FOSTERING NEW SPACES: CHALLENGING DOMINANT CONSTRUCTIONS OF POWER AND KNOWLEDGE IN EARLY CHILDHOOD ART EDUCATION

by

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DEDICATION

To my sweet son Iko. Every day you inspire and challenge me to live the truth of respecting, encouraging, and being joyful with young children.

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ABSTRACT

Within this dissertation I discuss my experience as both teacher and researcher in an early childhood art education research project with the goal to challenge traditional conceptions of power and knowledge in work with young children. Inspired initially by the idea of reactivating children's traditionally subjugated knowledges, in this research I aimed to foster a space where children and adults could ethically collaborate in art, making, and research. Over the course of 10 weeks, this art classroom was built as a space created *for* children, grounded in notions of change, movement, trust, and respect. The children were not only encouraged to create their own opportunities for making, and also to challenge what it means to exist and make in the early childhood art classroom by engaging in play, exploration, and collaborations with adults. In what follows, I share some of the children's words and work in order to make their experience in this classroom space visible. Both their artworks and experiences are analyzed through various theoretical lenses, including theories surrounding nomadism and movement, ethical encounters, collaborations between adults and children, and chaos theory in play. Ultimately, I argue that challenging conventional understandings of power, authority, and knowledge in the art classroom demands resistance from both adults and children. However, this resistance is coupled with a responsibility for educators to listen deeply to what their students both want and need, and to embrace curricular spaces that welcome the unknown. Throughout this dissertation it is my hope to present new and different ways of being and engaging with young children in spaces of art education.

CHAPTER ONE

RUNNING FROM VOLCANOES: THE HAPPENSTANCE DISCOVERY OF A NEW KIND OF CLASSROOM SPACE

Dylan[1] came excitedly over to me during our sketchbook (i.e., free drawing) time in art class and grabbed my hand, pulling me over to look at his newest drawing. It was of a volcano. He eagerly told me that the volcano was about to explode and that we had to get to the secret hideout. Together, we ran to the other side of the room while counting down from five and covering our heads with our hands. According to Dylan, we made it safely and survived the volcanic explosion.

The next week Dylan drew another volcano, which inspired more play and art making. He called me over, once more declaring that the volcano was about to explode and that we only had 40 seconds to get to the secret hideout. This time, when we reached that area of the classroom, we touched our hands to the wall. Dylan traced his own hand and then mine with his finger, making an electronic buzzing sound and stating, "complete" after each tracing. Our hands were obviously being scanned for admittance. After we survived the volcanic explosion, Dylan decided he was going to make a flag for the secret hideout. He asked me what my favorite color was (I replied that it was purple), and he proceeded to color one side of a small rectangular piece of paper purple and the other side green (his favorite color). He asked me to put the flag on the wall above our hideout. I obliged and reached up as high as I could to pin the flag to the wall. He then informed me that he was going to draw our secret hideout and asked me if I

[1] All children’s names within this research have been changed.

> would like my own room. I replied, "yes, I would love my own room." He began his drawing using a purple marker, describing the various elements of our tall, tower-like, secret hideout as he drew. He asked me if I would like things in my room to help me get pretty, and again, I answered that I would. He proceeded to draw makeup in my room.
>
> Two weeks later Dylan drew a third volcano in his sketchbook. This time, however, he had discovered a new secret hideout, located on a different wall in the classroom that would protect us from the impending exploding volcano. He called me over, and we engaged in our shared play activity once more, running over to the new secret hideout to survive the explosion. Dylan proceeded to make another flag for the new hideout. After I hung this flag on the wall just as I had the first, Dylan asked me if I would like to see my room. I said yes, and he took my hand and walked me in circles on the carpet. He stopped abruptly and told me that we had arrived. I asked him what was in my room, and he replied that my room had makeup and anything else I needed to be pretty. Then we went to his room. Again, we walked around in circles, and—perhaps understanding my confusion about this circular walk—he informed me that his room was very high. It became clear to me at that point that we were walking up a circular staircase to get to his room. Once we arrived, he told me that his room had toys and anything else he needed. I asked him what kind of toys, and he replied that his room was full of robots and any other toys he might need. (Cinquemani, 2014a, n.p.)

The encounters with Dylan described here continue to be some of the most profound in my career working with young children. It was these moments that formed

the basis for my extended interest in how relationships between teachers and students, between adults and children, could be transformed and redefined. Additionally, they challenged me to consider what it means to teach and learn in the art classroom, and how this space can be reconsidered to account for new kinds of relationships. These moments with Dylan laid the groundwork for this research and the ideas and theories I share within this dissertation.

Dylan's volcanoes were drawn during the fall of 2012. At this time I had been working for a few months as the elementary art educator at a small charter school in southern Arizona. Although I already had many experiences teaching art to young children in a variety of settings, I had never been the primary art educator within the context of a traditional school. Concurrently, I was in my second semester of my PhD coursework in Art and Visual Culture Education, having recently earned my MA in the same program. As such, I approached my new position as "art teacher" with my own newly formed ideals about what education for young children should look like, ideals that at this point were grounded in theory rather than practice.

Many of these ideas were inspired by my immersion in reading about "children's art" and specifically philosophies surrounding children's voluntary artmaking experiences. Lark-Horovitz, Lewis and Luca (1973) understand children's voluntary art as art produced by children where adults provide media and materials, but no suggestions regarding content. While there is research that discusses the value that voluntary artmaking offers the classroom space, the educator, and the child her/himself (Ivashkevich, 2006; Sunday, 2012; Thompson, 1995, 2003, 2006, 2009), these kinds of opportunities are rare in traditional school art classrooms where teachers often carefully

select both content and materials. In opposition to these customary school art practices, I began my classroom teaching experience with a fierce ideal that the children with whom I would work would be given the time and space to explore their own interests. During the yearlong period when I taught at this school, the children were provided with such opportunities, primarily through the use of voluntary sketchbook drawing time. In addition to the use of sketchbooks, I also offered my students other times to make choices within the classroom while also providing them with more structured and teacher-initiated art projects. Their time in the art room was shared between voluntary and pre-planned art experiences.

The facilitation of children's voluntary artmaking, however, brought along its own set of unique challenges. The art that the children created and the kinds of experiences that they engaged in during these times often challenged the kinds of encounters which adults sanction and are comfortable witnessing within school (such as risky play behaviors and violent images; Cinquemani, 2014b). Thinking and writing about my own experiences as teacher and researcher within these moments provided me the space to think about how power/knowledge/authority affects children's art and artmaking experiences. By providing my students with opportunities to engage in artmaking practices guided by their own interests and offering them chances to produce voluntary images, I was beginning to challenge the normal hierarchical structure of the teacher/student relationship. There was a transfer of power from my hands into theirs. However, it has been my experience that many teachers of young children are reluctant to give up their own power as adults. Perhaps they fear what would happen during this shift, or perhaps they simply assume it is their job to normalize and rationalize young children

(Ivashkevich, 2012; Tarr, 2003) and by relinquishing a portion of their power, their task of “educating” would fall short.

Posing Questions: A Desire for Newness

My research derives from these moments of contemplation and inquiry I encountered as an elementary classroom teacher and the experiences with Dylan described earlier, and is specifically related to the ideas of how power and authority function within the early childhood art education (ECAE) classroom. During this study I aim to think more deeply about how I can foster the kinds of experiences I had with Dylan. Together he and I created a new artistic space that was grounded in play and the rejection of traditional teacher/student roles (Cinquemani, 2014a). I want to figure out how I can facilitate these same kinds of experiences with other children I work with. Thus, I have developed the following question to guide this inquiry: What could teaching and learning look like in ECAE when dominant constructions of knowledge, power, and authority are challenged? Additionally, through this experience, I hope to also foster an understanding of the following supporting questions:

- In what ways can we, as art educators, challenge the traditional power/knowledge relationship that normally exists within classroom spaces?
- What would this look like within early childhood art education?
- How might these challenges affect the art that the children make and the behaviors that they exhibit within this space?

In order to effectively address these questions, for this research I both taught and researched with a small group of preschool and kindergarten aged children in an art classroom. This classroom was a shared space where the children and I engaged together

with artmaking materials and theories. It embodied both structured and unstructured (teacher-led and student-led) curricula. It embraced pedagogies based on challenging traditional relationships between teachers and students as well as the power of both the artmaking space and materials. This class was not structured on a specific plan or pathway of learning, but on a sense of multiple possibilities of learning and engaging with ideas, artworks, and materials (Wein, 2008).

Interpreting the Traditional

Through this kind of teaching practice, I aimed to construct a new kind of classroom space that challenged many customary ideas about making and learning through art and relationships between children and adults in schools, specifically in the context of early childhood art education. Within this dissertation, many of these customary ideas are framed under the idea of being "traditional." I argue that I aim to reject traditional ideas about art education and early childhood art education, about relationships between teachers and students, relationships between adults and children, and art materials and usages. The term appears often, and generally is used as a way to frame a practice or way of being that is perhaps outdated or grounded in a historical understanding that perhaps is no longer relevant. The "traditional" is often understood as a mainstream construction – one that I aim to dismantle. Through a broad and generalized perspective, I understand traditional spaces of learning to be non-collaborative. They are grounded in an appreciation of hierarchy and power rather than democracy. They are spaces of control, where the students/children and their ideas are often restricted in favor of order and teacher knowledge. They are spaces grounded in sameness, where students' work resembles each others', often inspired by the teacher's ideas rather than the

students'. These traditional understandings and interpretations are woven in and out of the literature and narratives that follow within this dissertation.

Challenging Single Stories: Deconstructing and Reconceptualizing

"The single story creates stereotypes, and the problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue, but that they are incomplete. They make one story become the only story" (Adichie, 2009, n.p.).

Within this research, it is my goal to challenge long held stories (or traditional ideas) that permeate the fields of both art and early childhood education. These stories exist about teachers and students, adults and children, education and classrooms. Most often, they suggest what ideal spaces of education should look like and how people should interact within those spaces. They form kinds of best practices, or as Adichie (2009) notes, single stories. Whatever name they go by (story, practice, myth), subscribing wholeheartedly to these approaches is dangerous because they contribute to a close-minded perspective about education, and specific to this discussion, about early childhood art education. One way of doing things becomes the best way, and then the only way.

Educators taking a postmodern and reconceptualist perspective on early childhood education begin to question these single stories, and pose inquiries as to whose truths are being acted upon, whose truths are being hidden, and how these truths emerged. Through dialoguing about these issues, early childhood reconceptualists "have expanded the possible discourses through which early childhood educators can act" (MacNaughton, 2005, p. 45). This perspective offers the chance to move beyond these kinds of grand narratives because they offer a multitude of realities, multiple ways of knowing and being

(Cannella, 2005; Dahlberg, Moss, & Pence, 1999). Through critical inquiry, these truths are renovated and transformed into deeper and more complex perspectives about the nature of teaching and working with young people (Alloway, 1997). However, before these singular ideas can be transformed or reconceptualized, they need to be first recognized, and then reexamined in order to understand where and why they originated. It is only then that we can begin the challenging work of beginning to develop more meaningful and respectful ways of being with children in educational settings.

