes, she was expected to integrate art into the lessons and activities she created. In the first few years of teaching kindergarten, Gean’s undergraduate coursework prepared her for her collaborative efforts with her other kindergarten colleagues to integrate art into the thematic centers they used daily to create five different centers for each day of a thematic unit of which art was a center everyday. She enjoyed teaching her students through the use of centers and felt that they learned when they experienced art interwoven into the curriculum.

After Gean’s move to another elementary school within the district, it was difficult to integrate art as much as she was accustomed to doing. This was due to the smaller classroom size, an increase in class size from 22 or 23 students to 28 students, and an impending shift in the curriculum that occurred the following year. The district’s philosophy of student learning and how teachers should facilitate this, went from a more holistic, DAP (Developmentally Appropriate Practice) approach to a scripted and intensive direct instruction reading program. The highly structured reading program does not allow for any creativity in her teaching and the children have no choice but to learn to read, as this is the cornerstone of the daily teaching schedule. After her first year of DI (Direct Instruction), Gean could see how her students were able to read and spell.

Nevertheless, she feels that as the students progress to the higher grades and the curricular demands increase, interest in learning will plummet along with their grades, and they will not develop into well-rounded learners. She emphasized in her first interview that because they are not getting the art in school, they eventually will become “burnt out” because they are not able to express themselves through any creative form.

Recently the building administration had decided that if all the lessons have been taught for the week, then on Fridays the students will be allowed to do more fun activities. The administration has also allowed a more integrated approach in teaching with the recent adoption of new math and science curriculum materials. With a lot of planning and the purchase of enrichment materials from her own pocket, Gean has been able to integrate art a couple of times during the school year, mostly in math and science. As Gean continues her own learning while working on her Master’s degree, she continues to hope that the tide will change and enable her to someday incorporate more art into her daily teaching.

Summary of Gean’s understanding of the visual arts. Even though Gean’s academic learning of the visual arts did not begin until her elementary education undergraduate coursework, she embraced the experiences wholeheartedly. Gean’s personal experiences in her adulthood have helped deepen her understanding of the visual arts and its impact on children. While teaching Vacation Bible School classes and Youth Sunday School classes, she used arts and crafts activities to help the five and six year olds to help them understand the message she was trying to convey. Also, while her daughter was involved in Girl Scouts growing up, there were art activities that were part of the topics they were learning about and it helped make the experience more enjoyable and to

identify the connections on a personal level. As Gean has experienced academically, personally, and professionally, if children are able to experience what they are being taught through a creative means, such as art or music, it will not only be more engaging, but it helps deepen the understanding and importance of the lesson.

Jamie

Jamie's teaching experiences are as varied as her teaching settings and her professional background. After graduating with her Bachelor's in Hearing Impaired from the local university, Jamie taught a mixed grade level (2nd-5th) special education class. For the next six years she taught early childhood special education for three to five year olds in a new district and completed her Master's degree in Special Education at the same local university. Jamie was able to transfer to another district closer to home and taught three to five year olds in a special education classroom. She then moved to another state and settled in a large metropolitan area. Jamie's first year in the district was in an early childhood special education setting, then for the remaining six years she taught in a gifted and talented kindergarten classroom at the same school. Upon returning to the area and to the same district she had worked in prior to her move out of state, Jamie has taught for the past seven years. Her first year back, she taught middle school special education followed by a year of third grade special education, with the last five having been in a regular kindergarten classroom. Jamie is currently pursuing her Specialist in Educational Administration. With the variety of settings, experiences, and educational opportunities Jamie has developed into a very knowledgeable early childhood educator, yet her lived experiences in the visual arts have been everything but exceptional. As with most of the participants, Jamie has been acquainted with the visual arts through the occasional

holiday craft projects in elementary school. Yet, unfortunately Jamie's most vivid art experience has had a rather profound impact on her personal outlook of art and creativity.

Summary of Jamie's understanding of the visual arts. Jamie's first grade experience had a tremendous impact on her willingness to be open-minded about the visual arts. During her coursework at the junior college prior to earning her Bachelor's, Jamie vaguely remembers taking an art history class. Once she went back to get her elementary education certification, Jamie was required to take art for elementary class. She vividly recalled how she and her classmates learned how to work with clay models and make them proportionate. They also created balsam wood structures and studied some artists and painters. Jamie feels that throughout all of her academic training she was not prepared to teach art to kindergarten or preschool special education children. Only in the large metropolitan out of state district that she worked in has Jamie had any professional development opportunities in the visual arts. Jamie's own personal interest in arts and crafts carries over into her classroom with mostly holiday or theme-related projects that the children recreate from her own home-tested sample. Jamie enjoys using her Promethean board to go to the homepages of illustrators and see how they create the artwork seen in children's books and believes if she had a better understanding of how to incorporate art into her classroom while also making it more creative instead of using the kindergarten patterned arts and crafts resource books. To take a university course is not financially feasible, but Jamie stated she would be more than willing to do a Saturday workshop. The greatest hurdle for Jamie's teaching of the visual arts seems to lie within herself, as she stated in her second interview, "I don't know how to teach them to be more creative. How to take that next step, I don't know how to do that."

Lilly

Sometimes it seems people enter a profession because they are expected to follow in the family tradition, even if they have no genuine interest in it. This was the case when Lilly attended the state's flagship university in the late 1970's and early 80's. Her mother, grandmother, aunts, and sister had all been teachers. After graduating with her degree in Elementary Education in 1981, Lilly's professional endeavors included working at a travel agency, a hotel, and even a book publishing company. At 25, she was married and living in New York City while her husband was attending university. When her daughter was becoming of school age, Lilly had the opportunity to teach part time at her daughter's private preschool. She quickly realized that earning the teaching certificate her mother had pushed her to obtain not only enabled her to be around her daughter, but as the position turned into full time and lasted for seven years; Lilly's preconceived notions of teaching changed dramatically. Lilly had vowed many years prior to "never go into the field her mother had always been in" and thought she was "above working with little kids". In her second interview, she remarked "I had finally matured to the point where I realized working with young children was very exciting...and then all of a sudden, I loved it and I could not wait to do it." Lilly's lived experiences with the visual arts in elementary school were "product-focused." Her most significant childhood memory was of her private art lessons when she was in the sixth grade and the artist who stimulated her creativity and helped her "to be able to think out of the box."

The visual arts became more significant once Lilly was living in New York City with her husband while raising their daughter and teaching preschool. Lilly's husband is a musician by profession and many of their friends were artists and musicians. Professional

development was encouraged and expected at her daughter's preschool. One workshop that profoundly affected her outlook on children and creating art was a session on Reggio Emilia. When she and her family moved back to her home state, they settled in the largest city, the capital. It was here that Lilly was expected to integrate art throughout the curriculum. She taught first grade for nine years in the district where student-created art was expected to be prominently displayed both in and outside the classroom with the appropriate objective clearly stated. Lilly's participation in the Reggio Emilia workshop enabled her to feel more secure in integrating art in her teaching, especially since there was no professional development or support for district's expectations of students' artwork as an expression of understanding of state benchmarks. Since the state revisions of the language arts frameworks beginning in 2006, the wording became very concise and eliminated the "umbrellas" that allowed art to be integrated as easily as before the changes were implemented. After nine years in the state capital, Lilly's husband became a faculty member at the local university in the town where she grew up and attained her Master's degree. Lilly has been teaching first grade for the past two years in one of the local area districts. In her current district, Lilly emphasized that art does not seem to be a "priority" and there are even greater limitations in place for integrating art into the curriculum due to district-mandated teaching guidelines involving time allocations for specific content areas.

Summary of Lilly's understanding of the visual arts. Lilly's exposure and awareness of the visual arts has had a positive impact of her understanding of the visual arts and their importance in the early childhood classroom. Lilly repeatedly emphasized her inability to "think outside of the box", yet her lived experiences have enabled to know

children cannot become a whole and healthy person without fostering a loving, safe, developmentally appropriate environment for learning to read, express themselves, and create their own knowledge. Lilly strongly believes if her students continue to receive the affirmation and encouragement she showers on them daily, then no matter what they are doing; be it art, music, drama, poetry, reading or math, “they’ll dive in and go for it.”

Martha

Martha’s early childhood teaching experiences run the gamut from teaching three, four, and five year olds in both university lab and public school settings to teaching future teachers at two in-state universities. Upon graduating from the state’s flagship university in 1968 with her Master’s in Child Development, Martha taught an early childhood education course and was director of the university’s first Laboratory Kindergarten for two years. Upon moving to the state’s capital in 1970, Martha consulted for the state’s largest school district on readiness. She was involved in teacher training throughout the district, including model teaching in the classroom. In the September of 1971, Martha became the Title I Reading Readiness teacher for two of the district’s elementary schools. By that November, the superintendent made her the district’s Readiness Consultant. She helped set up five developmentally appropriate classrooms for at-risk first graders and facilitated the training of the five teachers. In the summer of 1972, Martha began a twelve-year break from teaching to raise her family. She and her husband moved to a university town in the state. During this time, Martha wrote and published educational materials, did private consulting work, and occasionally substitute taught in her now current school district and even took a ceramics class at a local junior college. In 1984, Martha decided to go back to teaching full-time. At the local university, she became an

instructor in the Child and Family Studies department supervising student teachers in both her own classroom at the university's lab school where she was the lead teacher for the three and four year olds and in other class settings. In 1998, she opted to continue with supervising the child development teachers on a half-time basis and taught a course on creativity for young children for two semesters until she began teaching kindergarten in a local school district in August 2003.

In 2000, Martha's school received a grant from the state's art commission that enabled it to become part of the first statewide initiative to comprehensively integrate and infuse the arts into the curriculum. One goal of the initiative was the tremendous on going support of the teachers and administrators in growing both professionally and personally through varied arts experiences. Through the visits of artists at her school, week long summer institutes, and on-going staff development sessions, Martha was able to learn and flourish at integrating and infusing the arts into her kindergarten classroom.

Summary of Martha's understanding of the visual arts. Martha's personal experiences in the arts have mainly been positive and have helped foster a love of the arts that have spilled over into her classroom practices. Even though her academic background taught her that the process is important, she has come to realize the impact of understanding how creativity can impact a child's learning in the classroom. It is not only producing a product, but helping the child understand how it is part of their own world and the world that they live in.

Shelly

After Shelly graduated from the local university with her Bachelor's in Child Development, she worked at a private Christian school teaching four year olds for almost

a full school year and is now in her second year of teaching kindergarten in a local public school district. Being part of a military family, Shelly moved around a lot in her elementary years. She attended kindergarten and first grade in Virginia, for the majority of second grade and all of third grade she attended school in Texas, while in fourth and fifth grade she attended two American military base schools in Germany. In kindergarten, the only school art experience she could call to mind was rolling pinecones in peanut butter and birdseed and hanging them outside. Shelly's only early childhood experiences were when her mother had an in home daycare while her father was active in the military. Shelly stated twice that her mother "doesn't claim to be very" or "real creative." Shelly shared how personally important it was to color in the lines of the teaching materials her mother needed for the daycare children. Otherwise, her mother would not be able to laminate the materials for teaching her daycare children. Shelly remembered how she learned what a newt was from the alphabet chart her mother had made for her.

After moving back to the States, Shelly's junior high memories of doing anything art-related were of helping teachers make and create bulletin boards. She does recall how in high school she had more exposure to art materials such as pastels. One assignment given was for the student to draw anything using different types of media and Shelly chose to draw ducks because "it was something easy for me to draw." Art was a required course in high school, and in her first interview is when she stated how she "began to form my own idea of what I wanted to do and art wasn't it."

