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Developmental Models of Artistic Expression and Aesthetic Response: The Reproduction of Formal Schooling and Modernity

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Abstract

Developmental models of artistic expression have had a major influence on research and curriculum in art education. The purpose of this paper is to examine the characteristics and assumptions of artistic expression and aesthetic response developmental models. It is proposed that developmental models purported to be descriptive and to have widespread, if not universal, application are socially embedded and prescriptive of outcomes that are highly consistent with characteristics of formal schooling and with the values of modernity. Information for this theoretical study is based on selected literature on the following: (a) developmental models in art education, (b) characteristics of modernity, and (c) everyday/local art experiences.

Developmental Models of Artistic Expression and Aesthetic Response: The Reproduction of Formal Schooling and Modernity

Research on children's work in art has been influenced by fairly well-established developmental models on stages of artistic expression (Chapman, 1978; Eisner, 1972; Kellogg, 1969; Lansing, 1969; Lowenfeld, 1947). With current instruction extending children's classroom experiences beyond studio work to areas of aesthetics, art history, and art criticism, we are now also beginning to see discussions of children's stages of aesthetic understanding and response (Greer, 1984; Parsons, 1987; Wolf, 1988). If aesthetic response models follow a pattern of research and implementation similar to what has occurred for artistic expression,[1] we can expect to see aesthetic models exerting major influences on research investigations and on newly designed instructional programs. Recent models proposed on aesthetic response consist of stages that begin with a recognition of children's spontaneous verbal responses and age-based preferences, leading toward an eschewing of personal preferences and contextual cues, and culminating with responses based on perceptual qualities, formal relationships, and acquired artworld knowledge (Parsons, 1987; Wolf, 1988; also see Parsons, Johnston, & Durham, 1978).

In this paper it is proposed that models purported to be descriptive and to have widespread if not universal application may actually be prescriptive of outcomes that are highly consistent with and reproductive of characteristics of formal schooling and with the values of modernity. The purpose of this paper is to examine the assumptions of developmental models. This will be done by examining artistic expression and aesthetic response developmental models as they (a) relate to the characteristics of modernity and as they (b) differ from current theory and research on everyday/local cognition. In addition, brief reference will be made to information on gender

consciousness and multiculturalism inasmuch as research in these areas provide nondevelopmental interpretations of human behaviors and responses.

Information for this theoretical study is based on selected literature on the following: (a) developmental models in art education, (b) characteristics of modernity, and (c) everyday/local art experiences. The objectives of this research are to present information on the social embeddedness of developmental models whereby art educators will consider whether these models might have some applications, they might be modified, or they might be essentially replaced by nonhierarchical and nondevelopmental constructs that relate to children's everyday, informal art experiences.

Background

Since the last part of the nineteenth century, children's graphic expressions have been collected, analyzed, and categorized into stages that relate roughly to age-based development (Chapman, 1978; Eisner, 1972; Lansing, 1969; Logan, 1955; Lowenfeld, 1947). Changes in children's art work are seen as paralleling emotional, conceptual, perceptual, social, and technical/dexterity development whereby relatively simple global responses and artistic behaviors become increasingly differentiated, individually identifiable, and pictorially illusionistic. For example, it is believed children become more adept at conveying spatial relationships as a result of increased emotional and social maturity, because of overall cognitive development, as a matter of perceptual learning in the "real" world of experience, due to an ability to make increasingly sophisticated aesthetic choices, and as a result of learning culturally important artistic conventions (Kellogg, 1969; McFee, 1970; Wilson & Wilson, 1979). While Kellogg (1969) emphasized

the aesthetic choices children exercised in their work, Lowenfeld (1947) looked at the same type of work and saw the self-agency and emotional content expressed by children. McFee (1970) placed Lowenfeld's (1947) stages within a framework of cognitive learning styles, personal experience, and cultural learning and values; Wilson and Wilson (1979) have discussed and critiqued Lowenfeld's stages from the perspective of children learning culture-specific artistic conventions. In other words, the stages exist in our research and theoretical literature, with a range of interpretations as to why they exist and with qualifications to explain deviations from stage-specific characteristics. In the history of art education, one can identify child psychology, perceptual psychology, philosophical aesthetics (and the aesthetics of fine art culture), and formalistic art values as contributing toward the character of developmental models and their interpretations (Logan, 1955; Moody, 1992).