Following this perspective, this research is grounded in deconstructing and rebuilding new ideas about early childhood art education. To deconstruct is to displace meaning from "the taken-for-granted and dominant meanings, in order to *re*construct something new" (Lenz Taguchi, 2007, p. 276, original emphasis). Deconstruction serves as a way to help avoid dominant perspectives from becoming "normalizing and oppressive" (p. 276). Throughout this text, I embrace the act of deconstruction in order to explore the grounding for my choices in curriculum, pedagogy, and theory; it is necessary to know and understand what you aim to challenge before you can do so. Thus, deconstruction is understood as a "process of *re*doing by *un*doing, *re*formulating by *un*formulating, and *re*theroizing by *un*theorizing" (p. 276, original emphasis).

In both my actions with the children in the classroom and my writing here, I aim to break down and reject traditional ideas (stories, practices, myths) about what it means to teach and learn in an early childhood art education class, grounding my inquiry broadly within the framework of existing early childhood reconceptualist and deconstructivist theories. By rejecting these ideas, I engage in acts of disruption, "challenging taken-for-granted notions, values, practices, and pedagogy 'as usual'" (Lenz

Taguchi, 2007, p. 284). Once these ideas are actively resisted, I can begin to rethink, to welcome new ideas and approaches. This "thinking otherwise" also has the strong potential to displace traditional "power-productions" and challenges us to reconsider what we know and value about children and education (p. 285).

Lenz Taguchi (2007) describes engaging in "multiple readings" as a way to embrace deconstructive acts. She argues,

> We do multiple readings, or repeated analysis, to understand the same situation in many ways. This helps us to make situated ethical choices and what we will do next to challenge the children and students to be curiously engaged in their learning process. The deconstructive process can thus be understood as a simultaneous move of tracing and troubling meaning, and an ethical affirmation of renegotiated meanings and values. (p. 287)

Through this process, we are able to embrace the notion that there are multiples ways to act, be, and understand. This idea rests at the core of my research, in action and writing. The curricular, pedagogical, and methodological choices I engage in within this study are grounded in the idea that there are many ways to be teacher/student, adult/child, researcher/researched. Additionally, through the act of data interpretation and writing itself, I embrace the notion of multiple readings. I let ideas and theories unfold, interpreting them from various perspectives rather than a single vision or theoretical lens. I look at my own actions as teacher, the children's experiences as students, their artwork, and our encounters together in various contexts, situating them in history and exploring them through a variety of theories as means to deconstruct and reconceptualize what it means to teach, learn, and make.

Embracing New Pedagogies: Thinking About Relationships and Space

My own role as educator grounds this research in a substantial way. By embracing a position where I am both researcher and teacher, I was able to create the kind of early childhood art classroom that I believe can challenge these traditional stories, not just research spaces where these kinds of ideas may or may not be challenged. In considering what this space could look like, I have reflected deeply on the nature of early childhood art education, and what kinds of practices I really want to develop and practices I want to reject. As Dahlberg et al. (1999) describe, I want to "open up a new space for the reinterpretation and reconstruction not only of the child…but also of the pedagogue and of the early childhood institution" (p. 140). As such, it has become apparent to me that I desire to change the relationships between teachers and children in the art classroom, and the experiences within the artmaking space itself. These two big ideas relate to both curriculum and pedagogy while also addressing the child, pedagogue, and institution, as quoted above.

Dialogic Pedagogies

My interest in rethinking the relationship between children and adults within the art classroom space is based on a rejection of the teacher as an all-knowing figure who passes on his or her knowledge to students. Rather, I am interested in exploring what this relationship could look like if it were based on dialogue, fostering a co-construction of knowledge. This is one of the many pedagogical philosophies that grounds the work of the early childhood educators in Reggio Emilia, Italy. The pre-primary schools in Reggio Emilia have become somewhat of a phenomenon in the United States over the past 15 to 20 years. Many early childhood educators in the U.S. and elsewhere have attempted to

incorporate educational theories embraced in Reggio into their own classrooms. There is a great deal of literature already published where researchers discuss the philosophies embodied by educators in Reggio, as well was what these philosophies look like in the U.S. ,so I do not take time or space to detail this here (among many other works, please see Edwards, Gandini, & Forman, 1998; Fraser, 2012; Gandini, Hill, Caldwell, & Schwall, 2005; New & Kantor, 2013; Rinaldi, 2006; Vecchi, 2010; Wein, 2008). However, as pertinent to this discussion, the practices that guide educators in Reggio are based on "wondering with children about what they see, think, and feel, and how they make sense of experiences" (Gandini et al., 2005, p. 2). This is accomplished by working with children as collaborators and partners in exploration. Teachers act as co-constructors, "provocateur[s] who can support and help the children in building their own knowledge" (Fraser, 2012, p. 61). Through a larger lens,

> These schools [in Reggio Emilia] do not dismiss technical practices, nor do they ignore matters of organisation [*sic*] and structure. But they put them in their place: as means to support an educational project that understands the school as first and foremost a public space and a site for ethical and political practice – a place of encounter and connection, interaction and dialogue amongst citizens, younger and older, living together in a community. (Dahlberg & Moss, 2006, p. 2)

As described in the quote above, dialogue is an idea that runs throughout the work in Reggio Emilia, and subsequently in other educational philosophies inspired by Reggio. Within this research, I drew from these philosophies to work towards a dialogic pedagogy. By embracing dialogue, conceptualized by Rinaldi (2006) as "having a capacity for transformation" (p. 184), it was my aim to create a space where children and adults work

together to decide how and what they should (or could!) create. It is a rejection of knowing in a sense, because, as Rinaldi notes, the teacher is not able to control the final result. There "is a process of transformation" that occurs through dialogue – it is not simply an exchange of information (p. 184). Moss elaborates further to add that dialogue is actually the ability to see and understand things in new or different ways (as cited in Rinaldi, 2006). Thus, as a kind of pedagogy, dialogue "offers the possibility of welcoming contrasts, differences and different perspectives" (Rinaldi, 2006, p. 185).

The nature of dialogue in Reggio inspired other early childhood education philosophies as well, including the "dialogue pedagogy" embraced in Sweden in the 1970s. Dahlberg, Moss, & Pence (1999) indicate that this approach was explored as a way to "transgress former early childhood traditions" in the country that were grounded in outdated images of how young children should learn as well as "unequal distribution[s] of power between the child and the adult" (p. 131). This kind of pedagogy "starts from the idea that there should be a continuous dialogue between the child and the adult, on both an inner and outer level, which implies a reciprocal giving and taking of emotions, experiences and knowledge" (Child Care Commission report, 1972, as cited in Dahlberg et al., 1999, p. 132).

In this research, I embraced a dialogic pedagogical approach first and foremost by rejecting preconceived notions about what the children should make or how they should use the art materials offered; there were no singular ideas about what it means to make or explore. In this way, I was unable to control what happens. The children transformed materials in ways that were unexpected, which in turn affected how we interacted with each other. Whether we were discussing an artist, the children's own work, or my ideas

about how a given material could be used, a back and forth dialogue was adopted. At certain moments I had ideas that I suggested to the children, and sometimes they rejected these ideas while at others they embraced them. At other moments the children brought their own artistic thoughts and theories into play. Most often I built upon these ideas, extending their interests through additional materials or opportunities. Yet sometimes I let them play their ideas out by themselves, offering help when explicitly asked but more so simply watching them live out their own creative thoughts.

Intra-Active Pedagogies

Within this research, I was also interested in exploring ideas about how the children and I could relate not only to each other, but also to the space that we inhabited together. Classrooms are immersive spaces, entered into and inhabited by children and adults, and are designed with specific purposes and ideas in mind (O'Donoghue, 2010). The design, layout, and objects placed within the classroom, in essence, "determine in advance the types of engagement students will have" (O'Donoghue, 2010, p. 402). Both space and objects have communicative potential; they invite interactions and engagements from those who use them.

In Reggio Emilia, the designs of classrooms as well as the objects placed within them are conscious and careful choices. The space itself is conceptualized as the "third teacher" (Filippini, as cited in New & Kantor, 2013, p. 335). Additionally, the choices of materials and the attractive ways in which they are arranged for children create invitation for exploration (Gandini, 1998).

> All the things that surround the people in the school and that they use – the objects, the materials, and the structures – are seen not as passive elements but on

> the contrary as elements that condition and are conditioned by the actions of children and adults who are active in it. (Gandini, 1998, p. 177)

The classroom itself has the ability to educate – to communicate possibilities, ideas, and messages to the children (New & Kantor, 2013). This is especially meaningful because the adults and educators are seen as playing a valuable role in the conditioning of the space and objects within it.

When we approach education from the perspective that both people and space have the capacity to teach, the power that space and materials hold becomes more meaningful. Building on the work happening in both Reggio Emilia and Sweden described above, this idea is further conceptualized by Lenz Taguchi (2010) as a kind of intra-active pedagogy. Intra-activity focuses on the relationships between "all living organisms and the material environment: things and artefacts, spaces and places that we occupy and use in our daily practices…hence, this pedagogy is inclusive of the material as a strong performative agent in learning" (p. 10). Classrooms are full of objects that have the ability to affect how we teach and learn: furniture, materials, and classroom decoration all communicate ideas and values to children, their families, teachers, and our community. These objects "have force and power to transform our thinking and being in a particular space" (p. 4).

This power of space and materials, understood here as an intra-active pedagogy, guided my teaching practice within this research. It was not enough that my relationship with the children challenged traditional frameworks, for I argue that the space must challenge these frameworks as well. The classroom I created and the materials offered within it acted as "performative agents" that are understood as a part of a "production of

power and change in an intertwined relationship of intra-activity with other matter or humans" (Lenz Taguchi, 2010, p. 4). Understood through this lens, how the classroom space is arranged (including furniture and its placement) and what kinds materials are offered (including how they are presented) relate to issues of power and control.

Within this study, these choices were carefully considered and the space was curated to reflect the power of the children's interaction with and in it. As Lenz Taguchi (2010) notes, "everything around us affects everything else….all matter and organisms have agency and affect each other in a continuous flow of force and intensities that work in both predictable and sometimes in totally unpredictable ways (Grosz, 2005, 2008)" (p. 15). By thinking consciously about the nature of an intra-active pedagogy, I was able to not only create a space itself that challenges ideas about power and knowledge, but I was also able to challenge the children to rethink what materials are able to do and how they could use them to make in ways that are truly their own. In this way, artmaking and learning becomes "an intra-active event of relation with animate and inanimate material and discursive forces" (Rotas, 2016, p. 4).