The memorable experiences Shelly had while her mother had her daycare empowered Shelly's decision to go into Child Development. She expressed how her love of being around people, both professionally and personally, helps her in working with

children. She has been considering getting her Master's in Elementary Education to help deepen her understanding of the more rigorous curriculum demands, compared to a more holistic, hands-on approach she learned in her Bachelor's program.

Shelly stated in her second interview that within her classroom and district there is not "much art every day in the curriculum" and just as in her own schooling and lived experiences, art "became less important over the years."

Summary of Shelly's understanding of the visual arts. The personal experiences with her mother, the time spent in Germany attending fourth and fifth grades at the military base schools, and varied academic experiences from middle school through her undergraduate career have afforded Shelly with some background knowledge and experiences about the visual arts. Through her more recent experiences as a kindergarten teacher and mother to both an eight year old and six month old, Shelly felt that art creates a more well rounded individual, yet for her to implement art into her classroom, she remarked, "I really have to dig it up."

Sue

As a child of two educators, Sue knew that most her life she was destined to become a teacher. She enjoyed playing school when she was a child and by reading and "teaching" her younger brother to enjoy learning. She commented on how "she became a bit distracted from her destiny" when she began working on her Associates of Arts degree at her local junior college. She was enrolled in some basic medical courses when she came home to her parents very upset as she realized that she really wanted to become a teacher. Sue stated in her second interview that her parents said, "we know you should be

a teacher, we wanted to make sure that you wanted to be a teacher not because you thought you should be.”

After Sue graduated with her Bachelor’s in Elementary Education in 1983 from the local university, she taught second grade for three years in a school near where she grew up. The second school district she taught in was in the same town where she received her undergraduate degree. She taught six years of second grade and three years of first grade. It was in this district where teachers were provided a weekly art activity that included a video of instructions for the project and all the materials needed each child to complete one. Sue recalls how the video exposed the children to art techniques and terminology, but there was not much instruction about works of art or great artists. She also said how it was nice to have all the materials prepared for you. The district would also do art shows and the children’s work would be matted and labeled and put up for public display. Seven years after completing her Bachelor’s in Elementary Education, Sue earned her Master’s degree in the same area from the same academic institution.

Sue moved to her current district within the same area in 1997. She has taught first grade for eight years and kindergarten for five years, of which ten of those years she looped with her children from kindergarten up to first grade. During this time, Sue and her husband had two boys, one is a high-school senior and the other is in seventh grade. In 2000 when Sue’s school began participating in the statewide arts initiative, she realized that the love of the arts she had slowly and personally fostered was about to flourish under the guidance of artists, other teachers, and building administrators. The lack of school-based art experiences in her early childhood would become a stark contrast to what she had just begun to experience with the arts initiative.

Sue recalls growing up she enjoyed coloring and enjoyed making crafts with her mother, who was a teacher. In fifth through eighth grade, Sue's teachers incorporated art as part of student learning in reading, science, and social studies. In fifth grade Sue chose to do a poster of George Washington and said that after she had grown into an adult, the teacher would tell Sue how she still had that poster. From fifth grade through high school, Sue played the clarinet in the band.

During junior high and high school, Sue was able to enjoy working with ceramics with a local artist. Sue was required to take an art appreciation course while earning her Associates degree. It was a class primarily designed to expose the student to use different types of art media. She enjoyed painting on canvas and working with pastels. One project involved looking at a magazine picture and recreating it on paper. She chose a cat and realized that she was "pretty good."

When she transferred to the local university to continue her elementary education studies, the one or two classes required were not a creative outlet for Sue. She stated it was more about the "do's and don'ts" and how manage supplies with children. When Sue was preparing to take the teacher's exam for certification she had to do a lot of studying of artists and their work. Besides no art classes in junior high and high school nor Humanities in her high school coursework, Sue had no prior knowledge to draw from even her undergraduate elementary education courses. There were a lot of crafty projects and games to make, Sue explained, but it was mainly "busy work" and "no art."

Summary of Sue's understanding of the visual arts. The lived experiences that Sue has had in the visual arts have been varied in her exposure to art media and she feels confident about her creativity and ability to explore new ideas. Once she became part of

the arts initiative at her school, Sue has really savored the personal growth of learning to recognize and appreciate great works of art and especially to be able to expose her students to art through prints, discussions, readings, and hands-on experiences.

Valerie

Upon her graduation from the local private college with her Bachelors in Elementary Education in 1995, she taught fifth and sixth grade inclusion for a year and half in the small rural district where she grew up. For the next three years she taught third grade and then moved down again to first grade for an additional three years. After a year off from teaching to have her first child, she moved to a second school in the same district where she taught second grade for two years. She moved to a new school district and has taught first grade for the past six years.

When Valerie was in a Baptist kindergarten that incorporated a lot of art into the curriculum. She recalled in her first interview how they cut things and painted frequently, even though she felt as though she “didn’t really learn that much.” While growing up, Valerie was able to enjoy creating and making things at her neighborhood church’s bible school. Throughout the remainder of her academic career at a small Christian school Valerie had no experiences in the arts. This is in great contrast to the lived experiences at home with her mother’s love of painting as the starting point of encouragement in fostering Valerie’s own interest and enthusiasm. Valerie stated how she would paint alongside her mother two or three times a week growing up. Her mother encouraged Valerie’s brother, whom she described as an “excellent artist and he refuses to paint.”

Once Valerie went to university, she enjoyed taking art classes. Valerie’s open-ended experiences in class were a polarity to her classroom teaching.

At Valerie's first school there was a weekly art program that was provided for the classroom teachers called "Reaching for Rainbows" that included an instructional step by step video of an art project with all the necessary materials and tools to complete it. She stated that the children did "some really good, cute things." For the past two years at her new school there has been an art class in addition to the other enrichment classes that Valerie's first graders attend daily; including music, computer, library, and PE.

Summary of Valerie's understanding of the visual arts. Since becoming a classroom teacher, Valerie has evolved in her understanding of the importance of the visual arts in her classroom. Over time she has come to the understanding of letting children be creative in how they express themselves artistically and that sometimes it leads to a greater understanding of the whole child as an individual. Yet as the curricular expectations at the local, state, and national level have increased dramatically in years, Valerie has found it has placed significant limitations on her ability to incorporate art into her curriculum and enhance the learning experiences for her students.

Emergent Themes and Subthemes

The three major themes that evolved from the data were (a) development of visual arts beliefs, (b) demands of curriculum, and (c) classroom practices. Each of the eight participants discussed her lived experiences in the visual arts from childhood until the present. These experiences impacted their confidence, knowledge, and understanding of the visual arts while the demands of curriculum significantly influenced classroom practices and the ability to incorporate the visual arts in the early childhood learning environment.

Major Theme I: Development of Visual Arts Beliefs

Derived from the interview data came an understanding of how each of the eight teacher’s experiences in the visual arts from childhood to the present had an impact on their beliefs and classroom practices. Field notes taken during the interview sessions were used as verification as to how the teachers were integrating the visual arts into the curriculum.

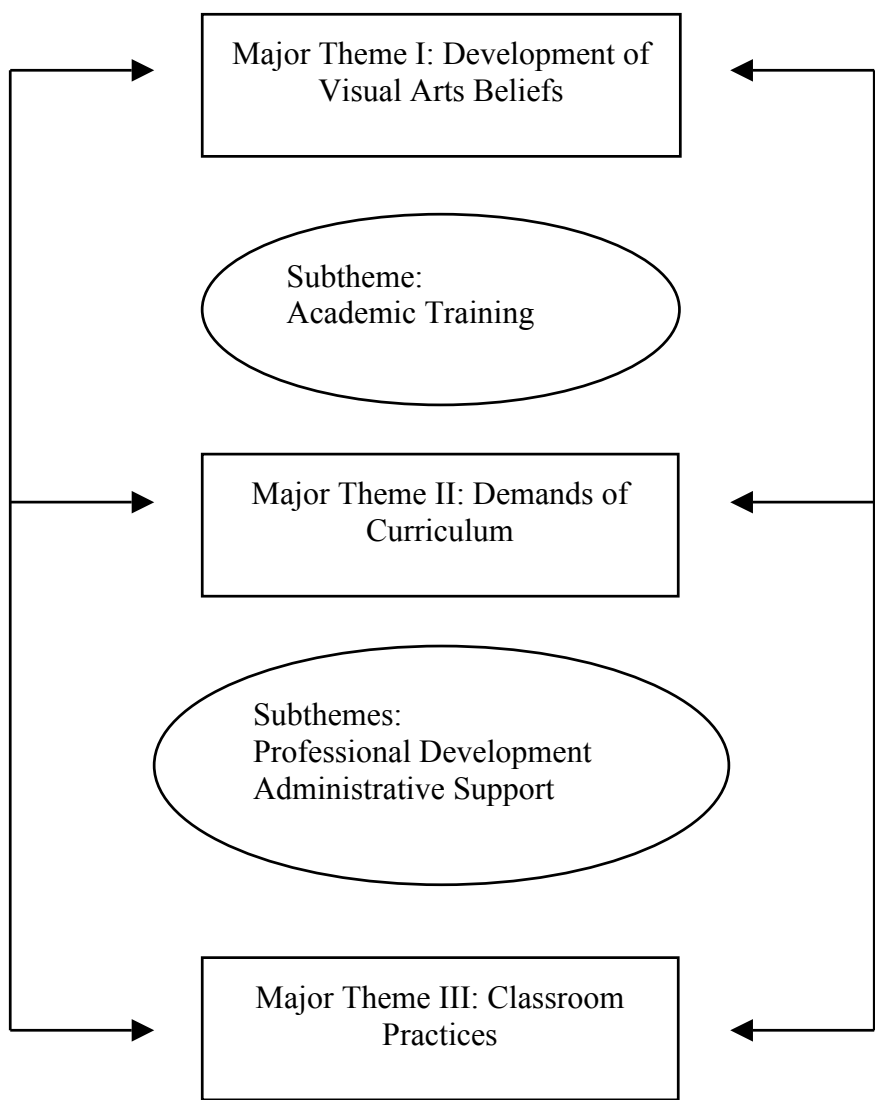


Figure 1. Relationship of Themes and Subthemes

Carolyn's childhood experiences were very limited at her private school. She remembers coloring a lot and making an occasional craft project that would be a copy of the teacher's model. There were not a lot of opportunities to do "free art", as Carolyn called it, even at home. She shared that neither of her parents are "artsy or very creative." At the beginning of Carolyn's first interview when asked of her childhood memories of the visual arts, she stated, "I never really enjoyed it much 'cause I never felt like I was a really good artist, so I have never really been into art."

Towards the end of the first interview Carolyn mentioned how many people do not think art is important for kids. Using her dad as an example, if he were asked about art in schools and its importance, his thoughts would be "it wasn't very important at all" and that more time should be placed on "teaching them to read", based on the state's ranking in reading ability.

Gean's experiences growing up in a small, rural town did not allow her to have any art instruction during her school years. When her family moved to a larger town during high school, electives were available. Gean chose to take both basketball and a culinary course, yet was unable to fit art into her schedule. During her first interview she expressed an interest in learning to draw and "wish[ed] that I could have gotten a chance to do it more growing up." Reflecting on her choice, she stated, "my creativity could have been boosted a little bit."