Although there are well-articulated debates on the descriptive power and merits of developmental models (Goldsmith & Feldman, 1988; Lewis, 1982; Wilson & Wilson, 1981), once established, these models have tended to exert a tremendous influence on theory, research, and practice (Johnston, Roybol, & Parsons, 1988). If nothing else, in research on children's art, some stance must be taken toward these models and some reference must be made to acknowledge their existence; once constructed, developmental models must be given some due, even if that "due" is critical. More often, however, stages have a taken-for-granted aura of an overarching framework with assumed wide-ranging explanatory power. They appear in most art education teacher preparation books and constitute the framework of major textbooks for children (Chapman, 1986; Hubbard, 1987; Moody, 1992).

Shared Characteristics and Assumptions

Developmental models in art have in common certain characteristics and are based on some shared assumptions. First, and foremost, these models present a developmentally progressive view of human behavior in the visual arts. Change is inherent to these models' descriptive being, with the underlying assumption that over time, as the individual "develops" via either creating or responding in the visual arts, there is an increase in complexity or a greater sophistication of expression and response. Although developmental descriptions of children's art may have been originally intended to validate whatever children produced at given periods of time, characteristics of early stages are often discussed as something to overcome (Feldman, 1980), and a language of deficiency is used to describe differences from desired stages and, especially, from a model's endpoint. For example, it is commonly stated that children's early drawings show little concern with or lack accurate perpendicular relationships. Trees on a hillside are drawn at right angles to the slope of the hill rather than to the larger gravitational, perpendicular relationship that objects have to the earth. The child's journey from dealing with specific objects to that of drawing objects in relationship to other objects and to the physical laws of the larger environment is carefully followed in developmental theory literature. With the exception of researchers such as Kellogg (1969), who looked at the aesthetic qualities of children's drawings rather than their accuracy to perceptual or conceptual knowledge, each succeeding stage is seen as a developmental improvement over the characteristics of former stages. One might note that in a somewhat similar manner, adult artistic styles have traditionally been presented in art history texts as a succession of improvements, e.g., impressionism replacing and improving on various forms of idealism and realism, only to be supplanted by the new and improved styles of post-impressionism, fauvism, abstractionism, and so on. In modern interpretations of art the

styles and of children's expressions and responses, development indicates change, and change is equated with progress and improvement (see Bowers, 1984, 1987). Even "Age of Crisis" or "Gang Age" stages of early adolescence, although representing a so-called lull in creative activity, are seen as stages leading toward greater and more encompassing artistic expression and understanding.

Second, it is assumed that developmental models convey a universalism, i.e., there is the assumption that descriptions of stages are just that—objective descriptions. Despite acknowledgements that collected child art examples rarely conform precisely to a given stage — children's work overlaps stages and may jump stages (Feldman, 1980; Wilson & Wilson, 1981, 1982) — it is assumed that described stages are descriptions of what most children do. The stages exist, they are described, and only due to deprivations or untoward experiences will they be expressed differently by individual children. Again, this does not mean that deviations are not acknowledged, but rather it is assumed that the modal characteristics of these models represent universal norms. Behavior designated as naturally occurring implies that nothing can or at the very least should be done to divert the developmental journey; however, at the same time, deviations from prescribed outcomes are considered behaviors to overcome. This is especially true for lower or initial stages. However, as Feldman (1980) has pointed out, the fact that higher stages or endpoint stages are not always achieved is a clue as to the socially prescriptive nature of these models.[2]