What Comes Next: A Structural Overview

Within this chapter, I have explored the ideas and experiences that led me to this research. I have shared the questions that ground my inquiry, as well as some of the larger philosophical ideas embodied in both my research and my writing. Additionally, I have grounded my pedagogical practice through the lenses of both dialogic and intra-active approaches. In Chapter Two I explore literature grounding this study, specifically in regards to ideas about power, knowledge, and truth in educational spaces. Methodological grounding for this research is presented in Chapter Three. I discuss

details about the development and implementation of the art class itself, as well as information about the research methods that ground this inquiry. Within Chapters Four, Five, and Six I present and analyze data. In each chapter, data is explored through the deconstruction of applicable literature (placing larger ideas in historical context) and then reconceptaulized through varying theoretical lenses. Specifically, in Chapter Four I address ideas about fluidity and ambiguity in the art classroom, thinking about student choice and freedom through nomadic theories. Child led collaborations within the art classroom are explored in Chapter Five; these collaborations are framed as moments of ethical encounters. Children's play and play art are considered in Chapter Six, specifically through the lenses of playwork and chaos theory. Finally, in Chapter Seven I offer a conclusion of sorts for this study. I return to my initial research questions, exploring larger implications of this inquiry as well as ideas for further study.

CHAPTER TWO

REFLECTIONS ON POWER, KNOWLEDGE AND TRUTH: CONSTRUCTING ALTERNATIVE EDUCATIONAL SPACES

The classroom can never truly be a neutral space. At any moment in time, there are political, social, and economic factors at play that have an effect on both teachers' and students' experiences within educational spaces. However, within these spaces, both teachers and students have some elements of control over the ways in which they exist and function; we are always making choices. We can choose to conform, to act in the ways that society has defined for us, as teacher or student, or we can reject these traditional subject positions and exist as something "other-than" (Wilson, 2005). This research study is situated within these "other-than" spaces, those moments when both teachers and students can envision themselves in new and different ways.

In order to fully explore what embodying these positions might look like, it is important to understand how traditional educational spaces and positionalities function in relation to issues of both power and knowledge. It is within this context that this chapter is situated. In what follows, I present various theoretical frameworks for exploring issues of power and knowledge related to education. First I explore Foucault's (1980) ideas about various types of knowledges and how they function to create regimes of truth that have the potential to perpetuate problematic power structures. Next I address various pedagogical practices that challenge the traditional roles of both teacher and student, looking to both critical and feminist pedagogies. Then I introduce alternative models of curriculum that help us to rethink who controls both knowledge and learning in the classroom, looking specifically at emergent curriculum practices and student-directed

learning in art education. Afterwards, I offer a variety of lenses through which children and childhood are conceptualized (including the child as innocent, tabula rasa, developing, and post-modern) and explore how these various images affect both classrooms and teacher/student relationships within those classrooms. Finally, I introduce various theories surrounding the idea of a third space as a new pedagogical site, where power is negotiated and perhaps shared amongst all present. It is within this vision of art education in a third space that this research study is situated.

Relationships Between Power and Knowledge

There is no way to separate what and how we teach in a classroom from issues of politics, power, and knowledge. MacNaughton (2005) explains,

> The politics of our time and place influence which stories (of individuals and societies) are told, when and by whom, which is why some stories are heard more often and given greater status than others. Consequently, identifying the stories (of individuals or societies) that are silenced or marginalized and then sharing them is a political act. (p. 4)

However, through the process of critical reflection we, as educators, can explore and question how power operates between and within classroom spaces and relationships. Before we can challenge the power structures that exist, we need to become aware of the ideologies that govern such spaces. Conceptualized through the lens of Foucault and early childhood post-structuralist thinkers, in the following sections I explore the ways in which knowledge has been compartmentalized within education and valued based on who it originates with or who has the "power" to make it become a truth.

Identifying Types Of Knowledge

The idea of knowledge is directly related to conceptions of power; power determines both knowledge and truth (Foucault, 1980). As such, the knowledge of teachers and of students can be understood through two different perspectives: that of erudite and subjugated knowledges. In the context of a traditional classroom, it is the teacher who holds both power (over both the classroom and the behavior of the students within it) as well as the knowledge that counts. Foucault (1980) would refer to this type of knowledge as erudite; it is the commonly accepted and formulated knowledge of the teacher. It is this type knowledge that is traditionally passed on to the students. However, Foucault also presents an alternate type of knowledge, the subjugated. He describes subjugated knowledge as "a whole set of knowledges that have been disqualified as inadequate…naïve knowledges, located low down on the hierarchy, beneath the required level of cognition or scientificity" (p. 82). This is the knowledge that young children possess, and that I hope to explore.

Foucault (1980) argues that when subjugated or disqualified knowledges merge with erudite knowledge, a genealogy is formed. This genealogy can be understood as embodying tactics in which the disqualified knowledges are brought to light. In this way, when merged with erudite knowledges, these disqualified knowledges are emancipated. Thus, the genealogy is what reactivates children's traditionally subjugated knowledges. It "entertain[s] the claims to attention of local, discontinuous, disqualified, illegitimate knowledges against the claims of a unitary body of theory" (p. 83), or the single, dominant, erudite knowledge. By altering the traditional power structures that typically exist in early childhood classrooms, it is my aim to create a space in which this kind of

genealogy can occur. It is not my aim to discount the knowledge that I hold, but to create a shared site in which both forms of knowledge can interact with each other, and form a discourse together.

This genealogy of knowledge that I hope to create certainly does not exist outside the realm of power. According to Foucault (1980) power is best understood as something that is exercised and exists in action; it is not something given, exchanged, or recovered (p. 89). It is something that circulates and functions in the form of a chain; it is never simply localized in one person or group's hands. People are always both undergoing and exercising power (p. 98). Foucault argues that it is mechanisms of power (e.g.: discipline and surveillance) that create apparatuses of knowledge. Therefore, power formulates knowledge.

Rejecting Regimes Of Truth

Additionally, Foucault (1980) argues that what a society regards as truth is also produced through power (p. 93). He states that, "'truth' is linked in a circular relation with systems of power which produce and sustain it, and to effects of power which it induces and which extend it." Termed a "regime' of truth" (p. 133), this concept can be understood as those ideas in any given society that are generally accepted as true, developed in part from those who are charged with (or have taken) powerful positions. Foucault notes,

> Each society has its regime of truth, its "general politics" of truth: that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true; the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements, the means by which each is sanctioned; the techniques and procedures accorded value in the

acquisition of truth; the status of those who are changed with saying what counts as true. (p. 131)

These discourses ground our beliefs and actions, while at the same time reject alternative ways of knowing and being in the world (Dahlberg, Moss, & Pence, 1999). This rejection occurs because of our desire to have a truth, and practice that truth in our lives; this hinders both learning and change (Foucault, 1980; MacNaughton, 2003). We are reluctant to live outside of our comforting truths, because they have been enacted upon us; they have been sanctioned institutionally. MacNaughton (2005) notes that truths that have been approved by those in positions of power create an "authoritative consensus about how to 'be' [so] that it is difficult to imagine how to think, act, and feel in any other way…the officially sanctioned 'truths' discipline and regulate us, i.e. they govern us" (p. 32). In thinking about early childhood, Cannella (2005) argues that what we think we know about children, childhood, education, or families is quite dependent on the truths created by those who have been offered (or who have taken) the "right" to speak these truths.

Foucault's (1980) goal was not to necessarily separate truth from each system of power, but to detach "the power of truth from the forms of hegemony, social, economic and cultural, within which it operates at the present time" (p. 133). This, according to Foucault, creates a new politics of truth. I aim to position this research in the creation of a genealogical space that alters the traditional relationship between power and knowledge and challenges the regimes of truth that exist in the spaces of early childhood art education.

Exploring Power Relationships Between Teachers and Students

As previously stated, it is the goal of this research study to create an educational space where both erudite and subjugated knowledges are merged together as one. This is most certainly a lofty goal, and not one simply achieved. Fostering meaningful relationships between teachers and students is something that takes time and especially thoughtful interactions. While there is no single set of prescribed practices for rejecting traditional hierarchical relationships in education, there are various pedagogical practices that do aim to challenge them.

Thoughts on the Critical Teacher

From a critical pedagogical perspective, the purpose of schooling is to reconceptualize, among other things, "the ways that power operates to create purposes for schooling that are not necessarily in the best interests of the children that attend them" (Kincheloe, 2008, p. 6). Kincheloe argues that students should be respected, inspired, and viewed as experts within those areas that particularly interest them.

From this perspective, at its core, education is a political activity, and it can never be neutral (Kincheloe, 2008). There are always existing power hierarchies, but through critical pedagogy educators can help to "mitigate the effects of power on their students" (p. 9). This occurs not through a relinquishing of the teacher's authority but through the acceptance of students' own knowledge as forming a part of the curriculum. Kincheloe (2008) states,

> Critical teachers…[help] students recall what they already know. Such teachers take student knowledge seriously and examine it as a part of the

> curriculum….knowing that they possess valuable knowledge, such students begin to realize that they are capable of learning much more. (p. 15)

In this way teachers relinquish not their authority within the classroom, but their authority as truth providers. This act rejects the notion that educators hold all the power, authority, and knowledge. In this form of teacher authority, students gain freedom; "they gain the ability to become self directed human beings capable of producing their own knowledge" (p. 17).

To become this kind of critical teacher, MacNaughton (2005) argues that one must also engage in critical reflection. Citing the ideas of McLaren (1993) she defines critical reflection as "the process of questioning how power operates in the process of teaching and learning and then using that knowledge to transform oppressive or inequitable teaching and learning processes" (as cited in MacNaughton, 2005, p. 7). These actions of being a critical teacher and engaging in critical reflection help to bring the "inequalities and oppressive power relations" that exist within the spaces of education to the surface, and to also reject them in favor of more democratic and rights-based educational experiences for young children.

Perspectives From Feminist Pedagogy

Notions of reforming the relationship between teacher and student have been quite visible within feminist pedagogy for many years. While most often grounded in women's issues specifically, at its core feminist pedagogy is concerned with education as a liberatory act. Therefore it is more than simply a concern about gender equity within classroom spaces, but also aims for a "transformation of teaching and learning to develop empowerment, community, and leadership for all participants, using democratic

processes where learning grows from student interests and experiences, [and] power is shared" (Garber, Sandell, Stankiewicz, & Risner, 2007, p. 367).