In Jamie's second interview she shared her most memorable experience in art. She was in first grade and her teacher had traced each child's body in the classroom on big sheets of paper. Jamie, who fondly stated she "had on a plaid dress that day" proceeded to color it all plaid. "But the thing I remember why it was so traumatic was

that I colored hair over the whole thing and the teacher made such a big deal of it that I took everything out of my supply box and laid it out so no one could see the head where I had the hair all over it. But she cut out another head and glued it on...and I can remember to the day laying everything out so nobody could see my head because I was so embarrassed.” Jamie’s mother spent a great deal of time teaching Jamie how to sew growing up. Which now as a grandmother, is teaching her oldest daughter how to sew.

Even though Lilly’s visual arts experiences in elementary school were “craft-oriented things” such as decorating shoeboxes for Valentine’s Day and painting pinecones with glitter sprinkled all over for Christmas, she still found pleasure from creating her work. Lilly was a Brownie and Girl Scout and fondly recollects her experiences making small leather items and woven potholders. At home, she was provided cutout paper dolls and paint by number kits. Her most significant childhood memory was her private art lessons when she was in the sixth grade that fostered her creativity. Lilly had the opportunity to paint on canvases and was exposed to a variety of mediums, including oils and charcoals. The art teacher supported her to be creative and “free-flowing.” Lilly became enlightened to new ideas and stated how she remembers “just loving it and it was great fun”, but was “short-lived.” For one 9-week term in high school, Lilly took a 3-D art course that included pottery and sculpture.

Even though Martha stated she loved art as a child and “got to do a lot of coloring”, she had no formal art classes in elementary or high school. The only school experience she can remember that involved art was in fourth grade when she researched the saber-tooth tiger. She expressed how drawing and coloring it in with colored pencils was something “you didn’t have every day.”

While growing up in the very small university town, where her mother was an administrative secretary at the university's student health center, Martha participated in a two-week art class for elementary aged children. She vividly remembers learning how to correctly draw a tree with its roots flaring outwards. Another positive childhood experience, painting by numbers, was a favorite pastime. Martha stated in her first interview, "I loved to do paint by number, which was not really art, but it was using real oil paints and that was always fun to use, to do that as a child."

Shelly's most vivid memories of her lived experiences in the arts are from her the two years she lived in Germany. She recalled in her first interview about learning the color wheel, mixing and creating colors, painting, and especially the process of papier-mâché in art class. She also remembered Leonardo da Vinci's Mona Lisa and being exposed to German art. Even though Shelly cannot recall the terminology for her specific creations, she emphasized that "the experiences were there" and "it was fun and I learned stuff." Shelly's fourth grade teacher integrated an art activity into a weekly literature reading. Her teacher had read a story about a bed and each child was given a little piece of fabric and had to infuse the fabric into their own personal story. Shelly chose to use the fabric as part of her cover of her book that included a small animal on the bed. The teacher, as Shelly fondly remembered, was older and enjoyed reading books in her rocking chair while the students sat and listened.

Even though there was no art class available during junior high, Shelly enjoyed helping teachers create and make bulletin boards. In high school, art was a mandatory course where it was expected that a variety of mediums were to be explored in creating

and producing their art. Shelly stated in her first interview how she did not feel that she was a “good drawer” and “did not have much confidence in her artwork.”

Sue’s elementary and middle school experiences in art were primarily from her classroom teachers integrating art into the curriculum. In sixth grade Sue enjoyed an art project that was tied to a classroom poetry unit. She fondly shared how she spent her Christmas break cutting out magazine photos to make interpretive collages of Carl Sandberg poems. She also enjoyed creating dioramas in seventh and eighth grade for her school projects.

The only negative experience that came to mind for Sue was in the art class she had during fifth and sixth grades. The art teacher gave directions on how to make a Native American medallion out of clay. Sue distinctly recalls no discussion of patterns or any other background information. “It was just like, here’s your clay, we’re making a Native American medallion and mine was quite good enough.” The art teacher expected the medallion to look exactly like hers and Sue remembers “feeling bad that I didn’t do a very good job with my medallion.”

Even though there were no art classes available during junior high and high school, Sue realized she “had a knack or desire” to be involved in the visual arts and expanded her experiences to include ceramics. An artist in the community had a kiln and people could go to paint and glaze pieces of pottery.

Other than the art experiences Valerie had in kindergarten at the local Baptist church, Valerie’s background knowledge in the visual arts up through high school have occurred outside of school. Valerie’s mother took some art courses where she became familiar with different mediums for painting and was able to support Valerie in her

exploration of learning how to paint with oils and acrylics. “I was very encouraged [by my mother] in the arts.” Not until she began attending college was she able to deepen her understanding of the visual arts.

Subtheme

Academic teacher training. All of the teachers involved in this study have received their degrees from teacher programs in the same state in which they are both certified and employed. Four have earned a Master’s or attained National Board Certification, while a couple are working towards other graduate level degrees.

While getting her second bachelor’s in early childhood education Carolyn did have practicum experience for a couple of semesters where she would teach lessons, but did not teach on her own for an extended amount of time, “like for a whole month” or to the “depth as a real student teacher.” Carolyn exclaimed, “I just don’t remember any creativity classes, I mean, none.”

When Gean earned her teaching degree in the late 1980’s, the emphasis in all her classes was to infuse art projects into the curriculum. Gean explained how the pedagogy was centered on the idea that younger children especially needed “something that they can catch...and will help them remember.” Besides an art course for elementary majors, Gean also explained how in each of her children’s literature mathematics, and reading courses, there were to be several lessons that incorporated or were centered around an art or creative activity.

Jamie’s academic background included an art history course at the junior college level. She remembers using clay and balsam wood strips to make proportionate people models and learning about some artists and painters including great works of art. Jamie

was required to take both art and music for elementary teachers. When asked what she learned about the visual arts in her academic training, she replied laughingly, “not really much on how to apply it to elementary school teaching.”

Once in college, Lilly does not recollect taking any art history or appreciation. While pursuing her undergraduate degree, she asserted the emphasis of the teacher education program was placed on reading, literature, and classroom management. She commented, “I don’t remember doing anything for art instruction.” By the time she completed her Master’s in Early Childhood Education at the local university in 1998, Lilly recalled how she was not required to take an art class in her coursework and remarked, “I think I would remember being involved in that [art].”

When Martha was working on her Bachelor’s degree in the late 1960’s, there was a basic art course that all undergraduates were required to take. Her teacher was a graduate student who she believed was not flexible and objective when evaluating the individual’s portfolio. Martha did not learn until years later that her difficulty in painting a straight line that cost her an “A” in the course could be attributed to an inherited tremor. The instructor’s inability to also respect and value the choices made for her portfolio seemed to also contribute to her final grade. Yet, for the remainder of her undergraduate career, Martha wanted to become more involved in art through intensive and time consuming courses designed for art majors in painting and drawing. She felt it would have been a fun experience to “enjoy learning what they had to teach.”

In Martha’s coursework to get elementary education certified, she took art for children, which she stated was “fun because it was things you would do with children.” Even though Martha’s undergraduate major of home economics did not have any specific

art classes, she explained that when interior design was studied, she came to the understanding that art is a part of it and how it can be interwoven into the many areas of what she was learning.

During her undergraduate studies, Shelly recalled an art class where slides were shown and the techniques discussed on various works of art by such artists as Pablo Picasso and Vincent Van Gogh. She shared having been exposed to some of the great works of art, specifically Michelangelo and the Sistine Chapel, while she lived in Germany. Even though the coursework did not include an art or creativity class, Shelly was required to integrate an art activity into her weekly thematic unit with her class of three year olds during her student teaching. Assisting her mother and teachers create bulletin boards when she was younger also enabled Shelly to come up with ideas for integrating art activities into each week's thematic unit and bulletin board during her student teaching. One requirement included exposing the children to textures. When she created her interactive bulletin board on bugs, she glued sand to the paper so that the children could feel a rough texture and give dimension to the surface. When asked where she got her idea, she commented, "I learned that stuff in art [as a child]."

Sue was required to take an art appreciation course while earning her Associates degree. It was a class primarily designed to expose the student to use different types of art media. She enjoyed painting on canvas and working with pastels. One project involved looking at a magazine picture and recreating it on paper. She chose a cat and realized that she was "pretty good."

When she transferred to the local university to continue her elementary education studies, the one or two classes required were not a creative outlet for Sue. She stated it

was more about the “do’s and don’ts” and how to manage supplies with children. When Sue was preparing to take the teacher’s exam for certification she had to do a lot of studying of artists and their work. Besides no art classes in junior high and high school nor Humanities in her high school coursework, Sue had no prior academic knowledge to draw from, including her undergraduate elementary education courses. There were a lot of crafty projects and games to make, Sue explained, but it was mainly “busy work” and “no art.”

Once Valerie began her undergraduate coursework, she shared in her first interview how she “took all the art courses I could get my hands on because I love art.” In her art appreciation class, she traveled to two regional art museums to see various period works of art. Valerie chose to take art for elementary teachers instead of the other option, music. The instructor had Valerie and her classmates create art in every medium, from basket weaving to oil pastels. Even though Valerie’s attempt at drawing her hand was one of the hardest things to do in art she said, it was still “so much fun.” Valerie’s open-ended experiences in class became a stark contrast to the past few years of her teaching practices.

Major Theme II: Demands of Curriculum

Curricular demands can vary from school to school within the same district and from each district within a state. The state or district may place a strong emphasis on standardized state testing, yet even within the same district, how each principal or building administration expects the district curriculum and state benchmarks to be taught may be dissimilar.

Subthemes

Professional development. In some school districts, professional or staff development is offered to teachers as a choice to help enhance the classroom learning environment. Other districts make the decision to conduct professional development on teacher workdays as part of the central office's ongoing agenda of predetermined content. Sometimes the building administrator is responsible for conducting the staff development and may choose to bring in a guest speaker that would benefit all the teachers.

While Carolyn has only been with her district for two years, her experiences teaching at her previous school that was working towards having more arts in the curriculum, enabled her to see how children can create if they have the opportunity to “have someone [an art teacher] that really knows what's going on and loves it and can teach these children so many things.” She stated several times about not being “that creative myself” and how she finds ideas from the internet or “goes along with the same things” other teachers do. Carolyn commented on how grateful she is for always having creative teacher assistants to help her with projects for her students. In her six years of teaching, Carolyn has not had any staff development opportunities in the visual arts. In both of her interviews, Carolyn insisted how she needed staff development to learn the basics of teaching art by having actual art experiences herself. “Oh, yes, I would love to do more and to know more, and I would love someone explaining it.” She is also unsure of how to use the state frameworks for integrating and infusing art into the curriculum. Carolyn admitted how it would be “extra work on my part” but that the children do not have an activity period for Art, only Music and PE. She noted the children may have “some great ability”, yet when given modeling clay and instructed to make a simple

shape, they lack interest. Carolyn emphasized that if they had the opportunities at school for someone to show them and let them “build things or make things or create things” it will foster learning and help them better “express their ideas.”

When Gean began teaching in her district nineteen years ago, teaching with centers was how her kindergarten day was structured. “If we did a two week lesson on plants, we had an art activity every day.” Gean noted how she benefited from her team’s collaborative work to create five different centers for each day of every thematic unit. She enjoyed teaching her students through the use of centers and felt that they too enjoyed learning when they experienced art interwoven into the curriculum.

Gean said professional development “would help, It would help a lot”, but added teachers are allocated funds to buy materials and resource books for classroom use. She postulated her ample background knowledge and experience would personally enable her to successfully integrate art into the classroom, *if* time were to be made available for planning.