Third, existing developmental models are teleological in that they have prespecified, preferred endpoints. Not just any outcome will do. When linked to change, improvement, and universalism, the endpoint of a model takes on the legitimacy of a socially preferred, artistic "ought." Developmental models do not typically provide a branching endpoint of

possibilities or choices.[3] Most often, they prescribe what is considered desirable, based on the professional, adult behaviors of artists, art critics, and aestheticians who are part of the recognized, fine art world of experts. In general, models prescribe outcomes that relate to some form of illusionistic picturing for artistic expression (based on socially defined artistic conventions) and to some type of formalism for aesthetic response (based on conventions established by activities of professional art critics and aestheticians).

Modernity Values

Developmental models of artistic expression and aesthetic response embody the worldview of modern industrialized societies. Modernity is characterized by a high regard given to the rationalization of human thought and behavior, formalization and systemization of diverse information and phenomena, identification of universally applicable rules, change equated with progress, decontextualized learning, asocial and context-free information, expert-originated knowledge, and abstract and theoretical information and constructs (Apple, 1982, 1990; Bowers, 1984, 1987). These characteristics and values are expressed in art through, among other things, formal analysis, credence given to the opinions of art experts, and positive values placed on artworld-specific knowledge. Developmental models of artistic expression and aesthetic response, as currently presented, conform to the values of modernism inasmuch as they are prescriptive of decontextualized, individualistic experiences with endpoints or final stages that emphasize formal relationships, art-specific knowledge, and analyzable information. In this sense, art-related models are prescriptive of social "oughts" and normative art behaviors; they are, in effect, social models, embedded within the particularities of time and place.

Modernity lends itself to model building and to hierarchical constructs; these are evident throughout modern society in the organizational structures and lines of command in government, business, industry, and eduction. Hierarchical, developmental constructs or models are amenable to examination through rationalized systems of analysis and have the ostensible benefit of providing clear-cut steps for personal and social thought and action—with prespecified outcomes. In education we have "big theory," "big idea," overarching models to explain major human behaviors (identified, defined, and promoted as major through the models themselves). Some areas of study, such as educational psychology and gifted education, are specifically known for their prolific generation of models to describe and prescribe learning and teaching, e.g., Piaget's stages of cognitive development (see Piaget, 1977; Piaget & Inhelder, 1956), Kohlberg's (1981) structure of moral decision making, Bloom's hierarchical taxonomy of learning (see Bloom, Engelhart, Furst, Hill, & Krathwohl, 1956), Guilford's (1967) structure of the intellect, Rensulli's (1977) triad for gifted education. The volume of research literature resulting from these models attests to their perceived importance and perceived explanatory power.

Questions arise as to whether models describe important behaviors, give importance to otherwise existing but ho-hum behaviors, or give us ways to consider important but overlooked behaviors. Not surprisingly, there is conjecture that the value of development models may hinge on their being broad-based generalizations and summations that provide a convenient way to deal with diverse phenomena. Until discipline-based art education (DBAE) theory was identified with its emphasis on instruction beyond studio work (Greer, 1984), children's responses to art had relatively little importance in art education research and model building priorities; we did not have models to describe these behaviors although they certainly were occurring in some manner within the art classroom and beyond.

In this sense, models give visibility and validity to selected types of behaviors and specific instructional content. Responses to art that occur within aesthetic inquiry and art criticism processes of DBAE will undoubtedly take on greater importance as they are given visibility in developmental models and in the research that models generate.

Everyday/Local Art Experiences and Knowledge

In this paper, everyday/local art expressions and responses are used to describe art experiences and responses that are not part of formal school instruction or part of school culture—and that deviate from developmental model characteristics.[4] That is, children engage in art activities very different from formal school instruction and from developmental model descriptions (Efland, 1976; Wilson, 1974, 1985; Wilson & Wilson, 1977, 1979). Aspects of everyday/local art experiences and knowledge will be described to indicate that artistic developmental models may be mostly descriptive of institutionalized/school art experiences. In this paper it is proposed that models tend to be prescriptive of art learning that conforms to the values of modernity, to the characteristics of a hierarchical society, and to the institutional needs of education.