While it is clear that most who practice feminist pedagogy would argue that their interests are grounded in challenging what Sandell (1991) refers to as the "patriarchal aspects of the school, its curriculum, and methods, [and] identifying how the hidden curriculum worked against women's success" (p. 179), my interests in feminist pedagogy are a bit broader. More than looking at how a traditional education environment has and continues to silence women's voices, I am concerned with the silencing of student voices, and those of children in particular. Yet this wider view of liberatory education is not outside the scope of feminist pedagogy, which can also be understood as a perspective that explores "an interactive and democratic approach to knowledge and education" (Maher, 1985, p. 46). Additionally, Garber at al. (2007) add the position that gender equity is not necessarily only about women's equality, arguing that "it involves content and practices that specifically challenge hegemony, stereotyping, and oppression" (p. 373). Embracing such an approach has two direct outcomes that are relevant to this study in particular: the classroom environment and the relationships built.

Classroom environment. At its core, scholars and practitioners of feminist pedagogy challenge the historical conception of both teaching and the classroom environment. In the traditional teaching environment, content is often delivered in a top down and passive approach, encouraging students to read, listen, memorize, and regurgitate information (Larson, 2006). From a feminist pedagogical perspective, teachers should reject these traditional conceptions and attempt to counteract them.

In order to do this, rather than embracing a hierarchical educational approach, such classrooms embrace a “collaborative, cooperative, and interactive” pedagogy (Maher, 1985, p. 30), based on an alternative instructional model (Sandell, 1991). Through this vision, students are actively involved in the construction of their own education (Maher, 1985). Similar to the perspective of critical pedagogy explored above, a feminist classroom is structured with the hope of minimizing all social hierarchies, and especially those amongst teacher and student (Larson, 2006). However, this differs slightly from the critical pedagogical perspective in that it acknowledges the oppression of the student (consider women or young children) inherent in the education system, with curriculum and teaching aimed to help these students build on their own intellectual and personal experiences to construct a “satisfying version of the subject, one that they can use in their own lives” (Maher, 1985, p. 30). While this model does in fact embrace student knowledge as legitimate and important, it also embraces the notion that certain students’ experiences are more often devalued in the classroom than others (Maher, 1985). This perspective is especially meaningful when considering early childhood education; while embracing and elevating student voice has become a topic of conversation in education, the voices and experiences of our youngest citizens are often glossed over.

Within this type of classroom, the role of the teacher and his/her perspective is a partial one, “the teacher is a major contributor, a creator of structure and a delineator of issues, but not the sole authority” (Maher, 1985, p. 30). Garber et al. (2007) describe this as a balancing act of power and authority, with the teacher embracing a leadership style that accentuates collaboration and develops a sharing of power. Notions of collaboration

and power sharing help to construct a vision of a classroom that is inherently co-constructed and as such, always changing and never stable. If a teacher embraces student inquiry, interests, and experiences, the classroom would always be in "constant flux" (Larson, 2006, p. 143).

Relationships built. A classroom built on the co-construction of knowledge and a sense of shared power ultimately fosters a more meaningful relationship between teachers and students. Gaudelius suggests that, at its core, feminist teaching is about building relationships – with content/material and also amongst each other in the classroom (as cited in Garber et al., 2007). This results in a type of empowering pedagogy, where the traditional power of the teacher as dominant can be reinterpreted as a collective power of creative energy (Shrewsbury, 1993/1997). Shrewsbury (1993/1997) explores this concept of power as creative energy more fully as she challenges the idea of "power" as only relating to domination.

> By focusing on empowerment, feminist pedagogy embodies a concept of power as energy, capacity, and potential rather than as domination. This is an image of power as the glue holding a community together….under conceptions of power as capability, the goal is to increase the power of all actors, not to limit the power of some. (Shrewsbury, 1993/1997, p. 168)

She goes on to suggest that, in order for power to be seen as a type of creative community energy, methods need to be enacted in the classroom to reject traditional unequal power relationships. When practiced, these types of empowering strategies (such as ones described above) encourage students to find their own voices.

While this notion of an empowering pedagogy is significant in mitigating negative power relationships between teachers and students, it is well understood that the power differential between adults and children is always present. Green (2011) argues that feminist teachers model democratic relationships with their students by acknowledging these power differentials. When working with young children, feminist teachers nurture relationships with them "that are neither intimidating nor domineering" (p. 202). Rather, they aim to relate to children,

> In ways that are not based on the (ab)use of their authority and power as adults…[and strive] for relationships based on respect, responsibility, and accountability, while acknowledging that the relationship can never be truly egalitarian. (p. 202)

Through an empowerment model, this practice rejects simply dictating to children what they must think or know, and engaging in conversations with children about their thoughts and ideas. Green posits that this type of relationship (whether between teacher and student, or mother and child) helps to communicate to children that their feelings and ideas are important. In a classroom, this practice shows students that what they know and think is significant, and not just for them but also for the collective whole. Green adds, "giving a voice to children who are often silenced helps them to learn to be empowered people who can identify and articulate their values and needs" (p. 203).

Each of the ideas explored above suggests new ways that teachers and students (adults and children) can be with each other or co-exist in classroom spaces (Sandell, 1991; Shrewsbury, 1993/1997). This new way of being together, understood as existing within a liberatory classroom environment, is built upon the experiences of the students,

but also on the contributions from the teacher (Sandell, 1991). This perspective embraces new roles for both teachers and students, which, according to Sandell, allows for new types of activities and knowledges to emerge. Through this new relationship, “teachers and students should become empowered through their own development of expertise rather than reliance on information of (outside) authorities” (Sandell, 1991, p. 182). Offering the analogy of a tapestry to explore the co-construction of knowledge in this type of classroom space, Maher (1987) notes that, “given perspectives and experiences are seen as equally valid, partial, and subject to elucidation by comparison with each other” (as cited in Sandell, 1991, p. 182). Sandell goes on to argue that in this new relationship, teachers can also be positioned as learners, learning with, from, and alongside the children with whom they work.

Alternative Curriculum Models

The idea that teachers can exist in classroom spaces as learners themselves and give up elements of control is not necessarily a novel idea. In both early childhood and art education there are established curricular practices that are grounded in these ideas. Within both fields, these approaches position children as powerful in that they have control over what they explore within the classroom.

Emergent Curriculum

An emergent curriculum exists in the middle of the curriculum spectrum, a kind of “planful interaction” with the children with whom a teacher works (Jones, 1977, p. 4). It stands in contrast to a traditional prescribed or pre-planned curriculum that is designed in advance and enacted perhaps upon children rather than with them. An emergent curriculum is, inherently, a curriculum that is grounded in children’s own interests and

motivations. Thus, the content is most often drawn directly from the children themselves. The role of the teacher is to observe the child's interests, provide choices and experiences which enable the child to explore these ideas through materials and play, and interact with the child throughout this process, serving as a resource and reinforcer to extend the children's discoveries and choices (Jones, 1977).

Dewey's 1938 work *Experience and Education* lays the groundwork for many of the central tenets of an emergent curriculum. Dewey believed that education should emerge from children's own interests, rather than simply being imposed by adults/teachers (Follari, 2011). According to Dewey, in this type of educational environment, the role of the teacher is to discover what their students are interested in, then create and organize classroom experiences based on these curiosities (Follari, 2011). To foster these experiences and provide meaningful and educative spaces, the teacher herself draws not only on the interests of her students, but also her own experiences with similar ideas (Dewey, 1938).

Understood through this lens, emergent curriculum becomes a kind of "adult play" which only begins when teachers meet their students (Jones & Nimmo, 1994, p. 3). Rather than a traditional form of lesson planning, where one maps out goals, objectives, and activities beforehand, an emergent curriculum is not predictable. It is a story that unfolds over time, one that can never be truly understood at the beginning but only at the end (Jones & Nimmo, 1994). According to Jones and Nimmo, an emergent curriculum can also be understood as a form of collaborative thinking, in that the idea can stem from many possible sources. Ideas can come from the children, the teacher's interests/ideas, or even things in or around the physical environment. Additionally, sources for an emergent

curriculum can come simply from serendipitous and unexpected occasions that occur within the classroom that the teacher and children rise to explore.

Within an emergent curriculum model, the relationship between the children and the educator is one built on trust, respect, and collaboration. Stacey (2009) argues that, "children have a right to a responsive curriculum that is designed just for them. Deserving such a curriculum, they respond to it with engagement and delight, for it belongs to them and their teacher" (p. 4). This mutual ownership of the curriculum fosters a more participatory educational space. Through an emergent curriculum, traditional power relationships between children and teachers are challenged (Wien, 2008), creating an environment where ideas and knowledge are co-created amongst all engaged. It allows teachers the opportunity to work together with the children whom they teach; the chance to focus on children's ideas, questions, and interests (Stacey, 2011).

Student Directed Learning: Teaching for Artistic Behavior (TAB)

Emergent curriculum practices are most often evident within pre-school and elementary school classrooms. However, some of the central tenets to the approach can be also seen in art education classrooms that embrace choice.

> Choice-based art education provides for the development of artistic behaviors by enabling students to discover what it means to be an artist through the *authentic* creation of artwork. The ability to make one's own choices and decisions regarding one's work is a contributing factor for creativity. (Douglas & Jaquith, 2009, p. 3, original emphasis)

When we take the time and space to see students as artists, the nature of our classroom – of how we teach and how our students learn – begins to shift. As such, students develop a

sense of ownership over their own artwork, and "creative control of learning and its products [moves] from teacher to learner to amplify student voice and heighten engagement" (Jaquith & Hathaway, 2012, p. 4).

In their 2009 text *Engaging Learners Through Artmaking,* Douglas and Jaquith, the founders of the TAB approach, describe what this particular kind of choice-based practice looks like. They argue that within a TAB setting, students are given opportunities to behave, think, and perform as artists. This is accomplished not by teaching artistic behaviors themselves, but "teaching *for* artistic behaviors" (p. 2, original emphasis). They describe artistic behaviors as ones "that inform and sustain creative process" (p. 2). Within this approach, students are encouraged to seek out experiences and behaviors of artists, rather than simply copy the work of artists. Some of these practices include playing with materials, planning out ideas, risk taking, knowing when to abandon failed projects, working on multiple pieces simultaneously, accepting mistakes, using materials in traditional and unique ways, and using art as a form of commentary (p. 3). Ultimately, they argue that, "the main focus of teaching for artistic behavior is to facilitate and encourage the generation of art ideas" (p. 5).

Most art classes that follow TAB and choice models are set up with various studio centers that "are designed to accommodate diverse learning styles and artistic behaviors….[They] contain directions, materials, tools, and resources…allowing learners to pursue work while their teacher interacts with other students" (Douglas & Jaquith, 2009, p. 17). Students have the opportunity to select in which area they wish to work and are able to create art based on their own ideas, rather than a pre-determined lesson offered by the teacher. They explore artistic materials and content simultaneously.