In the past seven years, Jamie’s current district has not offered any staff development in art. When she worked in a very large metropolitan district, she emphasized in her first interview that the staff development opportunities were “so much better.” Her previous school district allowed teachers to attend trainings and early childhood conferences that various organizations held. One example was at a mid-year conference, there were mini-sessions on art and other hands-on activities that Jamie enjoyed attending.

Jamie expressed an interest in having staff development in art. She would like to have a better understanding of what they should be learning in art, how to develop those

skills, and how to integrate it into her thematic units. Jamie also shared that having “practical information” on how art can be an integral aspect of the classroom curriculum. She mentioned that so many kindergarten resource books are programmed and do not foster creativity. Jamie revealed her struggle with infusing art because she “doesn’t know how to teach them to be creative.” Jamie suggested if professional development were made available, a full or half day introduction at the beginning of the school year with a couple of follow-up sessions throughout the year would make it more effective for teachers to better understand how to expose children to art in a meaningful way. She also suggested there being a resource person who would be a “go-to” for nurturing teachers to “take it a step further.”

Even though there has not been any professional or staff development opportunities in the two years that Lilly has been in her current district, while she was teaching four year olds at her daughter’s preschool, professional development was encouraged and expected. One workshop that profoundly affected her outlook on children and creating art was a session on Reggio Emilia. She shared how the approach fosters creativity and critical thinking skills in young children. In her first interview, Lilly emphatically said, “I remember loving that whole philosophy and kind of adopting that in my inner self halfway.” Lilly declared how she tries to keep that feeling embodied in her classroom, but “imagination doesn’t come easy” for her. She would enjoy professional development that would give her more hands-on training of how to use various art tools, become familiar with the mediums, as well as learning to enjoy creating art herself.

Martha’s involvement in professional development has been extensive at her school, which is part of a statewide initiative designed to help teachers infuse and

integrate all of the arts disciplines into the basic curriculum. This initiative is striving to augment the skills and knowledge of the arts to improve children's academic success. Over the past six years, Martha has attended the five day summer training twice and the two and half day arts retreat three times offered in the fall and spring each year. Several artists visit the school each semester for professional development and most have interactive activities involving the students. The school has been self-sustaining in funding the artist visits and professional development by raising money through school-wide arts-inspired events and happenings.

Martha's previous experiences as a teacher of three and four year olds and Child Development Instructor at the local university impacted her knowledge base, thus setting a strong foundation for the importance of understanding the developmental stages of children's drawing. Going from being "taught you never make models for children" to teaching how to "kinda do it together in steps" has been a bit of a transition teaching public school kindergarten Martha revealed in her first interview. She asserted that if the activity is where they must follow directions, than it is not an art activity. Her example was, if something is to be colored in a specific manner, then this is part of learning to follow directions. Martha remarked that in the past few years the children that she is teaching are not coming to school with as many varied and enriching home experiences as before. So while some of her students are still drawing potato people they have learned to watch others around them to gain the confidence to try it themselves and for the others "art for creative sake" is when "they should be able to color a tree pink if they want to color a tree pink." Therefore, it takes more time to build background knowledge through

lived experiences for many of these children to be creative whilst concurrently exposing them to great artists, great works of art, and exploring varied art mediums.

At the various workshops she has attended through the arts initiative, Martha noted how she has learned not only from the artists but from the other participants. She enjoys watching and listening to the teachers and artists and admitted that “teachers are the best to steal ideas from each other and that’s the best way to learn.”

Shelly’s only recollection of professional development in the past two years of her district was in a “make and take” mini-session on a teacher workday. She said it centered on using construction paper as a means to reinforcing a taught skill. If professional development were offered in how to integrate the arts more into the curriculum, Shelly indicated some interest if it were offered at the beginning of the school year and for “someone to keep those materials coming for us” to create projects that she would like to incorporate into her teaching. She followed that by saying, “I think [as teachers] we don’t do it purposely, but our experience tends to kind of mold what we bring into our classroom.” She also expressed her desire to have guest speakers from the community and museum field trips. Shelly shared how she would love to take her students to a local pottery store where her students could choose a prefabricated pottery piece, paint it, and see how it gets fired in the kiln. Admittedly she said, “it’s not really for experience if you don’t get to shape or mold clay” but they would at least have the opportunity of expressing themselves through painting something of their own choice as her school has no art class or teacher.

Since her school’s involvement in the arts initiative nine years ago, Sue’s professional development experiences have “just been fabulous.” Like Martha, she

discussed the opportunities to enjoy the weekend long fall and spring retreats and especially the week long summer program where you just feel that camaraderie about learning with teachers from your school. Sue indicated in her first interview that many teachers at the beginning of the initiative felt uncomfortable teaching art to their children and had deep concerns about classroom management while having art in the classroom. After the first year, the school realized that instead of having just a few students interact with the visiting artists, that it was best to have the artist in the classroom. Once the classroom teachers had an understanding of how to set up to teach the lesson, show the children how to use the materials, the process to creating their artwork, and clean up procedures because they saw the teaching artist do it, Sue observed that teachers were “amazed” that “it [art] really could happen” and how it has enabled students to think on a high level of thinking. Sue explained that once a child has created a piece, conversations develop their language skills to discuss their piece and how it may be similar of different from a particular artist. In addition, the child might also write a step by step explanation of their personal creative process or an artist’s influence on their finished product. The children have great pride in their creative accomplishments when they learn that, “they can’t do it wrong”, and have learned how to effectively articulate their thought process in words and on paper. Sue observed that as students go through a developmental process of learning and feeling comfortable with the arts, so do teachers.

Valerie described her professional development in visual arts as “zero, zip, and none” since her graduation in 1995. While her courses in her undergraduate teacher preparation helped foster a deeper love for exploring and creating in the visual arts, the opportunities to learn how to incorporate art into the classroom curriculum have not been

available. If professional development were offered, Valerie stated “it would be great, but it’s not gonna be considered.” Valerie remarked in her second interview how “a lot of teachers have an aversion to art” or may feel “I can’t teach art.” She declared that “art is simple”, and if teachers were provided the professional development experiences to learn how to teach art in the classroom with the plenty of materials, it may “spark an interest to let them know, ‘you can do this’.” Valerie added that incorporating art gives children the opportunity to draw and paint allowing them to “express themselves” when they may not feel comfortable talking or writing about personal subject matters. Valerie also emphasized the importance of using art for learning the other subject areas in her second interview. Based on her own teaching experiences when she was able to teach the curriculum in thematic units, Valerie shared how “children enjoy it and they learn better when they’re having a good time.”

Administrative support. If a teacher has had enriching lived experiences in the visual arts from childhood through their academic career, it is the principal or district level administration that can nurture or deny a teacher’s determination to integrate and infuse the arts into the classroom.

At Carolyn’s school, one of the curriculum coaches told her earlier in the school year if she were able to relate art to the state frameworks, then “go for it.” Yet, as Carolyn explained, our day is “jam-packed...every single minute of the day....I don’t know when to fit [in] anything else.” In her second interview, Carolyn imagined that “it could be done”, but on her own, the extra time and effort would be quite great.

Gean also indicated the recent support from the same coach about integrating more art into the curriculum once they have completed the lessons for the week, “she’s

giving us a little leeway to do that on Fridays.” Yet Gean commented on how the highly structured reading program in Kindergarten and First Grade up until now, has impacted the shallowness of their learning. If they are not exposed to art or have the opportunities to create art, Gean claimed in her first interview, “they’re gonna burn out” because of the time spent daily on teaching and reteaching reading. Gean added in her second interview that if “a little bit of the curriculum could be lifted from us”, then the children would be able to enjoy more literature and with a creative activity to help them deepen their understanding and message of a story.

When Jamie was asked in her second interview if she had the support of the administration to integrate art into her classroom, she said “I think so.” She added that because of her center time in teaching kindergarten, she has more flexibility to have art activities. She expressed if she had the professional development opportunities, could “make it more creative” it would be more interesting if she learned “how to better incorporate it into [the] classroom.”

Even though there was no professional development in the visual arts in Lilly’s previous district of nine years, Lilly was expected to display her children’s artwork both inside and outside her first grade classroom. The large urban district stressed that all activities be tied to the state’s language arts benchmarks and be displayed prominently next to the student work. They also had at least \$500 a year to use towards purchasing classroom art materials. A couple of years prior to moving to her current district of two years, the state revised their language arts benchmarks Lilly declared “so we actually lost a lot of freedom to do art.” She added that when the state “simplified the wording...the umbrellas that we used to do art under, now they’re not there.” In Lilly’s first year of her

current district, she was constantly being observed to see if she stayed on “script” in the highly structured reading program. She learned last year that if she pushes the academics “fast and furious and do well with that”, then at the end of the school year there is a lot more time for the children to have creative opportunities. Lilly mentioned that since she proved to the administration she is a good teacher and prepared her students well for second grade, “they can trust me.” Twice in her first interview Lilly said, “Now they don’t hawk over me and I don’t have to stick to the script.” Consequently this year she is able to integrate more art and has observed how it benefits the children and their academic success as it creates a “desire for learning” rather than “fighting the learning.” She hypothesized that “art makes the whole learning process easier if they want to be there.”

Martha spoke of how her principal is “very, very supportive” of the teachers and the school’s involvement with the arts initiative. She commented in her second interview that when she attended the previous summer institute she overheard some teachers expressing concern that it might be rather difficult to convince their administrators of how much a positive impact the initiative would be to their school. Martha also shared that she knew of a few schools that did not have the support of the administration and consequently were unable to applying for the implementation grant that would lead to a school wide commitment.

Sue mentioned the same principal’s enthusiasm about the initiative and that she was “excited” because it would expose the children to an integrated, diverse, and developmentally appropriate curriculum school wide. Sue declared, “I think if you have somebody looking down your throat constantly trying to micromanage and nitpick you to

death, you know, it would be hard [to integrate the arts].” In her second interview, Sue supported her previous statement liking it to a “juicy delicious sandwich”: both the classroom teacher and principal must be in agreement of wanting it [the arts initiative] to happen and all the curriculum is layered in the middle with a hefty side of community support. Sue also articulated in order to successfully sustain the arts initiative, each school must have its individual needs met by knowing what is relevant to the students, what interests the teachers, how the state frameworks influence the curriculum, and then work together to integrate and infuse the arts into a positive learning environment.

The administration at Shelly and Lilly’s school, part of the same district as Carolyn and Gean, also has lifted some of the curricular restrictions of the highly structured reading program. Shelly first stated that she wants to be completely sure that her students have learned the day’s lessons thoroughly and she feels she is “okay with what I do with them”, but if time allowed she “would like to do more art.” Later in the same interview, Shelly revealed that she doesn’t consider herself a creative person and that the time involved in planning would require a lot of research on her part. In Shelly’s second interview, she echoed the administration’s emphasis on having the children master the knowledge of the state frameworks, but noted if she were able to “effectively incorporate” into the current reading and math series, then the administration would be “fine with it.”

During her second interview, Valerie voiced her impression that much of the flexibility needed for “teaching across the curriculum” is no longer a viable option because of district mandated pacing guides for each marking period based on the state benchmarks. When she was at a recent meeting for all first grade teachers to update the

district report card, Valerie remarked how one school seemed to boast of how they plan together and everybody is “on the same page.” She also mentioned how the district wants to be assured that if a child transfers within the county, they will not lose out on a specific lesson. Furthermore, because of the unaccommodating schedule of each marking period centered around specific instructional lessons, Valerie declared there isn’t “any time” to “bring all the subjects together” like “we used to teach.”

Major Theme III: Classroom Practices

Academic teacher training, curricular demands, professional development, and administrative support are factors that have been found to have an impact on the teachers’ classroom practices. During the interviews, each participant shared her visual arts teaching experiences in her classroom and were substantiated through observations and contributed documents.