Researchers have described the many art forms that are not included in most art curricula. They have suggested that art educators look to the aesthetic potential of the built and natural environments, folk arts, popular arts, commercial arts, etc. (Blandy & Congdon, 1987; Duncum, 1989, n.d.; Hobbs, 1984). Researchers have also described differing ways children make and respond to art outside the art classroom. Wilson (1974) and Wilson and Wilson (1977) documented the themes and artistic strategies of children drawing in nonschool

settings. For example, sexual fantasies, scatological images, and cartoon figures are common in children's nonschool art. Duncum (1989) recorded the depiction of violence and "gross" subjects in children's work which, needless to say, are usually discouraged, if not forbidden, in school art contexts.

Formal art instruction reifies developmental models, i.e., developmental models fit the requirements of "schooling" and vice versa. For example, studio art instruction commonly involves exercises dealing with overlap, linear perspective, center of interest, shading techniques, ways to show perspective, and skill in various media techniques for purposes of increasing technical facility for various types of pictorial illusion. These are skills that conform to or support the developmental changes specified in existing models.

Much school art is taught to <u>overcome</u> art learning from other contexts and, in particular, the contexts of the popular culture and out-of-school learning. School contexts provide the learning of rules and deductive strategies whereas everyday problem-solving is context-specific and opportunistic. According to Lave, Murtaugh, and de la Rocha (1984), problem solving in everyday/local contexts is practical, concrete, and personally motivated (also see Brown, 1989; Rogoff, 1990; Rogoff & Lave, 1984). In everyday/local contexts, children will draw on lined paper, scrap paper, their own bodies, and walls and sides of buildings. They use ball-point pens, rulers, and erasers; they copy, trace, and use stencils. These materials, tools, and techniques are discouraged in school art and result in art not usually collected for research studies and for analysis of stage-based, developmental descriptions.

What is Studied in Research Studies

Researchers have tended to focus on art activities that require little supervision or management and that are not "messy." Research art[5] is produced within specified time limits and within school or controlled environments. Most children's art that has been studied is based on traditional school media and occurs within the assumptions of what constitutes valued school art experiences, e.g., art that is not copied, not based on popular media, not on taboo subject matter, and not from collaborative projects. The types of experiences and products studied and the conditions under which responses are made and recorded in developmental research studies conform to the assumptions of modernity and to conditions that will fit the desired outcomes of developmental models. For example, to record stages of aesthetic responses, individuals were asked to discuss examples of fine art, such as Ivan Albright's painting titled "Into the World Came a Soul Called Ida" (see Parsons, 1987). This and the other works are clearly within the general category of Western "fine art." Although Albright's work is certainly worthy of study, it is also a work upon which many artworld (fine art) experts have expounded and a work upon which favorable judgments have been made. This and other art works used to elicit responses in aesthetic response studied are executed in traditional media, and they conform to recognized fine art formats, media, and genres. This does not mean that other types of art expressions and responses are not studied by researchers, but rather that, they usually are not part of developmental, model-producing studies.

Art criticism instruction is traditionally structured so that students will avoid personal associations, and they will reference their analysis to the perceptual qualities of the object (Feinstein, 1983, 1984). Likewise, aesthetic stage models place a formalistic, decontextualized appreciation of art as the

desirable outcome of development (Parsons, 1987). Within aesthetic response models, students move from personalized, global experiences to depersonalized and analyzable understandings of art that communicate relevant, professional artworld artistic conventions (see Parsons, 1987; Wolf, 1988). Such a developmental scheme is biased toward modernist interpretations of artistic meaning and response—and against, for example, traditionalist, postmodern, and feminist interpretations. In other words, our models for appropriate or desirable art behaviors support the characteristics of school art learning and the larger mission of schools to educate individuals to live in a modern, industrialized society wherein expert-based, specialized knowledge is the accepted standard.