The role of the teacher within these spaces differs a great deal from a more traditional classroom. Classes often begin with a short, whole group demonstration on a specific technique or medium, with the teacher offering only essential information (Douglas & Jaquith, 2009). After this, students are free to make choices based on the centers available, and the teacher rotates around the room. During this time, a TAB teacher may “offer small-group or individualized assistance, facilitate solutions, provide additional instruction and reinforcement for those ready for more information, [or] highlight an interesting piece of student work” (p. 24). Sesto (2012) notes that teachers not only encourage students to develop their own original ideas, but also serve as a mentor for the children’s “artistic inquiry” (p. 52).

Hathaway (2012) argues that this is a personal and powerful way for children to learn as they define their work themselves; it creates a sense of autonomy that is rare in traditional school art classrooms. Additionally, Sesto (2012) notes that, “a choice-based art rooms shows respect for the children and their choices” (p. 54). It is also grounded in trust. Longmore (2012) explains that we should “trust that children will challenge themselves at their own level—they will use their skills, ideas, and creativity to derive complexity from simple materials” (p. 58).

Visions of Children and Childhood

The vision of a classroom space where adults and children (teachers and students) work closely together based on trust, respect, collaboration, and multiple perspectives of knowledge suggests a shift in the way we understand and view both children and childhood. This shift is grounded upon the repositioning of childhood as a social construction and an understanding of children as subjects rather than objects (Christensen

& James, 2000; Greene & Hill, 2005). This contemporary and critical perspective (grounded in the new social studies of childhood) acknowledges that "the child" and "childhood" are socially, culturally, politically, and historically constructed concepts (see the work of Alloway, 1997; Canella, 2005; Dahlberg et al., 1999; Greene & Hill, 2005; James, Jenks, & Prout, 1998; MacNaughton, 2003; Prout, 2000; Prout & James, 1990) and therefore cannot be understood in any one singular sense. Children are viewed as social actors who exhibit control over their own experiences in society (Prout & James, 1990); they are "not passive receptors of socialization but are active social agents managing their own experiences and negotiating adult control" (Emond, 2005, p. 124).

While there is no one way to know the child, the images of children that we hold are productive, in the sense that they control the types of educational institutions we construct for children, and the work of teaching and learning that occurs within them (Dahlberg et al., 1999). Walkerdine (1992) argues that in this way, the child is created as a sign, something to read, to be defined and mapped, showing itself in the discourses which exist within the classroom space. This perspective can have both positive and negative consequences, creating spaces where children can flourish or spaces where they are controlled. When considered in this way, the image of the child is of central importance because it affects all aspects of our relationships with children, in and outside of the classroom, as teacher and researcher.

Historically, conceptions of the child were grounded in psychological and developmental paradigms, understanding children through dominating themes such as naturalness, rationality, and universality (Prout & James, 1990). Yet a critique of these historically hegemonic concepts, note Prout & James, has helped us to shift beyond

singular visions, and conceptualize children and childhood on a continuum, where they can move between and among social worlds and spaces (McClure, 2008) and are not understood in a singular way. In considering the way in which we view children, it is important to recognize some of these traditional conceptions in order to move beyond them. Below I share some of the popular images of children that continue to prevail in society. As McClure notes, "in each case, the image of the child is reductive, singular, and objectified; it disallows multiplicity" (p. 41). Understood in this way, we cannot truly understand children through one of these images alone. Rather, the image of the child is multifaceted and not easily defined.

I conclude this section with some thoughts on the image of the post-modern child, an image that at its core is meant to destabilize these previously held singular vision. I also show how these contemporary perspectives on children function within educational spaces.

The Innocent Child

The nature of the child as innocent places the conception of the child as pre-sociological, in that this view does not take into consideration the social context in which the child lives, and is uninfluenced by elements of social structure or society (James et al., 1998). Young children are considered pure, innocent, and uncorrupted by the world into which they have been born (James et al., 1998), somehow existing outside of external influence. An example of this innocent child can be seen in Rousseau's (1762/1979) *Emile*, in which he discusses his ideal child, who was to be protected from the corrupt and evil nature of the world in which he lived (Ivashkevich, 2012). Dahlberg et al. (1999)

note that this belief is grounded in the child's innate goodness, and the value of children learning to know their "inner nature and essential self" (p. 45).

The Tabula Rasa Child

This image of the tabula rasa child (as a blank slate or empty vessel) stands in contrast to Rousseau's innocent child (Dahlberg et al., 1999). In this view, the child is born with nothing – no innate capacities, no universal human knowledge (James et al., 1998). It is through education that the child is filled with the knowledge, skills, and cultural values that society has predetermined that they should know (Dahlberg et al., 1999; James et al., 1998). It is within an educational context that young children will become socialized, taught reason, and trained to conform to the society in which they were born and will live. Therefore, it is our job as educators to deliver this content to them. This child would fit nicely in Paulo Freire's (1970/1993) banking concept of education.

The Developing Child

Conceptions of the developing child are grounded in psychological developmental theory (drawn from the work of Piaget), in which children are seen as moving through an ongoing process of development that is scientific and predictable (Ivashkevich, 2012; James et al., 1998). These ideas are based on the self-sustaining natural growth of children as they develop into adults, moving from simplicity to complexity of thought, from irrational to rational behavior (Prout & James, 1990). The child is thus viewed as incomplete, immature, egocentric, and lacking in self-control (Ivashkevich, 2012).

Once again, it appears the role of the educator is to help the child move along their clearly marked trajectory of development; children are "marginalized beings

awaiting temporal passage, through the acquisition of cognitive skill, into the social world of adults" (Prout & James, 1990, p. 11). Within the context of education, Ivashkevich (2012) argues that this is an example of "educational intervention as an act of improving, normalizing, and rationalizing children" (p. 41). Like the innocent child, the developing child is seen to exist outside the confines of society; Dahlberg et al. (1999) note that in this image, "the influence of culture and the agency of children themselves are equally discounted" (p. 46).

The Postmodern Child

The complex vision of the world held by many postmodernist theorists challenges these above stated traditional conceptions of children and childhood; rather than looking at one way of knowing or being a young person, educators and researchers should be looking at the shifts and changes in society that affect children's experiences (MacNaughton, 2003). MacNaughton (2003) notes that this is more of a transforming model of the child, rather than a reforming or conforming one. Within this postmodern perspective, the differences between children and adults should not be seen simply through a developmental model. As Prout & James (1990) demonstrate, these differences are also culturally and socially constructed, relating at points to factors such as race, class, gender, and ethnicity. They continue,

> Children are and must be seen as active in the construction and determination of their own social lives, the lives of those around them and of the societies in which they live. Children are not just the passive subjects of social structures and processes. (p. 8)

Through this vision, we have come to understand that children create their own meanings and understandings of things that influence the world (MacNaughton, p. 73).

The natural hierarchies and divisions of the child discussed within the first three perspectives (adult/child, mature/immature, sophisticated/naïve, developed/developing) are rejected within a postmodern view (Ivashkevich, 2012). There is no single truth of the child but many truths. Social reality is not fixed or constant, but rather should be understood as something that is constantly in a state of flux, simultaneously changing and being created through the activities of social actors (Prout & James, 1990), both adults and children together.

The Image of the Child in Educational Spaces

In a rejection of these reductive conceptions of children, many contemporary scholars and early childhood educators are taking up the image of the child often discussed within the Reggio Emilia, in which the universality of the child's potential is valued (Malaguzzi, 1993). Within Reggio, there is a "critical importance of an 'image of the child' that acknowledges children's creative, intellectual, and communicative potential" (New & Kantor, 2013, p. 334). Carlina Rinaldi, the pedagogical director of the infant-toddler centers and preprimary schools in Reggio argues,

> The cornerstone of our experience, based on practice, theory, and research, is the image of the child as rich in resources, strong, and competent. The emphasis is placed on seeing children as unique individuals with rights rather than simply needs. They have potential, plasticity, openness, the desire to grow, curiosity, a sense of wonder, and the desire to relate to other people and to communicate. (1998, p. 114)

When considered in this way, the proficiencies of children become more open and thus more exciting. McClure (2008) posits,

> As a metatheory and a metaphor, the image of the child operates in a nuanced and layered way as it produces and sustains reflective practice both in schools in Reggio and in schools and educators "inspired by" or "in dialogue with" the Reggio approach. (p. 44)

This conception of the child opens the door for expanding ideas about education and what children are capable of.

While this is certainly a more valuable way of thinking about children, we should be careful not to accept this perspective as a new truth. Boldt and McArdle (2013) argue that by expanding the way we "know" children, we are able to broaden our perspective about what they are capable of. They state, "if we know children as skillful and creative negotiators of their social worlds, we are prepared to see and appreciate what they can do" (p. 3). Yet here we are still claiming a "knowing" of the child. Whether we know her or him to be strong or weak, mature or immature, we are still subscribing to a specific truth.

Thompson (2013b) presents an alternate way of conceptualizing the image of the child. She argues against seeing the child in either/or dichotomies, and encourages us to see them as something more, as people always in the process of becoming: not as "becoming adults" in a developmental perspective, but as a child whose identity is not fixed or static. "From that angle, we see a very different child, socially situated, constantly changing, and very much open to the influence of teachers and peers and the worlds of experience they share" (p. 101).

If we are able to consider children in this way, as "unknowable" (Levinas, 1987, 1988, 1989a, 1989b) and "always in the process of becoming" (Thompson, 2013b) then the types of educational spaces we are able to construct for them begin to look very different than those of the past or even present. In traditional spaces of education that embrace singular visions of children,

> Children are treated as things rather than as ends in themselves…the school conceives the process of education as one of "transmitting" knowledge, "developing" skills, "training" children (or teachers!) by routines of instruction which in fact minimize opportunities for significant choice and self-direction. Children are not conceived as co-agents in the process of education. (Hawkins, 1972/2002, pp. 228-229)

While this image of education is, of course, problematic, Hawkins (1972/2002) goes on to argue that a simple rejection of the active teacher and passive child model (as described above) does not fully embrace the multifaceted understandings of power and freedom. While the image of education described above does not trust children's choices (their choice being connected in some way to the notion of freedom), a simple switch in perspective does not necessarily foster these ideas of children's freedom/choice either (Hawkins, 1972/2002).

However, if we are able to view children through a multiplicity of lenses through which we reject traditional binaries (bad/good, smart/ignorant, helpful/uncooperative, etc.); if we are able to see children as something more, as something that is always changing, or transforming (MacNaughton, 2003), we can begin to envision new educational spaces that provide each child the opportunity to thrive in a space that speaks

to her or him. This type of approach would, as Hawkins (1972/2002) explains, allow us to make thoughtful "curricular and instructional choices, to make the curricular spiral tangent at many points to the individual lives of children, to the educative resources of *their* total environment which *they* know or can be helped to discover" (pp. 218-219, original emphasis).