When Carolyn was initially asked how are the visual arts based on her experiences and knowledge being represented in her teaching, she responded, “I don’t have a lot of experiences and we don’t do much in the classroom, so, I guess there would be little or none.” Carolyn shared in her second interview how she has done “several little artsy things” with her kindergartners. A Christmas ornament was created from beads and candy. The children used tempera paint on popsicle sticks that Carolyn had pre-glued into snowflakes. She said some of them were meticulous and that once their project was completed they were proud of themselves. The other painting opportunity the children had was for a Mother’s Day card, which was drying on a classroom table. Carolyn showed how most of the children carefully used their index finger to make white dots all over the design copied onto construction paper. As she repeated that this had been only

the second opportunity for the children to paint this year, they were “just experimenting....they loved it...they got to get dirty and messy and have fun.” When they were studying antonyms the children cut out magazine pictures to visually discriminate opposites and then glued them to construction paper. Carolyn indicated multiple times how there is not enough time during the day to have an art activity because of the curricular demands and time needed to find and prepare an art activity, she also confessed to not taking advantage of the art activity the district had provided for her school the previous year. She was unable to recall why it became the “biggest headache” and that as far as she knew it was not offered at her school this school year, but then added she “could have used” and “should have taken advantage” more of the prepared art kits.

Gean’s classroom practices of integrating the visual arts have changed dramatically since she began her teaching career nineteen years ago. Gean realizes that “requirements change and that you have to let some things go”, yet she expressed her desire to be able to have learning centers again. With teaching the reading and math series her district mandates, the time left during the school day to plan an activity, gather the materials, and have the children be able to immerse themselves in a creative opportunity are a rare occurrence Gean declared. Several times the children have used beans and construction paper for a math activity and she when she gives them a coloring sheet she emphasizes them to be creative and not to be restricted by using prescribed colors to complete it. Gean spoke in her first interview of how imaginative some of her first graders are and she is thankful when there are a few spare moments at the end of the week to express themselves by writing poems, singing, dance, or drawing. Gean

mentioned how their vocabulary and language skills develop over time as they become accustomed to expressing themselves when the children share their creations.

Since Jamie's school has had an art teacher for almost two years, she remarked that she is "probably doing less" of theme or holiday-related "artsy crafty kind of things" than before. Jamie pronounced her efforts to possess the know how of fostering her students' imagination through incorporating art or other creative opportunities. When she does her rainforest unit near the end of school, she and the children make 3-D vines to hang from the ceiling. Jamie also enjoys integrating technology when she is guiding the children on how to create something using the promethean board and the children are able to see her drawings on a grander scale. When Jamie explores the characteristics of illustrators with her kindergartners, she enjoys helping the students discover the different techniques utilized from crayons, chalk, cutting painted paper or even illustrations that are computer-generated.

Everyday Lilly's first graders complete an entry in their journal. Sometimes they are given text to copy or a story prompt. Other times she has them draw to support a skill such as antonyms or synonyms. Lilly also likes to have them illustrate poems she has them include in their journal. She knows that "some of it is going to be very skill oriented and some of it's just creative or creative expression" and she sees "it benefitting the children and it absolutely supports their academic progress." In addition to the reading and math series Lilly uses, she also has a daily language program that involves reading aloud a non-fiction paragraph about famous people, places, or events in history. After having reread the paragraph on Leonardo da Vinci's Mona Lisa several times and discussing important facts, Lilly created her own classroom Musée du Louvre. While the

original is permanently housed in Paris, the first graders in Lilly's classroom have their watercolor masterpieces mounted on the wall surrounding their own Mona Lisa.

Lilly understands the importance of having her students achieve academic success, but they also need to be "well-fed...loved and cared for...and to physically play". Most of her students will never have the opportunity to go to Boy or Girl Scouts, church camp, private art lessons, much less have simple art materials in their home. Therefore, Lilly recognizes the importance of children being able "to create and see beautiful work and to feel proud of [their] work." Throughout the room and outside the classroom are student created works ranging from illustrations of themselves in their future career, a quilt designed with their names illustrated in each segment, to painted snowmen and the Mona Lisa wall. She strives to give them an enriching and positive learning environment by including "singing, poetry, music, art, journal writing, reader's theatre, and crafts." "It is important for the children to have that part of their spirit released and nurtured just to become a whole happy thinking person."

Martha indicated in her first interview the importance of integrating and infusing the visual arts into her classroom. She tries to do an activity based on an art print each week, but with the recent adoption and implementation of the math series, she remarked that "it's kind of over powering a lot of other things." A couple of years ago with almost every letter she found a work of art that represented the letter the students were learning. Because there are "so many things that we're required to get in", Martha noted, that it is now something they do less often. She tries to squeeze it in after recess or if it is too cold or wet to go outside, but she added they "still do lots and lots of art." Martha's classroom is covered in children's artwork including outside her Vincent Van Gogh style

Sunflowers door. Her students have explored with Cray-Pas oil pastels, finger paint, tempera paint, watercolors using not just paintbrushes but marbles, golf balls, and even hardboiled eggs to understand how the tools used impact the outcome. There are hand drawn penguins near the reading loft with Jackson Pollack inspired symmetrical butterflies suspended from the ceiling. Martha maintained that teaching through the arts by involving children in the activities being used to teach a skill, result in them enjoying the learning process, as based on scientific research. She has seen the “value” of not just the visual arts, but how story telling, dance, music, finger plays and drama impact her children’s learning. It would be “very grim and boring” if she were limited to “paper and pencil and workbook sheets.” She stated how she is aware of some schools that adhere to that philosophy; otherwise if it is not “fun”, the children will “not participate”... “turn you [the teacher] off as well as learning.”

During Shelly’s first interview, she shared how the children do a lot of color, cut, and paste thematic activities. They make collages and use paint occasionally for Halloween pumpkins or sponge painting a spider or dinosaur onto construction paper. She commented on how they do “simple stuff ...coloring or painting every once in a while, but it has to be something that is not gonna take a lot of time.” She explained the importance of them “to get reading and math and some handwriting” and they “do some things science related each week and...to get some of the art activities, that would probably take more time.”

In her second interview, Shelly noted that since the first interview she realized they have more art opportunities when she realized her frame of reference were her upper elementary experiences she had while living in Germany. She mentioned there is no

formal art class, but the teachers at her school receive an art kit with all the materials and instructions included. Shelly said the most recent one was how to make swans by drawing the number 2, yet unfortunately they are not exposed to a variety of materials or mediums.

Shelly explained that after teaching calendar, reading, science or handwriting, “there’s not enough time.” Shelly believes that art creates a more well-rounded individual and that those experiences, as she stated in her second interview, give them a foundation to find out what their purpose in life is and what path they will take as they grow up and begin to consider a career. She also conveyed that “art plays a good part in what they learn and helping them cultivate their learning experiences”.

When Sue taught first and second grade at her previous district during the late 1980’s to mid 1990’s, a weekly art kit with all the required materials and an instructional video was distributed to all the teachers. At the time, even though it was a “canned program”, the videos exposed the children to art terminology, unfortunately “it didn’t teach a lot of art appreciation.” Sue also said what was wonderful, looking back, that the district ensured you had all the materials and resources to provide art in your classroom and also took care of matting and labeling her students’ artwork for various local art shows.

Sue remarked that the depth to which art is integrated and infused into her classroom would not be possible if she and the seven other teachers did not sit together after school every Thursday afternoon and collaborate on what ideas they had or have found for how art can be infused or integrated into language arts, math, science, social studies, and the district mandated academic vocabulary. Sue shared how in math this

week they are using Salvador Dali's *The Persistence of Memory* to discuss time and to understand the significance of the 12, 6, 3, and 9 on a clock face. She said working together, "that face to face and talking about what we're doing and why we're doing it is just so valuable....it also makes our workload a lot easier". Sue surmised the importance of sharing and planning together when she added, "I mean, I would never think of some of the things that the people [that are working on the language arts] are coming up with to do, and you know, it's really neat!"

When Sue was asked if she would like to add anything, she replied, "The arts are so exciting for kids....it's a way to express themselves....they are interested in it [and] they want to come to school....they need to experience art....it's giving them a well rounded education."

While Valerie's undergraduate coursework helped foster an appreciation and passion for personal exploration and creation in the visual arts, it did not seem to lay the foundation necessary for understanding the importance of art in the early childhood classroom. In her previous district, she explained how there was a weekly art program entitled *Reaching for Rainbows*, that was prepared by someone in her district for the teachers that had all the materials and an instructional video needed to complete the project. Valerie added, "it was really old, but it's really good".

When Valerie taught second grade in her former district, she had her children write and illustrate in a journal whatever they wanted to on a daily basis. She read their entries weekly and learned a lot about her children, what was happening in their lives, and what their perceptions were of the world around them.

Some children who are not as academically successful as others, Valerie said, excel in art. She voiced her frustration that “there is just a little pinch of time for art” due to the state guidelines of specific teaching time allocations of subject areas, the district’s mandated curriculum programs including the detailed pacing guides, and lack of planning time. In first grade, “we have no time for art, none at all.” “We have 140 phonics lessons [and] 20 topics in math that we have to teach and we’re supposed to get to the end of that... and...we have five reading basal readers...we’re supposed to get to the end of those [too].”

When Valerie’s first graders have the opportunity, usually on Fridays after weekly testing, to color, draw, or use watercolors, she stresses the importance of taking ownership of their artwork. She has taught them to take pride in their efforts and to take the time to think about the choices to be made when generating and producing their creation. Valerie believes that “drawing and painting for children is where you can either snuff out an ability or you can let it grow.” Valerie conveyed the importance of a classroom teacher drawing or painting in front of the students. If the children watch the teacher try, they will always appreciate the effort and be supportive, “even if you can’t do a really good job....they think it’s great. They love it.”

Comparison of Understandings Across Participants

The differing lived experiences of the participants in the visual arts, their academic knowledge, professional development, and wide ranging teaching experiences, in addition to their ages, ethnicities, and family profiles are all contributing factors that have impacted their perspectives. While the majority of the teachers did not have many opportunities to be imaginative and creative through the visual arts in the school setting,

Lilly, Martha, Sue, and Valerie all had supplemental enriching experiences that helped deepen the personal satisfaction of creating a piece of art. These same four teachers, based on their personal teaching experiences, were able to articulate the importance of young children having the opportunities to not only create art, but were keenly aware the positive impact it can make on their students' everyday lives. Martha and Sue's commitment to their school's arts initiative, along with their "very supportive" principal, and ongoing professional development has fostered the knowledge, skills, and lived experiences to enable them to both infuse and integrate the arts in teaching their kindergarten and first graders. Lilly, who many years before had attended a workshop on Reggio Emilia, professed she has been "motivated" to perpetuate that "whole philosophy" in her first grade classroom, despite the time-consuming restraints of her current district's curricular mandates.

Carolyn and Shelly, the two youngest and least experienced teachers, both have academic knowledge primarily based on teaching children through kindergarten. The idea of going to graduate school was a possibility for the novice teachers, however personal commitments and family obligations have prevented them from embarking on such a scholarly endeavor. During their second interviews, coincidentally, both Carolyn and Shelly after having time to reflect on their current classroom practices conveyed how they had begun thinking of ways to increase the frequency of artistic opportunities for their children, especially as the school year was almost over.

Martha, too, comes from the same background as Carolyn and Shelly, but her years of extremely varied teaching experiences, including at the university level, have

enabled her to attain a deeper understanding of both theoretical and research based best practices for primary aged children.