Alternative "Models"

For art criticism instruction, Congdon (1986) has provided rationales for giving educational validity to everyday/local art speech and informal analyses of art. Statements made by children, laypersons, and folk artists indicate that highly complex art concepts are often part of everyday/local speech. In recording spontaneous, everyday comments made in response to less traditional (not fine art) art forms, Congdon cites statements that are personal, related to concrete experience, communally understood, spontaneous, ostensibly unfocused (in the traditional sense of a developmental "focus"), and specific to the time and place in which the art form is discussed. Statements on how art functions predominate rather than statements on its perceptual qualities such as occurs in formalistic analysis. Everyday talk about art, however, has usually been dismissed as uneducated, inconsequential, or merely a step toward more appropriate speech (Hamblen, 1984).

In describing traditional studio-based art instruction, Efland (1976) has bluntly stated that such art "doesn't exist anywhere else except in schools" (p. 519). Likewise, dialogues recorded by Parsons (1987) and by Wolf (1988) that form the basis of their aesthetic stages are not the way people ordinarily talk about art. Such research-recorded talk occurs within controlled conditions and serves, perhaps, as exercises toward later, more broad-based and wide-ranging experiences and understandings of art.[6] One might also note that even art experts do not discuss art in this manner. Barrett (1989, 1990) has compared art criticism instructional formats in art education to the writings of professional art critics and found them to differ in a number of significant ways, e.g., art critics do not necessarily follow a predetermined structure, they tend to mix evaluation with description and interpretation, and they provide numerous contextually referenced statements that link the art object to personal life experiences, social interactions, and so on.

Art education research has tended to focus on how school learning is preferable, with nonschool art knowledge and responses considered "unschooled," i.e., criteria for success is set up in terms of school art learning (see Duncum, 1989). In a tautology of school learning related to school success, student assessments are based on how well students perform on tasks learned in school. Much school-based art is devised to wean children away from their everyday/local responses and behaviors. The culture of schools and the culture of children-as-students are characterized by individual cognition, an emphasis on abstract symbol manipulation, adherence to explicit rules, and context-free generalizations. These are the types of learning characteristics promoted and rewarded within modern industrialized societies that are based on hierarchical systems of organization. In contrast, learning in everyday/local contexts tends to be experiential, collaborative, situation-

specific, and involve the manipulation of concrete materials (Brown, 1989; Lave et al., 1984; Rogoff & Lave, 1984).

Studies of how adolescent males and females make moral decisions illustrate dramatic differences between modernist, school-based learning and everyday, locally- based responses. Gilligan (1982, 1990) found that when presented with a moral dilemma, males often apply abstract rules that have been previously learned whereas females tend to base their decisions on the specifics of the dilemma and on how their decisions will influence the relationships of the people involved. Gilligan indicated that gender was not considered when models of moral behavior were constructed (see Kohlberg, 1981) with the result that girls' decision making is often construed as illogical, deviant, or an indication of wrong thinking. Likewise, studies of minority students suggest that learning does not always "progress" according to prescribed models (Stokrocki, 1990). It appears that many students do not naturally or readily accommodate themselves to school-based forms and sequences of instruction.

Whereas art behaviors within schools and within developmental models fit and promote school culture, everyday/local art expressions do not. Duncum's (1989) study of children's images of violence indicated that teachers are often uncomfortable with such depictions and consider them to be pathological in nature. In nonschool contexts, children produce art that is personal, autobiographical, and fanciful— and often socially irreverent. Their art is not necessarily created to be publicly displayed or publicly critiqued—or analyzed by researchers. Although creativity and art have been equated in much of our thinking about art instruction, it is a polite rendition of creativity that is allowed in school art contexts. Controversial subject matter, experimental art, and innocuous, but messy, art do not fit the requirements of the school context. The art that occurs within developmental

models provides order and predictability. It is supportive of the value system and institutional character of the school context and, as much, supports and perpetuates school culture, values, attitudes, and behaviors.