Exploring the Third Space

These new spaces of education can be conceptualized as a type of third site or space, where traditional conceptions of power, authority, and knowledge can be challenged, and curriculum can address the lived experiences of students. The notions of third space that are embraced within this research stem primarily from the postcolonial theories of Homi K. Bhabha (1985, 1990, 1994) and his writings on cultural translation, hybridity, and ambivalence, but are reconceptualized within the space of early childhood art education.

Bhabha (1994) understands the third space as an ambivalent space, or a site of subversion, where those interacting within it create authentic new experiences based on recognition of where original experiences (or ideas) stem from. Within this inquiry, these original ideas and/or experiences are based in an understanding of the roles of both teacher and student, adult and child, and the ways in which each party interacts in the classroom studio space based on these roles. I can assume that when entering an art classroom, the children and I each have our own image of what normal and acceptable classroom behavior looks like; we each hold our own beliefs about how students and teachers should act. These thoughts about classroom behavior relate also to issues of authority. As both teacher and researcher, I acknowledge that authority does exist in the

classroom, but I do not accept it as a single kind of authority; I strive for it to be transparent. There are many ways of being teacher, researcher, and student in the classroom. It is through an understanding of this transparency, and the rejection of the traditional discourse of normal school authority that a third space can be created. In what follows, I offer an analysis of Bhabha's conceptualizations in their original context, and also introduce other theorists who have explored notions of third space specifically within art education. Through these varied understandings, it is possible to explore the potential of fostering third spaces within early childhood art education.

The Post-Colonial Third Space

As a postcolonial scholar, Bhabha (1985, 1990, 1994) primarily explores issues of colonialism and of the relationship of colonized and colonizer, and looks at the "history of colonies and nations" (Wilson, 2008, p. 120). Simon (2000) notes that, "to enter into the postcolonial world is to see cultural relations at a global level, to understand the complexities of the histories and power relations which operate across continents" (p. 13). This postcolonial perspective has created a space of "reflection which avoids simplistic characterizations of power" (Simon, 2000, p. 14). English (2009) adds that a postcolonial perspective (along with other "posts" like postmodernism or post-structuralism) exhibits distrust for grand narratives (regimes of truth), and is "distinguished by its decidedly political bent and its particular attention to issues of race and diaspora" (p. 87).

In his theorization of a third space, Bhabha is exploring the relationships of nations, cultures, and people through issues like power and control. His third space (an ambivalent space or a site of subversion) relates to the space created amongst dominant and subordinate cultures (Wilson, 2008), the colonizers and the colonized. This third

space is created from Bhabha's ideas about cultural translation, hybridity, and ambivalence. I elaborate briefly on each of these ideas in hopes to more fully understand this idea of the postcolonial third space.

Cultural translation. Bhabha (1990) argues that cultural translation speaks to the way in which all forms of culture are somehow related to each other, thus, they are always in an act of being translated. In this way, there can never be a true "original" because cultures are always open to flux or change. Cultural translation denies the essentialism of any original idea or given culture; "each position is always a process of translation and transference of meaning" (Bhabha, 1994, p. 39).

Hybridity. Bhabha (1990) talks about hybridity as a process that comes from the act of cultural translation. Hybridity constructs something new, something that is "neither the one thing nor the other" (Bhabha, 1994, p. 49). It is "the 'third space' that enables other positions to emerge. This third space displaces the histories that constitute it" (Bhabha, 1990, p. 211). This notion of hybridity relates to the idea of integrating competing knowledges and discourses, as well as the relationships that come about in these hybrid contexts (Hulme, Cracknell, & Owens, 2009). Hulme et al. add that it is the condition of being "in-between" multiple sources of knowledge.

Ambivalence. For Bhabha (1985) an ambivalent space is the result of hybridity; it is the space created when cultural translation and hybridity are accepted. This space is created when ideas about traditional discourses are rejected. Bhabha (1994) refers to this ambivalence as being introduced in the act of interpretation, which "is never simply an act of communication between the I and the You designated in the statement" (p. 53).

Ambivalence occurs when we realize that there is no single idea of interpretation, no single form of truth.

Third space. Bhabha (1985) argues that through the acceptance of ambivalence, a form of subversion forms. It is this subversion that turns traditional colonial conditions of dominance into spaces of intervention. This third space is a site of both ambivalence and subversion that has developed as a result of hybridity. It is a space where "the meanings and symbols of culture have no primordial unity or fixity; that even the same signs can be appropriated, translated, rehistoricized and read anew" (Bhabha, 1994, p. 55). The term "third" is also utilized in cultural studies literature to describe the place where negotiations take place, a place where identity is both constructed and reconstructed (English, 2009).

The third space is a site for the creation of newness (Bhabha, 1994). It is within this third space that discourse or engagement can occur: between the colonizer and colonized, the dominant and subordinate. "These 'in-between' spaces provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood – singular or communal – that initiate new signs of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration, and contestation, in the act of defining the idea of society itself" (Bhabha, 1994, p. 2). This space is characterized around production, not simply reflection (Hulme et al., 2009; Richardson, 2006), producing new ideas, experiences, and ways of being.

Creating a Third Space

Within the context of this research, it was my aim to create moments where encounters in the third space could occur. It is within this space that traditional conceptions of power and authority in educational contexts can be challenged. Bhabha

(1994) notes that in order for a third space to be created, moments of discursive transparency and ambivalence must occur: epiphanies when the traditional discourses of power and authority are no longer considered a single form of truth. In order for this third space to function within this research, both the children and I needed to stop seeing ideas about classroom behaviors and relationships as absolute or fixed. The classroom needed to function as a site of possibility and ambivalence where we could engage as student and teacher in new and different ways.

The third pedagogical site. While Bhabha does not conceptualize this idea of the third space in terms of a classroom or an educational context, Brent Wilson (2005) argues that there is the possibility of creating a third space, or a "third pedagogical site" in the art classroom. He maintains the first two sites represent (1) children's spontaneous artmaking that occurs in informal spaces outside of and beyond school, and (2) the traditional school art classroom where children create artwork directed by teachers. Wilson defines this third site as a space "between school classrooms and kids' self initiated visual cultural spaces – a site where adults and kids collaborate in making and interpreting webs of relationships (Haraway, 1991, pp. 170, 194, 228) among the images that kids make for themselves and the images that adults ask them to make" (p. 18). The third site becomes the space for adults and children to work together to negotiate and share their ideas. Wilson and Wilson (2009) argue that this third site can be facilitated when adults and children put aside the traditional authority and status inscribed upon them as teacher or student, and collaborate together in drawing practices. Here, they posit, the adult and child become colleagues or near equals.

Additionally, Wilson (2008) conceptualizes the third pedagogical site as a space to engage in meaningful research practices. He posits,

> The challenge we researchers face is to somehow provide evidence regarding how individuals – and societies – change in desirable ways because of art and visual culture education. Most art educational research is conducted inside art classrooms. This is the wrong place to look for change! (p. 119)

Wilson argues that this third pedagogical site can function as a site of research with children, where new content emerges through the negotiation and reformation of both children's and adults' interests.

Within this particular article, as Wilson (2008) reflects back upon his work in the field of art education (mostly in interviewing children about their self-initiated artmaking), he suggests that through his research, he was creating a third pedagogical site. He notes, "the kids and I were using this space to exchange ideas about things such as the sources on which they based their graphic narratives and their motives for making them" (p. 127). Wilson argues that when we, as adults/researchers, attempt to engage children about their first site artwork (their self-initiated image making), we create a paradox as we inquire into a space that exists beyond schooling and at the same time includes ourselves (our interests as teachers and researchers) into the experience. This is the creation of the third pedagogical site.

> The third pedagogical site is a research site and if we researchers were to spend more time living in and investigating the third pedagogical site we might discover the many extraordinary ways in which to make art education truly change individuals' lives. (p. 129)

Sketchbooks as a part of the third space. Thompson's (2009) conception of the third space in the classroom is based on ideas from both Wilson (2005, 2009) and Bhabha (1994). She describes this idea of the third space as a "space *between* – neither the exclusive province of teachers nor of children, but a shared space in which they work together to create an ongoing present and to envision and enact a future in which both are fully acknowledged and engaged" (p. 30, original emphasis). Thompson (2013b) later presents the idea that providing children with opportunities to create voluntary drawings in sketchbooks functions alongside Wilson and Wilson's (2009) conception of the third site. Through this sketchbook practice, Thompson argues that there is a greater reciprocity established between children and adults. She states,

> When we focus on children's self-initiated visual projects, the balance of power and authority that typically exists in American classrooms shifts dramatically, allowing teachers to learn from children and to engage in dialogue with them about the ideas, issues, and images that matter most to children as individuals and as members of cultures that are uniquely their own. In doing so, both children and adults temporarily suspend their customary classroom roles. (Thompson, 2013b, p. 95)

By challenging the traditional power dynamics that exist between teachers and students, between adults and children, it is my hope to create a kind of third space or site in my research classroom. By inviting the children with whom I work to include their own thoughts, ideas, and questions in the classroom, I aim to create a shared and permeable space where we will work together to plan and negotiate the structure and focus of the time we share (Thompson, 2009).

CHAPTER THREE

LIVING THE QUESTIONS: THE SPACE BETWEEN TEACHER AND RESEARCHER

Shana: We're gonna do something super special in this art class….this art class is all about research. Research means asking a question and then finding an answer to the question.…I have a really important question that I'm gonna be asking that I need your guys' help with…how can we create our classroom together? So you know how sometimes you go to school and the teacher says, "now you have to read. Now you have to write. Now you have to do this. Now you have to do that." In this school, in our art classroom, I want you guys to help me to decide what should we do.…[for example] Alex told me he likes to make art outside, so we can go and make art outside….maybe Elissa really likes to use yarn, and so I'll make sure we have yarn for Elissa….it's just up to you guys. You guys have to tell me what you really want to do, okay? Do you guys think you can all help me with that? And then, what I'm gonna do is, sometimes you'll see me and Amanda and we'll be like writing stuff down, and you see how we have these little microphones, we're audio recording our conversations so that I can remember what you guys say so that I can bring it back next week. And also so that I can help to teach other art teachers how to make really fun classes like this….so that's kind of what our art class is gonna be about. It's gonna be about a lot of choices…and you guys telling me what's important to you. Do you think you can help me with that?

Within this research, I lived and enacted my research questions through the dual roles of teacher and researcher. Throughout this chapter I explore both the practical and theoretical methodologies embraced as I moved through this study. First, I position the research in context, exploring its setting and the ways in which the children with whom I worked were introduced to the art class and the idea of research. Next, I discuss the nature of practitioner inquiry (the primary method embraced), examining teacher action research, the role of adults in research with children, and ethical research practices with young people. Then I explore the ways in which my data was collected, presented, and analyzed, introducing ideas drawn from narrative inquiry and discussing how I aimed to create multi-voiced narratives within this research. Finally, I address some of the limitations of this study, including but not limited to its scope, my own positionality, and issues of power.