In contrast to the teaching newcomers, two of the veteran teachers are both pursuing graduate degrees at the local universities. Gean's mention to the idea of professional development would "help" is noteworthy; nonetheless, her involvement earning her Master's in Education is of greater significant importance to her. As with Jamie, who would genuinely appreciate the support in learning how to foster imagination and creativity using the visual arts with her kindergartners, she has been highly involved in her administrative internship and coursework to obtain her Specialist's in Educational Administration in hopes of attaining her professional aspirations to become an early childhood district coordinator or school administrator.

In addition, four of the participants, Carolyn, Gean, Shelly, and Valerie, all having earned a bachelor's degree, appeared to have not only the least amount of academic knowledge and professional development, additionally voiced the most frustration of "not having enough time" to integrate and infuse the arts into their classrooms rooted on the academic expectations impressed upon them by their administrative supervisors or district level personnel.

The preceding accounts of the participants highlight how their statements are influenced by their personal knowledge and lived experiences in their understanding of discussing the visual arts. Table 6 encapsulates the eight participants' narratives by giving relevant statements categorized by themes ensued by an inclusive representation of their personal insights to the visual arts.

Table 6

Analysis Across Participants

Themes and Subthemes	Participants	Examples of Meaningful Statements
Development of Visual Arts Beliefs	Carolyn	“I never really enjoyed it much ‘cause I never felt like I was a really good artist, so I have never really been into art”
	Gean	“wish[ed] that I could have gotten a chance to do it more growing up” “my creativity could have been boosted a little bit”
	Jamie	I remember why it was so traumatic....I can remember to the day... because I was so embarrassed”
	Lilly	“just loving it and it was great fun”

Table 6 (continued).

Themes and Subthemes	Participants	Examples of Meaningful Statements
	Martha	<p>“got to do a lot of coloring”</p> <p>“I loved to do paint by number, which was not really art, but it was using real oil paints and that was always fun to use, to do that as a child”</p>
	Shelly	<p>“the experiences were there”</p> <p>“it was fun and I learned stuff”</p> <p>“did not have much confidence in her artwork”</p>
	Sue	<p>“had a knack or desire”</p>
	Valerie	<p>“I was very encouraged [by my mother] in the arts”</p>

Table 6 (continued).

Themes and Subthemes	Participants	Examples of Meaningful Statements
Academic Teacher Training	Carolyn	“I just don’t remember any creativity classes, I mean, none”
	Gean	“something that they can catch...and will help them remember”
	Jamie	“not really much on how to apply it to elementary school teaching”
	Lilly	“I don’t remember doing anything for art instruction”
		“I think I would remember being involved in that [art]”
	Martha	“fun because it was things you would do with children”

Table 6 (continued).

Themes and Subthemes	Participants	Examples of Meaningful Statements
	Shelly	“I learned that stuff in art [as a child]”
	Sue	“do’s and don’ts” “busy work” “no art”
	Valerie	“took all the art courses I could get my hands on because I love art”
Demands of Curriculum	Carolyn	“jam-packed...every single minute of the day...I don’t know when to fit [in] anything else”
	Gean	“a little bit of the curriculum could be lifted from us”

Table 6 (continued).

Themes and Subthemes	Participants	Examples of Meaningful Statements
	Lilly	<p>“so we actually lost a lot of freedom to do art”</p> <p>“fast and furious and do well with that”</p>
	Martha	<p>“it’s kind of over powering a lot of other things”</p> <p>“so many things that we’re required to get in”</p>
	Shelly	<p>“to get some of the art activities, that would probably take more time”</p>
	Sue	<p>“that face to face and talking about what we’re doing and why we’re doing it is just so valuable...it also makes our workload a lot easier”</p>

Table 6 (continued).

Themes and Subthemes	Participants	Examples of Meaningful Statements
	Valerie	<p>“We have 140 phonics lessons [and] 20 topics in math that we have to teach and we’re supposed to get to the end of that... and...we have five reading basal readers...we’re supposed to get to the end of those [too]”</p>
Professional Development	Carolyn	<p>“Oh, yes, I would love to do more and to know more, and I would love someone explaining it”</p>
	Gean	<p>“would help, It would help a lot”</p>
	Lilly	<p>“I remember loving that whole philosophy and kind of adopting that in my inner self halfway”</p>

Table 6 (continued).

Themes and Subthemes	Participants	Examples of Meaningful Statements
	Martha	“teachers are the best to steal ideas from each other and that’s the best way to learn”
	Shelly	“our experience tends to kind of mold what we bring into our classroom”
	Sue	“just been fabulous” “it [art]really could happen”
	Valerie	“zero, zip, and none”
Administrative Support	Carolyn	“it could be done”
	Gean	“she’s giving us a little leeway to do that on Fridays”

Table 6 (continued).

Themes and Subthemes	Participants	Examples of Meaningful Statements
	Jamie	“I think so”
	Lilly	“they can trust me” “Now they don’t hawk over me and I don’t have to stick to the script”
	Martha	“very, very supportive”
	Shelly	“effectively incorporate” “fine with it”
	Sue	“I think if you have somebody looking down your throat constantly trying to micromanage and nitpick you to death, you know, it would be hard [to integrate the arts]”

Table 6 (continued).

Themes and Subthemes	Participants	Examples of Meaningful Statements
Classroom Practices	Valerie	“is on the same page”
	Carolyn	“just experimenting...they loved it...they got to get dirty and messy and have fun”
		“biggest headache”
		“could have used”
		“should have taken advantage”
	Gean	“requirements change and that you have to let some things go”
	Jamie	“probably doing less”
	Lilly	“to create and see beautiful work and to feel proud of [their] work”
	Martha	“still do lots and lots of art”

Table 6 (continued).

Themes and Subthemes	Participants	Examples of Meaningful Statements
	Shelly	<p>“simple stuff ...coloring or painting every once in a while, but it has to be something that is not gonna take a lot of time”</p> <p>“to get some of the art activities, that would probably take more time”</p> <p>“there’s not enough time”</p>
	Sue	<p>“that face to face and talking about what we’re doing and why we’re doing it is just so valuable...it also makes our workload a lot easier”</p> <p>“The arts are so exciting for kids...it’s a way to express themselves...they are interested in it [and] they want to come to school”</p>

Table 6 (continued).

Themes and Subthemes	Participants	Examples of Meaningful Statements
	Valerie	“there is just a little pinch of time for art”

Overall Description of Participants’ Perceptions

The following description of the teachers’ lived experiences emanates from the themes and subthemes that were ascertained from the analysis of data and the meaningful belief statements of the participants.

For most of the teachers who had parental support growing up or positive school experiences in the visual arts, they maintain a strong foundation of personally understanding the possibilities in creating something artistic. In addition, when high quality art education was available at the university level, the “practical information” of how and why to develop and implement age-appropriate art activities into the early childhood classroom fell short. The curricular demands, ranging from a personal understanding of state frameworks to the knowledgeable support of the building administration followed by district mandated teaching guidelines and additional state requirements was difficult for several teachers. Those participants new to the primary grades may not have been as secure as those more experienced in being able to articulate their teaching philosophy and practices. This may be due in part to lack of teaching experience prior to graduation, professional development opportunities at the school, district, or national level, and also the understanding and exposure received at the

undergraduate level to pedagogical theories and practices, which heretofore may have hindered the teachers' ability to foster and develop an appreciation of the arts. The teachers who not only felt comfortable and secure in their personal attempt to model their own imagination and creativity in the classroom, were especially hopeful the children themselves are capable of being imaginative, creative, and proud of their artistic endeavors.

Van Manen (1990) states, "In our efforts to make sense of our lived experiences with theories and hypothesizing frameworks we are forgetting that it is the human beings who bring schemata and frameworks into being and not the reverse" (p. 45). Therefore, when interpreting the lived experiences of the eight participants in this study, the themes and subthemes that were supported by the data in this chapter, are an accurate representation of their visual arts beliefs and the impact on classroom practices.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

Through data analysis, an overall description of the participants' understanding of the visual arts emerged. In the content analysis, themes and subthemes emerged that answers the central research question and the sub-questions. The central research question for this study was “with the expectations of increasing test scores and an ever narrowing curriculum, how do K-1 teachers in a southern state define their visual arts beliefs and apply them in the early childhood classroom?”

The guiding sub-questions included the following:

1. How do K-1 teachers in a southern state define their lived experiences of the visual arts?
2. What are the understandings of K-1 teachers in a southern state about how they learned to use the visual arts with their students?
3. What meaning do K-1 teachers in a southern state assign to their classroom practices that they believe represent their lived experiences of the visual arts?

Discussion of the Central Research Question

The following central research question guided the study: with the expectations of increasing test scores and an ever narrowing curriculum, how do K-1 teachers in a southern state define their visual arts beliefs and apply them in the early childhood classroom?

The participants' exposure and opportunities to the visual arts at home, school, church, or from other extracurricular activities is where the foundation of varied perspectives are conceived. The academic training they have acquired is another

component of how their beliefs affect how they process and act upon their understanding of the visual arts and its role in the classroom. These highly individualized points of view may sometimes be acutely influenced by the demands of the curriculum in turn impacting classroom practices.

Discussion of the Sub-question One

How do K-1 teachers in a southern state define their lived experiences of the visual arts? Carolyn's school-based experiences, like most of the other participants were primarily programmed craft projects that came from recreating the teacher prepared sample. Imagination, passion, and creativity were generally not part of the process. Some of the participants were afforded the opportunity in the upper elementary through middle school years to be creative when presenting science and social studies projects or utilizing an art medium for creative writing. When asked to define what art is and how it relates to children having the opportunities to create art, some of belief statements are contradictory to what they personally experienced and how they may perceive themselves when it comes to their own creative capabilities.

Carolyn stated, "Creativity comes to mind and to me that's different to everybody....putting your ideas and thoughts in, not necessarily in words...but in drawings or paintings or sculptures." She said neither of her parents are "artsy or very creative" and she "used to think [art] was not important." She felt young children especially enjoy the process of painting, which takes a lot of time to prepare and clean up. Carolyn indicated that in order for her students to have the opportunity to experience art in school, she suggested she has to be creative person to generate these "great activities," otherwise she would have to had seen it done at school by other teachers.

Gean replied, "It's expression with creativeness....It is not determined on how well it looks, but what goes into it." Therefore, when time allows, sometimes at the end of the day or mostly on Fridays if they are "caught up", she lets them color and draw whatever they imagine on their own. Gean said her students "really look forward to those days" and tries to afford them the opportunity to "express themselves" that she did not have in her education.

Jamie's definition of art involved having an understanding of how to use art materials and media "to create something" and when children are involved with art it also includes a "more guided process." Jamie's personal experiences with art in elementary school only involved occasional holiday projects. When Jamie had to earn a badge for Girl Scouts, her mom taught her how to sew. She has very fond memories spending time making clothes and now is recreating similar memories with her daughter by teaching her to make dresses for her year old granddaughter. Jamie has always enjoyed other crafts at home, but would "love to sit down and paint an ocean picture." She said there was not anyone in her family that exhibited any artistic abilities that could teach her basic techniques and she also suggested it requires "talent." Hereinto is where the problem lies, Jamie does not "know how to teach the children to be creative."