Conclusion

In this study it is suggested that current developmental models have application primarily for the study of art within modernist frameworks of formalism, individual expression, fine art conventions, and traditional school settings. Developmental models have prespecified, preferred outcomes, with other outcomes considered deviations from the norm or a result of instructional failures. Developmental models tend to be selective and conform to and support the preferred behaviors and values of the society in which they originate and in which they are educationally applied.

With reference to the diversity of aesthetic experiences available to children outside the confines of formal/school art instruction, it is proposed that our developmental models present limited and limiting approaches to artistic expression and aesthetic response. As Gilligan (1982, 1990) has noted, many of our social and cognitive models have served as prescriptions for behaviors and thinking that have little to do with how many people understand and experience their personal and social worlds. Not surprisingly, many students are alienated from school activities and find few connections between academic learning and everyday experiences of personal and community life and of vocational requirements (Brown, 1989; Efland, 1976; Sternberg, 1982). Developmental models need to be considered as having applications for certain outcomes and for certain contexts rather than being used as standards for desired behaviors and for all contexts. From this

study, it would appear that modifications of and alternatives to current developmental models are appropriate. In particular, this researcher believes that we need to have an understanding of the social embeddedness of our models so that instructional possibilities can be developed that allow for greater experiential and cultural diversity in visual art expressions and responses.

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Footnotes

[1]In this paper, artistic <u>expression</u> refers to studio work or the making of art. Aesthetic <u>response</u> refers to verbal statements made during processes of art criticism and aesthetic inquiry.

[2]Feldman (1980) placed development or change <u>within</u> the discipline under study rather than within the individual. Therefore, how a discipline is defined, how it is studied, and what is studied will greatly influence what type of "disciplinary development" occurs. To date, the developmental character of art as a discipline is described as: the entry of unschooled or "naive" individuals who are expected to learn (develop toward) the endpoint of the knowledge possessed by the "sophisticated" expert of fine art culture (Feldman, 1980; Greer, 1984). The possibility that there are developmental (or nondevelopmental) journeys for other art forms or for other art cultures (e.g., within quilting or basket making circles) has not been broached in research on models.

[3]See Parisner's (n.d.) discussion of possibilities of multiterminus graphic development based on Wolfe and Perry's (1988) finding that children use different visual systems depending on context and purpose.

[4]Behaviors and lifeworld experiences that occur outside the formalized institution of school have been variously described as child culture, situational learning, situated knowledge, contextual knowledge, local knowledge, everyday cognition, community subcultures of learning, informal learning, and nonschool domains of knowledge (see Brown, 1989; Lave, Murtaugh, & de la Rocha, 1984; Rogoff, 1990; Rogoff & Lave, 1984).

[5]In addition to "school art styles" (Efland, 1976) and "children's art styles" (Wilson, 1985), we perhaps also need to identify and study "research art styles."

[6]Just as color wheels and value charts serve as exercises toward broader applications in the making of art, it is suggested in this paper that many art criticism and aesthetic inquiry activities might be thought of as <u>exercises toward other ends</u> rather than as being considered sufficient in-and-of themselves. However, developmental aesthetic response models based on research comprised of verbal exercises imply that these activities constitute *bona fide* art criticism and aesthetic

Linear Perspective and Montage: Two Dominating Paradigms in Art Education

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...every picture is an ideological work, independently of its quality. In this sense the world that it reveals is the world of an ideology, regardless of how realistic the painting may be for realism is only one of numerous visual ideologies.

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Introduction

As a former public high school art teacher, I was always puzzled by the common belief held by my students in what they referred to as the right way to represent images and ideas in their drawings and paintings. After years of producing art