Wildcat Art: A Space for Early Childhood Art Education

In order to engage in this inquiry, it was necessary for me to have an early childhood art education space that I could teach and research in to really explore how traditional ideas about power, authority, and knowledge could be challenged. I knew that I wished to be both teacher and researcher so that I could enact the pedagogical strategies to challenge these aforementioned ideas. Rather than design a program from scratch, I chose to implement a special early childhood offering of the Wildcat Art (WCA) program, a Saturday morning art laboratory school run through the University of Arizona (UA). WCA is a non-profit art program offered through the Division of Art and Visual Culture Education for K-12th grade students in the broad Tucson community. The Saturday morning art classes are connected with an upper level art education course (ARE

438/538: Teaching Art and Visual Culture Education), which is a pre-student teaching practicum class for students seeking their art teaching certification.

Wildcat Art was first implemented at the University of Arizona in the spring of 1994 as a way to offer pre-service teachers (undergraduate and masters level art education students) a chance to gain invaluable hands on experience teaching art to children (Smith, 1996). These pre-service teachers enroll in ARE 438/538 and have normal class meetings for several weeks before the Saturday morning classes begin. They engage with contemporary practices and theory about art curriculum and pedagogy, and design their own lesson plans, which they subsequently teach on Saturday mornings to one or more age groups within the K-12th grade student population. Initially, by creating the WCA program, the Division of Art and Visual Culture Education sought to strengthen its ties with Tucson schools and community, offer children from various backgrounds and socio-economic statuses the chance to engage in visual arts lessons, and create a space for art education pre-service teachers to live out the realities of art teaching (Smith, 1996). The WCA classes are held every spring for eight weeks and always culminate with a final exhibition of K-12th grade student artwork held at a gallery space on the UA campus.

My choice to teach and research through the Wildcat Art program was based on a number of practical elements. First, by creating a special early childhood offering of WCA, the class and research itself was legitimized through an already established program with a reputable history. As a laboratory school, WCA is space for the testing of theories and knowledge about teaching and learning in art (Hausfather, 2000). Therefore, parents and guardians who enroll their children in WCA understand that: the classes are taught by art education students, their children will explore both contemporary and

traditional artistic media/practices, and that there may be elements of research involved with the program.

Secondly, by offering a program through Wildcat Art, the physical and conceptual space for the class was already in place. A classroom in the School of Art has served as a physical location for the program for many years, which meant that all supplies and furniture were readily available and accessible. There were policies and procedures for a community-based art class already in place – permissions to have minors on campus, policies to follow about use of space and materials, procedures about ordering supplies and materials, contact information for past participants and recruitment, and registration protocol and payment information for parents/families. All of these pre-established policies for the WCA program were upheld through the course of this research and approved through the Institutional Review Board (IRB).

Research Details: Recruitment, Registration, and Research in WCA

For this WCA early childhood art class, a promotion/registration flyer was created in the established WCA template. It was advertised on the WCA website, sent to past participants and local pre-schools, and promoted in local media outlets. Since art media to run the class were needed, there was a cost of $90 per student to attend. There were a number of scholarships (both half and full) available to students in need. As a totally non-profit program, the participation fee goes entirely to supplies and scholarships for the program.

There were a total of 14 students enrolled in the class, ranging in age from 3.5 to 5 years old. Once students were enrolled, parents/families were sent a registration packet that included basic information about the class itself, the research it was connected to,

UA required policy forms on interactions with non-enrolled minors, and the IRB-approved research parental permission form (see Appendices B – D). The research was introduced again on the very first day of the program during an introductory meeting for children and families. It was made explicitly clear that the children did not need to participate in the research in order to enroll in the art class. The difference between participating in the research and not was also shared with families and children at this time. If children did participate in the research, their parents were informed that photographs/videos/audio recordings of both their child and their artwork may be shared within publications and presentations surrounding this research project, but that the children's real names would not be used.

Broadly, the research itself was introduced to parents and families as a way to explore relationships between teachers and children and how they can work together to build curriculum. During the introductory meeting the WCA classroom was described as embodying an emergent or negotiated curriculum, where the children are given some control over their own learning experiences and can communicate to their teacher what they are interested in learning about or exploring. This model was successfully enacted during the course of the research study and within the WCA classes.

Following IRB protocol, the parents/guardians were asked to give their permission for their children to participate in this study; all 14 children were given permission to participate. However the IRB did not require the children's oral assent to participate. Regardless of this detail, it was important to me that both the families *and* the children themselves agreed to participate. All 14 children were present in the room during the initial welcome and introduction and subsequently heard the same information shared

with their parents. However, the research was introduced to them again once the class started and their parents had left (see the narrative which opens this chapter for details). All of the children agreed to participate, but their level of understanding about what this means cannot be guaranteed (this idea will be further explored later within this chapter).

Though I was the lead teacher and researcher within the study, there were also two advanced undergraduate art education students (Amanda and Jessica) that were involved as assistant teachers and researchers. They assisted with set up and clean up, general management of the class and care for the children, as well as in the data collection process. Their participation in this research was voluntary, and each of them received University credits for their involvement. Though I utilized the photographs, videos, audio recording, and journal entries they collected in my analysis, they did not participate in the research beyond the data collection process.

Class Specifics

The classes met a total of 10 times for 2.5 hours each time. Upon arriving students were invited to engage in any one of the many open-ended activities offered. There were various stations set up throughout the room, some that remained consistent over the course of the program and some that changed. Each class began with an invitation to draw in sketchbooks; included a short class meeting to discuss plans for the day, share interesting/important details, or look at and discuss artwork; and offered the children time and space to engage in voluntary artmaking experiences with various media. On two separate occasions we visited the University of Arizona Museum of Art (UAMA) where the children looked at the exhibitions on view and participated in hands on activities.

The program culminated with a co-curated exhibition of the children's artwork. The children worked together to title the exhibition (*Wildcat Kids Art*) and worked with me to choose which artwork to exhibit. On our final class the children visited the gallery space where their artwork would hang, and were invited to make some curatorial choices. They decided if they wanted their artwork to hang all together or separately, and even moved pieces around in the gallery. Additionally, the children were invited to select their favorite artwork and record a statement about it. These recordings were added to a short video, uploaded to YouTube, and included in the final exhibition through QR codes on the artworks labels. The children and their families were invited to the exhibition closing reception, which was held the Saturday following the last class.

Practitioner Inquiry as Method

This study primarily exists in the space of what Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2009) refer to as practitioner inquiry, where educators (practitioners) take on the role of researcher as well. Within this research I am both teacher and researcher, even aiming at times to be something more: a different kind of adult perhaps. Scholars engaging in this type of research challenge the notion that knowledge is simply generated by those outside educational spaces and then applied by teachers (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009). Rather,

> Practitioner inquiry across types is built on the assumption that the relationships of knowledge and practice are complex and distinctly non-linear, and that the knowledge needed to improve practice is influenced by the contexts and relations of power that structure the daily work of teaching and learning. (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009, p. 41)

This type of inquiry is especially suited to the questions I investigate within the study due to the way in which the children's learning and my own practice of teaching are interwoven, allowing explorations of making, intentions, interpretations, and learning. Additionally, this research embodies not just theory or practice alone, but "critical reflection on the intersections of the two" (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009, p. 41).

Teacher Action Research: Living the Questions

Both teacher research and action research are genres of practitioner inquiry. Noffke (1995) argues that education-based action research involves the "improvement of practice, of the understanding of practice, and of the situations in which practice occurs" (p. 5). It is based on a broad understanding that teachers themselves understand best the kinds of questions that need investigation within their classrooms and are the prime candidates to enact the type of changes that research brings to the surface. This research study exists in a space of teacher action research, embodying elements of both genres.

Traditionally, action research is understood as a cyclical or spiral-based process, where the researcher goes through various cycles of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting (Noffke, 1995; Stringer, 2007). Each stage of action research (plan, act, observe, reflect) is repeated as the researcher changes the situation in the hopes of enacting the desired change. In action research, the researcher works in collaboration with participants who are directly involved in the changes they hope to enact. The nature of the spiral process is more naturally embedded within this type of research. As the children and I worked together to plan the artmaking experiences within the classroom, both curriculum and pedagogy changed to meet the needs and interests of the children.

Teacher research is broadly understood as inquiry done by educators based on their own teaching work in schools or classrooms (Henderson, 2007). Most teacher research evokes elements of action research, where students and teachers "participate together, learning about [their] own classroom" (Hubbard & Power, 2003). It is at its core a study of self, focused on the everyday interactions with children, families, and colleagues, a quest to "improve daily practice" (Henderson, 2007, p. 7). Cochran-Smith & Lytle (2009) describe teacher research as a kind of "self study that works from the postmodernist assumption that it is never possible to divorce the 'self' from either the research process or educational practice" (p. 40).

When educators engage in both teaching and research, they live the questions they hope to explore; their practice is inextricably tied to the notion of answering these questions through teaching itself. In *Letters to a Young Poet,* Rilke (1984) explores what it means to live the questions,

> Try to live the questions themselves…don't search for answers now, because you would not be able to live them. And the point is to live everything. Live the questions now. Perhaps then, someday far in the future, you will gradually without even noticing it, live your way into the answer. (as cited in Wilson McKay, 2006, p. 48)

As teachers, we are always asking questions; reflexivity in good teaching is essential. However, to engage in teacher research is a way to try to live the questions we have. Wilson McKay (2006) looks to teaching action research as a way to translate these questions into our everyday lives as educators. By integrating these questions into our teaching practice, we can begin to rethink our big ideas about education as a practice.

This can “lead to a new vision of [ourselves] as teachers and [our] students as learners” (Hubbard & Power, 2003, p. 1).

However, action research is not simply an investigation of teachers and their actions to improve professional practice, but a way of thinking more deeply about the nature of teaching and learning. A premise of teacher research is rejection of the notion of the passive teacher; rather teachers are those who have a larger vision of the power they hold to change the system as a whole (Hubbard & Power, 2003). Teacher research “has the unique potential to challenge common assumptions about knowers, knowing, and knowledge” (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009, p. 40). Cochran-Smith & Lytle define this kind of deep practice as “working the dialectic” (p. 43). They utilize the term dialectic as a way to explore the “reciprocal, recursive, and symbiotic relationships of research and practice, analysis and action, inquiry and experience, theorizing and doing, conceptual and empirical scholarship, and being researchers as well as practitioners” (p. 43). When viewed in this way, teacher research becomes more than simply an investigation of questions that pertain to one’s practice, but a way to challenge traditionally held assumptions about what teaching, learning, and research can look like.