Lilly's description of art and the opportunities for children and art, as "an exercise in which some sort of creative expression is encouraged...it could be visual or performance or kinesthetic even", are one in the same. Her school experiences were not unlike most of the other participants, the holiday themed craft projects. Lilly's private art lessons when she was in the sixth grade opened her mind to what she was capable of as an individual when she created her own work and learned to "think out of the box" while

experimenting with different mediums. Living in New York City for 14 years with her husband and young daughter “enhanced her love of art.” Learning about the Reggio Emilia approach has also enriched her understanding of how children need the opportunity to “just open the window and paint what you see and paint what you feel and paint whatever.” Lilly strongly believes when time allows, the importance of giving her students opportunities to create art and “to have that part of their spirit released and nurtured just to become a whole, happy, [and] thinking person.”

Martha first asserted what art is not. She explained that a lot of people think art is only comprised of the visual arts and that is equated to “coloring, cutting, and pasting.” She claimed it also includes “drama, acting out things, watching dramatic presentations, story writing, dance, movement, and the fine arts.” She added that for children to have those enriching experiences it is important to “expose them to as many different kinds of media as you can and have them involved in it as much as you can.” While Martha had no formal art classes in school, she fondly remembers one summer attending an enrichment class at the local university where she learned drawing techniques, including how to draw a tree with its’ roots spreading out into the earth.

Shelly remarked that art is “formed expression” and children express themselves through art by creating a piece by using “crayons, chalk, pad, [and] paper.” Shelly recalled how some of her “teachers that were artsy, would bring more art into the classroom versus the teachers who didn’t like art as much.” Based on Shelly’s own lived experiences with art she understands that it “can help reinforce some of those things, but it’s not necessarily, in my mind, usually the way that I think to reinforce it.” Shelly maintained that even though she had some memorable visual art experiences in

elementary school, the frequency decreased as she got older as did her level of enjoyment. It was during high school Shelly's interests became clearer and she realized that "art just wasn't it."

Sue surmised, "Art is a way of expressing yourself so people can know who you are or what you think about something...I think it is the part of us that makes us human. The part that we want to explain to someone else that you can't explain...in math everything is black and white, and I think art helps you to explain those areas that are very gray." Sue's initiative to use art as a vehicle for expression has been evident since elementary school. Sue spent her Christmas break creating magazine collages to illustrate her interpretation of Carl Sandberg poems.

Valerie observed "art is the reflection of yourself...your creation or your imagination put into form in some way." When Valerie attended a private kindergarten she enjoyed a lot of art, including painting, yet, like most of the others, her school experiences primarily involved color, cut, and paste activities. At the neighborhood church where she attended Bible School while growing up, Valerie said "we made lots of things and I still have lots of those." While Valerie's opportunities to create did not take place in the classroom she firmly believes children need more opportunities because "Art is their imagination in form. Art is their creativity in form...whatever they decide to do."

The lack of self-confidence in some of the participants, like Carolyn, Jamie, and Shelly, which is embodied in their personal beliefs of their capability to teach art to young children, in turn seems to have influenced their level of interest in the visual arts while enrolled in their teacher education program (Klopper & Power, 2010). While some of the teacher participants may not have had enriching academic experiences in the visual

arts, Dinham (2007), suggests the opportunities that Lilly, Martha, Sue, and Valerie were afforded at home through “cultural and creative pursuits” (p. 22) have enabled them to ascertain a personal understanding of their own creative and imaginative abilities.

Furthermore, those teachers that have become aware of their own creative abilities and how to nurture and foster that within themselves through purposefully enhancing their own artistic growth, in turn strengthens their capacity to “be willing to teach the arts in their own classrooms” (Andrews, 2010, p. 91). Thus, Lilly, Martha, and Sue are able to define their lived experiences in the visual arts with great clarity and depth.

Discussion of Sub-question Two

What are the understandings of K-1 teachers in a southern state about how they learned to use the visual arts with their students? Carolyn’s experiences in her bachelor’s program of early childhood education did not seem to, as she reflected, establish the fundamentals of young children’s ability to “learn things through their art and [that] they can express their ideas.” It was not until Carolyn’s first teaching experience did she begin to see the impact the arts had on children’s learning. A K-2 primary school in her previous district had recently become involved in an arts-based philosophy. At the school’s presentation that showcased the students’ artwork, Carolyn explained, “It was like, oh, my gracious, these young children have done these things.”

Gean’s undergraduate experiences afforded her with the background knowledge of how art could be infused into other subject areas such as reading and mathematics. When she began her first teaching job, she was able to draw from those integrated lessons the skills necessary to collaborate with her colleagues to create five different daily center activities, including art, for each of the thematic units they taught during the year.

In Jamie's university training to become a classroom teacher, she took both an art appreciation class and elementary art for teachers. She thought it was rather fascinating to learn about artists and painters and was introduced to various art media. Nevertheless, she disclosed, "nothing really applied when I stepped into a kindergarten classroom or a preschool special ed class."

Lilly earned her bachelor's in elementary education from the state's flagship university in 1981 followed by her Master's in early childhood from the local university in 1998. She was emphatic that she "wasn't painting on canvases and [was not even] using paint."

Besides the mandatory undergraduate art course Martha took during her undergraduate studies, she was also enrolled in the coursework required to become state certified in elementary education. She enjoyed her Art for Children class because "it was things you do with children."

Shelly remarked that some form of an art experience was expected to be integrated into the lessons she created for most of her child development coursework including a methods and materials class. She mentioned an elementary education elective in Children's Literature that taught her how to integrate art activities into the literature books she would read to her students. Shelly suggested when she had to come up with creative ideas for her bulletin boards and thematic activities during her student teaching, it was the childhood experiences she had with her mother that "had a lot to do with it."

Sue's first academic experience in the visual arts was an art appreciation class at her local junior college before transferring to the university to complete her bachelor's degree. When she used pastels and canvases for the first time, she noted, "I really liked

it” and added, “I really realized that I was pretty good.” Sue recalled taking a class in art for elementary education but was disappointed it was not a creative outlet for her. She shared, although the class taught art from a management of materials perspective, “it was nothing that I felt like let me really express myself.”

Valerie’s elementary education program at a parochial college included an art appreciation class where the students visited regional museums. She recalled having to decide between either an art or music course and she chose art for elementary school. Valerie fondly remembers having “a ball” in the art for elementary teachers course. She explained how one particularly difficult assignment was drawing one’s own hand. Even though Valerie said, “I can’t draw at all...but it [the class] was so much fun.”

The participants’ academic teacher training primarily placed an emphasis on the core content areas of reading, language arts, and mathematics. While most of the participants had at least one art history or appreciation class, they also had a course in art for elementary education majors. However, based on the participants’ perceptions, their level of essential content knowledge, pedagogic skills, and integrative teaching strategies, was woefully lacking in their understanding of how to foster creative opportunities for young children. Twigg and Garvis (2010) stress the importance of teachers to feel competent teaching art by having a sound grasp on the fundamental skills necessary to provide art experiences for their students. Hudson and Hudson (2007) suggest the teachers have authentic personal experiences involving a variety of art medium, especially “clay and other three-dimensional materials” (p. 12). In addition, an awareness of the state’s visual arts standards and the national standards was never mentioned by any of the participants.

Discussion of Sub-question Three

What meaning do K-1 teachers in a southern state assign to their classroom practices that they believe represent their lived experiences of the visual arts?

Carolyn claimed that children ought to be afforded the opportunities to create art. However, due to her self-professed lack of creativity and because she does not have a background in teaching art to young children, nor is comfortable with the content she believes she is expected to know, Carolyn feels she would not be successful teaching the visual arts to her kindergartners. Yet, “if there was someone to give [me] ideas as to how to implement [art] into my reading [or] math,” she mentioned “...it’s always helpful when other people give you ideas.” Therefore, Carolyn feels that along with the effort needed “to be creative” in weaving art into her teaching it is “extra work on her part.”

Gean tries diligently to complete all of required reading and math lessons each week so that her first graders will have a sliver of time on Friday afternoon to be imaginative and create something that comes from within. Gean has lots of thematic ideas for art integration from when she taught kindergarten many years ago, but with the highly structured curriculum, it requires a lot of planning to integrate art into a lesson. Gean professed her wish to “get back to [teaching] in centers every day. I have it in my head a way to do it, but, I just can’t get it out.”

Jamie’s lived experiences, both while growing up and in her tertiary training, did not seem to help her establish a sense of being creative or imaginative. Jamie’s emphasis on integrating art into her classroom has mainly been through “programmed” art projects for her thematic or holiday theme units and have lessened in frequency since her school

began having an art class a couple of years ago. Jamie would be more confident in teaching art if she felt equipped to foster imagination with her kindergartners.

Lilly's only lived experiences in the visual arts that seemed to have an impact on nurturing her ability to think creatively other than the occasional opportunity to put a individual imprint on her holiday themed school art projects, would be the private art lessons she had in sixth grade. Attending a workshop on the Reggio Emilia approach would be the most significant adult experience in the visual arts she lived affecting her whole personal teaching philosophy. Therefore always striving, even with her current district's heavily structured and time restrictive curriculum and focus on test scores, Lilly is "always hopeful" to "keep that [Reggio Emilia approach] alive in my room, somehow."

The visual art opportunities that Martha has experienced have enabled her to foster an environment of imagination and creativity in her kindergarten classroom. Even though her district's curricular expectations are ever increasing, she feels it is important to plan as many art activities into her weekly plans, going beyond the two artists emphasized throughout the school year. Martha postulated meeting with her colleagues who "are very willing to share ideas" about what they are doing in their own classrooms helps her integrate art activities aligned to the state frameworks with greater success.

Shelly's varied and enriching art experiences both at home with her mother's daycare and in school while living abroad during her upper elementary years have afforded an understanding that providing classroom opportunities with art, she expressed, "does allow them another method of learning." Shelly emphasized her "rigorous

schedule” and has attempted to “reinforce when we have the opportunity for it”, but shared how it’s “ a little bit more difficult for me to squeeze those opportunities in.”

Sue’s lived experiences in the visual arts, not unlike Martha’s and Lilly’s, have solidified the value and importance of having frequent opportunities to participate with art in the early childhood classroom. Sue explained in her classroom practices, art is a vehicle for how children show their knowledge that sometimes may not be possible via paper and pencil. Using art, she has observed, strengthens their skills of observation supporting the state science objectives. Teaching from a “project” approach, as Sue suggested, results in “so much more than you ever would have gotten just on the unit test.”

Valerie enjoyed painting at home growing up and has a historical art foundation as well as exposure to different art mediums and genres during her undergraduate studies while also having the experience of teaching “across the curriculum” from a thematic and holistic perspective. Her district’s expectations of teaching the “the same page” as all the other first grade teachers and the amount of expended “time doing unnecessary things” does not afford you to “spend more time on art...or even to bring in into your reading or your science or your social studies.” She reflected on the days when it was “the whole language thing ” and children “remembered the skills because it was tied to something that was fun and enriching.” Valerie declared how “we need more art experiences and we need more time.... and “to not be so held down to the paperwork.”

In the varying degrees to which teachers are intrinsically and extrinsically motivated to provide meaningful art experiences for their children through the opportunities to create, observe, and discuss their own and other works of art (Colbert &

Taunton, 1992), the need for networking and collaboration with fellow teachers, parents, artists, and the community at large will only strengthen art within the everyday curriculum (Twigg & Garvis, 2010). Furthermore, the participants that have had professional development, especially ongoing, have had the greatest success in learning how to best integrate art into their classroom. Pavlou (2004) asserts that those teachers whose self-confidence prevents them from enjoying the process and product of creating art are also hindering their ability to plan and prepare authentic art opportunities. Therefore, teachers who objectively analyze their own teaching practices through professional development, may become more secure and confident in providing meaningful art experiences for their classroom environment (Terreni, 2010).

Conclusions

As Carter (1993) succinctly articulated in order for children to have meaningful art experiences they must have “opportunity, exposure, and encouragement”. It is these three aspects of art education that both pre-service and current teachers ascertain in order for “the arts not [to be seen] as a peripheral part of the curriculum, but as an essential part of the knowledge all children should learn in the early grades” (Core Knowledge Foundation, 2010, p. viii).

The opportunities for teachers to create art, explore a wide variety of materials and tools, and feel comfortable with their creative endeavors is the first step (Hudson & Hudson, 2007; Twigg & Garvis, 2010). Several of the teachers stated they were not creative or imaginative. Just like the students, teachers need encouragement. Seeing other teachers experience personal satisfaction in creating a work of art because of a confidence that grew out of exploration (*The Visual Arts in Primary Schools*, 1988) will

help foster the background knowledge and skills needed to understand why children enjoy the act of creating and its tremendously positive impact on children's learning.

The participants did not feel prepared in content knowledge of teaching art from their university experiences. The state and national visual arts standards were never mentioned by the participants, furthering the lack of knowledge required to understand how to integrate and infuse art into the curriculum, as they are not even cognizant of all content area standards. Andrews (2010) recommends professional development that will enable the teachers to gain a strong content-based understanding of authentic art experiences while also learning how to integrate art into the content areas by having gained personal respect for their own artistic abilities through opportunities to work with artists who can teach them age appropriate teaching strategies.

The majority of the teachers expressed the pressures they receive from the building administration and district level personnel in order to achieve the academic outcomes the kindergarten and first grade students are expected to meet or exceed. The teachers conveyed their frustration with the overabundance of unnecessary and redundant paperwork, the pacing guides that require teachers to teach almost simultaneously, the rigidity of the curriculum and how it leaves no time for integrating art. Many of the teachers implied how the ability to teach with the best practices they have utilized in the past to facilitate an enjoyable learning environment is no longer within their control.

In the Project Zero research project (Seidel, Tishman, Winner, Hetland, & Palmer 2009), one of the primary areas of focus was to have a greater understanding of the K-12 learner and their classroom experiences in the arts. Both teachers and artists, who are the primary facilitators of providing these opportunities, shared their personal journey of

learning and how they applied their lived experiences to their practices. In order for teachers and artists to facilitate an enriching classroom environment, they also need planning time, materials, resources and building level administrative support. In addition, the findings also highlight the tremendous influence of decisions made by those outside of the classroom on the quality of arts experiences. Central office administrators, curriculum coordinators, policy makers, and educational researchers all have a considerable amount of influence and control over what can and may occur for the learner (Seidel et al., 2009).

Implications

Although primary teachers are expected to teach all subject areas, art is one of the areas both novice and veteran teachers feel ill equipped to teach (Andrews, 2010). When a pre-service teacher enters into a teacher education program, there are at least 13 years of schooling that involved very few meaningful art experiences. Therefore, teacher education students do not feel comfortable letting go in an art studio creating. They seem to lack the imagination necessary to take ideas in a different direction or the next level. Teachers cannot be expected to be excited about teaching art if they themselves have not been excited about experiencing art.

The frequency and depth to if and when these open-ended art experiences are made available to teachers in the field is another implication that requires thought. As teachers have the opportunity for professional development, Dinham (2007) suggests that as learning about the visual arts and how to both infuse and integrate into the curriculum is not a process that can be rushed. “Extended and coherent engagement” (p. 27) is how

the teachers will become more capable of enjoying the arts themselves and with greater confidence be able to foster a creative, imaginative, and thinking classroom.

Recommendations for Future Research

The most significant commonality among the participants is the lack of lived experiences in the visual arts from kindergarten through university. Several of them lacked the self-confidence to think they were creative. If a teacher does not feel creative or imaginative, that same feeling of being unable to teach from a different approach will probably have a negative effect on the long term ability to keep things fresh in their own classroom. A longitudinal study looking at what pre-service teachers beliefs about the visual arts prior, during, and after their academic training may help expand and deepen the phenomenological understanding of their lived experiences.

Another area of interest would be to replicate the same study in another state to see if the findings are similar and support the current understandings of the participants' lived experiences and how it has influenced their classroom practices.

An additional query into finding early childhood teachers who are known at their schools for their uniqueness, imagination, or creativity in the classroom and try to discover what lived experiences have helped shape them to be the teacher they are today.

A final study of relevance might out to include male primary teachers as the participants embodied within the phenomenological theory to gain an understanding of the similarities and differences between the lived experiences in the visual arts between men and women and its' impact on classroom practices.

Having the great fortune of being a primary teacher and working diligently to provide the most enriching classroom experiences takes a lot of personal determination to

continue to grow as an individual and as a teacher. Carolyn, Gean, Jamie, Lilly, Martha, Shelly, Sue, and Valerie, based on their own visual arts experiences have contributed to furthering the knowledge for the support of a more “holistic approach to improving early childhood teacher education in the arts [therefore it] may lead to higher quality art education experiences for students in early childhood education settings” (Twigg & Garvis, 2010, p. 201).

APPENDIX A

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD NOTICE OF COMMITTEE ACTION



 THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI

Institutional Review Board

 118 College Drive #5147
 Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001
 Tel: 601.266.6820
 Fax: 601.266.5509
 www.usm.edu/irb

**HUMAN SUBJECTS PROTECTION REVIEW COMMITTEE
 NOTICE OF COMMITTEE ACTION**

The project has been reviewed by The University of Southern Mississippi Human Subjects Protection Review Committee in accordance with Federal Drug Administration regulations (21 CFR 26, 111), Department of Health and Human Services (45 CFR Part 46), and university guidelines to ensure adherence to the following criteria:

- The risks to subjects are minimized.
- The risks to subjects are reasonable in relation to the anticipated benefits.
- The selection of subjects is equitable.
- Informed consent is adequate and appropriately documented.
- Where appropriate, the research plan makes adequate provisions for monitoring the data collected to ensure the safety of the subjects.
- Where appropriate, there are adequate provisions to protect the privacy of subjects and to maintain the confidentiality of all data.
- Appropriate additional safeguards have been included to protect vulnerable subjects.
- Any unanticipated, serious, or continuing problems encountered regarding risks to subjects must be reported immediately, but not later than 10 days following the event. This should be reported to the IRB Office via the "Adverse Effect Report Form".
- If approved, the maximum period of approval is limited to twelve months.
 Projects that exceed this period must submit an application for renewal or continuation.

PROTOCOL NUMBER: **29010502**

PROJECT TITLE: **K-1 Teachers' Visual Arts Beliefs and Their Role in the Early Childhood Classroom**

PROPOSED PROJECT DATES: **01/05/09 to 06/30/09**

PROJECT TYPE: **Dissertation or Thesis**

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATORS: **Blythe A. Goodman**

COLLEGE/DIVISION: **College of Education & Psychology**

DEPARTMENT: **Curriculum, Instruction, & Special Education**

FUNDING AGENCY: **N/A**

HSPRC COMMITTEE ACTION: **Exempt Approval**

PERIOD OF APPROVAL: **02/09/09 to 02/08/10**

Lawrence A. Hosman

 Lawrence A. Hosman, Ph.D.
 HSPRC Chair

2-10-09

 Date

APPENDIX B

EXAMPLE OF LETTER TO SCHOOL DISTRICT SUPERINTENDENT

August 1, 2008

Dear Superintendent:

I am writing to seek permission to conduct a study in two of the elementary schools in your district. I am considering _____ and _____. I would like two (Kindergarten and First Grade) teachers from each school to participate, for a total of four teachers involved in my study. The study is to fulfill part of the dissertation requirements for the doctoral degree I am pursuing in the Department of Curriculum, Instruction and Special Education at The University of Southern Mississippi.

The purpose of my study is to explore primary teachers' visual arts beliefs and how they apply them in the classroom. The study will consist of interviews and observations of teachers. I will also gather documents the teachers believe could help in explaining how their beliefs are evident in the classroom (e.g., lesson plans, samples of work, newsletters to families). My data collection would begin in September and should be completed by the Winter Holidays. Results of the research will be shared with the participants, used as part of my dissertation, and may be submitted for journal publications and presentations at a later date. All names of the participants, schools, and the school district will remain confidential. No risk is involved for any participant. The participants will be asked to sign informed consent forms and are free to withdraw from the study at any time.

If you have any questions, please contact me. My phone number is 467-6161.

Thank you for considering my request.

Sincerely,

Blythe Goodman

APPENDIX D

FIRST INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

1. What grades and the length of time for each have you taught?
2. Where have you taught?
3. Where did you receive your academic training to become a classroom teacher?
4. Have you taken any coursework beyond your bachelor's degree?
5. What experiences (both positive and negative) have you had in the visual arts as a child, including those at school, home, church, camp, etc?
6. What experiences (both positive and negative) in the visual arts have you had in your academic career?
7. What experiences (both positive and negative) have you had in the visual arts as an adult?
8. What did you learn about the visual arts in your academic career?
9. Explain any additional professional development in the visual arts as a classroom teacher.
10. How important are the visual arts in your classroom?
11. How are your experiences and knowledge of the visual arts representative in your classroom practices?
12. Have your experiences, knowledge and classroom practices of the visual arts changed since you began teaching? If so, explain.

APPENDIX C

THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI
INFORMED CONSENT FORM
AUTHORIZATION TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH PROJECT

Consent is hereby given to participate in the study titled:
K-1 Teachers' Visual Arts Beliefs and their Role in the Early Childhood Classroom

1. Purpose: The purpose of the study is to explore K-1 teachers' visual arts beliefs and how they apply them in their classroom.
2. Description of Study: Data will be collected for the study through informal and formal tape recorded interviews, observations of you with your class, and documents. Times for formal interviews and observations will be scheduled at your convenience. It is anticipated that approximately two to four formal interviews will be conducted lasting approximately thirty to ninety minutes each. Two to three observations are expected to be conducted lasting between thirty minutes and two hours. You will determine any documents that you wish to provide. Your participation is voluntary, and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.
3. Benefits: The benefit from your participation is the information gained from the study of exploring teachers' visual arts beliefs. After the study is completed, I will provide you with the findings, if you desire.
4. Risks: There are no known risks and/or discomforts associated with the study.
5. Confidentiality: All names will remain anonymous. Pseudonyms will be used during the interviews and in the written report. All pseudonyms will continue to remain in place including any other data collected through the transcribed interviews, observations, field notes, and documents with regards to any possible presentations and publications. Only the chair of my dissertation committee, a peer reviewer, and I will have access to the data. The identifying information of you and your pseudonym, the audiotapes, transcribed interviews, observations, field notes, and documents will all be securely stored throughout the duration of the study. After the conclusion of the study, the audiotapes will be destroyed.
6. Subject's Assurance: Whereas no assurance can be made concerning results that may be obtained (since results from investigational studies cannot be predicted) the researcher will take every precaution consistent with the best scientific practice. Participation in this project will be completely voluntary, and subjects may withdraw from this study at any time without penalty, prejudice, or loss of benefits. Questions concerning the research should be directed to Blythe Goodman at 467-6161. This project and this consent form have been reviewed by the Institutional Review Board, which insures that research projects involving human subjects follow federal regulations. Any questions or concerns about rights as research subject should be directed to the Chair of the Institutional Review Board, The University of Southern Mississippi, 118 College Drive #5147, Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001, (601) 266-6820. A copy of this form will be given to you.

Signature of Research Subject

Date

Signature of Person Explaining the Study

Date

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