As teachers work to enact change in their classrooms, re-envision and theorize their own teaching, and create opportunities for their students to challenge what it looks like to learn and investigate theory, the roles of teacher, student, and researcher are “intentionally blurred” (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009, p. 43). Teaching and research merge together to become a form of inquiry, “intended to capture the nature and extent to which those who teach and learn from teaching by engaging in inquiry interpret and theorize what they are doing” (p. 46). Teacher research becomes a “dynamic and

collaborative process" (Henderson, 2007, p. 23); a space of activism to "rethink, resist, and re-frame the problems of education" (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009 p. 46).

Spaces Between: Trying To Be Another Kind of Adult

Within this study, the roles of teacher and researcher are woven closely together. For me, the connection of these two roles very much mirrors the idea of the teacher as researcher held within the practices of Reggio Emilia. Loris Malaguzzi (1998), the first director and leader of the early childhood education program in Reggio Emilia, describes that the work of the teacher as researcher is "to learn and relearn together with the children" (p. 86). For him, a teacher is someone who embraces questions and collaborates with the children with whom they work to address these questions. Through this lens, a teacher is never just a teacher but always engaged in acts of research with their students.

My own interest in how issues of power and authority function in the early childhood art classroom is inherently tied to both teaching and research. As an educator I want to explore how the children and I might share power and authority within the classroom. What might this type of teaching feel like, or look like? How might the children respond? Can the types of power and authority that exist in classroom spaces be shared in this way? As a researcher I desire to investigate these questions and share them with others who work with young children. I wish for ethical and respectful interactions with children in all spaces of education, not just those in which *I* live. Therefore, these questions truly live in spaces of education, requiring a merging of teaching and research. In this careful space, I have, at the same time, the ability to explore ideas and enact change in response to these ideas.

While powerful, the act of engaging in both teaching and research simultaneously is challenging. In this research, I really aim to be something other than a teacher or a researcher, embodying a liminal space in between these two roles. As introduced in Chapter Two, Wilson (2008) postulates the notion of the third pedagogical site as a space for research inquiry. In this third site,

> There exists the possibility of the emergence of cultural meanings that are not yet firmly resolved – not yet fixed. The site points to new modes of pedagogy at the edges of and beyond schooling. It celebrates the possibility of new content that emerges through the presentation, negotiation, and collaborative reformulation of kids' and adults' interests. (p. 120)

Within the context of this research, I embraced the Wildcat Art classroom as a kind of third space where these kinds of new pedagogical practices and artistic making can flourish. Within this space I worked to become a new kind of adult – someone more than teacher and more than researcher.

This is an idea that Christensen (2004) addresses in her ethnographic research with children. She openly acknowledges issues of "power, voice, and representation" (p. 165) that exist within children's experience in both social and political life, spaces of research included. She argues that we need to see power as being embedded within the act of "doing" research and not as something that simply lies with adult or child, "but rather in the social representations of these that we make, negotiate, work out and work with in social life" (p. 167). In her own research, she explores what it meant to rethink "what an adult is" and engage in "an ongoing balancing act" (p. 173) as she observed and engaged with the children she was researching.

> Adults doing childhood research should present and perform themselves as an unusual type of adult, one who is seriously interested in understanding how the social world looks from children's perspective but without making a dubious attempt to be a child…It is, however, possible to be a different sort of adult, one who, whilst not pretending to be a child, seeks throughout to respect their views and wishes. Such a role inevitably involves a delicate balance between acting as a "responsible adult" and maintaining the special position built up over a period of time. (p. 174)

Within the context of this research, it was my aim to be a different sort of teacher – one who was also a researcher, one who was responsive to the children's interests and desires, even when they conflicted with my own comfort and ideas about what art teaching and learning looks like.

This idea is broadly conceptualized as an effort to create a newness (Bhabha, 1994) in spaces of early childhood art education, and in large part rests on my ability to be this different kind of adult teacher researcher in this new kind of space. I was able to collaborate with the children and challenge traditional ideas about the image of the teacher and the image of the researcher, embracing a space between. In this new kind of space between, "neither site, role, or representation holds sway…one continually subverts the meaning of the other" (Routledge, 1996, p. 400). Viewing my own role through this kind of lens, I am able to challenge the positions of authority that come with the title of teacher or researcher; it allows me to think of my position as something in between, a position that is always in the act of becoming – becoming something else, something more, or something different. As Sunday (2015) describes, her position as researcher with

young children aims to “identify disruptions by means of considering how power can be allocated between adults and children as negotiated processes” (Thompson, McClure, Schulte, & Sunday, 2015, p. 400). It is within a similar kind of space that I desire to work with children, rejecting traditional understandings of adult/teacher/researcher and child/student/object.

Crafting an Ethical Relationship: Research *With* Rather Than *On* Children

The notion of engaging in research practices with or alongside children (rather than on them) reflects this rejection of traditional binaries. This idea is grounded in the repositioning of children as subjects rather than objects of research (Christensen & James, 2000; Greene & Hill, 2005; Prout, 2000). This position accepts “that children are not passive receptors of socialization but are active social agents managing their own experiences and negotiating adult control” (Emond, 2005, p. 124). Additionally, this consideration stems from the silent voice of children in traditional and historical research practices (Christensen & James, 2000).

The idea of research with children can be understood as a way to engage in practices that reflect this contemporary image of children and childhood. This kind of researcher “values children’s perspectives and wishes to understand their lived experience [and] will be motivated to find out more about how children understand and interpret, negotiate and feel about their daily lives” (Greene & Hill, 2005, p. 3). I believe that the core of this type of inquiry involves the researcher valuing children’s thoughts and ideas, taking interest in their lived experiences, and working to understand how they feel and exist in the world. These core ideas are central to both the creation of a third

space in research and an attempt to overcome traditional power/knowledge/authority relationships that teachers often have with children.

In specifically considering the idea of research with children in art education settings, both Christine Thompson (2009) and Christopher Schulte (2013) utilize the term of *being there* with children in research and artmaking. Thompson notes that it is her recognition of children's artmaking as both intertextual and performative that drives her desire to be there with children in research – to observe, document, respond to, and interact with the young children with whom she works. She notes that, "it is necessary to take time to linger, to live within the situation, in order to see those things that begin to occur or perhaps are noticed only when given enough time to become evident" (p. 27).

For Schulte (2013), the idea of being there with children in research relates to an ethicality of experience. He describes that in spaces of research, both adults and children enact their own choices about the way in which they wish to *be there*. These can be moments of uncertainty, as both adult and child consider their level of participation (i.e., to contribute, to contest, to consider). He notes, "children and adults are invited to participate, but also *dared* to create difference through this participation. However, not every child or adult dares to enter into, to move, to live, or to think in moments of uncertainty" (p. 2). Schulte adds that these choices reflect the "purpose with which the *way of being there* is composed" (p. 3, original emphasis). I find this conception of *being there* in research with children attractive because it speaks to a possibility of moments of ambivalence and the creation of third spaces (Bhabha, 1985).

Additionally, Thompson's consideration of taking time to linger with children, looking and listening, suggests the value the adult researcher places on children's

experiences and in creating contexts where children feel “comfortable and confident, motivated and respected” (Rinaldi, cited in Thompson, 2009, p. 27). Finally, the way in which both teachers and children can control their own participation in the research process, choosing to engage or not engage in moments of uncertainty, reflects the power that this type of research has in fostering moments of ambivalence and third spaces. It is within these moments and spaces that traditional ideas about relationships and knowledge can be challenged. Inherently, the use of the term *with* (rather than *on* or *about*) suggests a shift in power that fosters collaboration and cooperation, and allows space for ambivalence to exist.

Levels of understanding: Are we all *there?* The idea of *being there* with children in research reflects the active consideration, recognition, and value placed on children’s thoughts, ideas, and experiences. However, as Schulte (2013) notes, the way in which children choose to *be there* should not be something that we overlook. Though I made more than one explicit attempt to help the children understand that something larger than just an art class was taking place, I am left to live and write with the very real understanding that they did not fully understand the bigger ideas I had hoped to explore and what will happen with their artwork, words, and images. I attempted to explore informed consent as a process rather than a “single gesture” (Zeni, 2001, p. 161) but I question how successful this really was.

Especially prevalent in spaces of education is the notion that children may find it difficult to refuse participating in research when introduced by their teacher and approved by their parents (Ailwood, 2011). The powerful relationships that exist between adults and children can overtake their own sense of self during these moments. In all research

with children, adults always hold a position of being more socially powerful (Lahman, 2008).

> The necessity of children's relationships with adults remains, and within social structures and institutions adults will always have greater access to positions of power than children. In the context of schools, adults have far greater access to socially and institutionally sanctioned positions of power. However, the power relationships between adults and children in schools depend also on children's freedom and resistance. (Ailwood, p. 29)

However, in order to resist, children need to fully understand the way in which they are involved in the bigger research questions at play, and trust that their participation within the research will not be jeopardized based on their ideas or actions.

Ideas about sharing research and the ways in which children (and their thoughts, work, and images) are represented via public presentations or publications are closely connected to this idea of understanding. When we share elements of research enacted with children, issues of responsibility and ownership should be carefully considered (Zeni, 2001). Are the children aware of the spaces in which their images, artwork, and words may appear? There are many examples of research where data and analysis are shared with children before they are shared with a larger public. This grounds the work in an ethical space. However, in a research context such as this there is no sustained contact with the children, so this kind of approach is not possible. Additionally, adults and especially researchers have access to spaces of presentation and publication not available to children. In describing her own research project with young children, Ailwood (2011) references some similar concerns.

> My representations of the photos, interviews and my analytic choices all reflect my greater access to institutional power in terms of writing and publication. The children may not have represented the play as I did or have chosen the aspects of their play as of importance for analysis. (p. 28)

While I face limitations in this work with young children, my attempts to engage with them carefully, respectfully, and ethically cannot be overlooked, in hope that, "with thoughtful consideration, children and adults may enter into joyous, intersubjective, meaningful relationships" (Lahman, 2008, p. 282). This effort is grounded in my practice as a reflexive teacher and researcher. Lahman describes these practices as "thoughtful, self-aware analysis of the intersubjective dynamics between researcher and the researched. Reflexivity requires critical self-reflection of the ways in which researchers' social background, assumptions, positioning behavior impact on the research process" (p. 291).

Throughout this process I remain aware of the larger power dynamics at play. As adult/teacher/researcher I always maintain a more intense type of power that cannot simply go away or be transferred (Foucault, 1980). However, by being reflexive, thoughtful, and sensitive to the existence of this power (and emboldened to reject it at the same time), it is something that can be altered, changed somehow to be "less than." During the course of this research, as I listened carefully to the children's words and images, tried to determine their interests, planned curricula and activities based on these interests, asked their thoughts and opinions and responded to them through provocations, and asked them to photograph and tell me about their artwork, I was able to change the way that power traditionally exists between adults and children in classrooms. "As long

as we remain in a posture of questioning findings, reflexively considering the research process…and respecting children, we are on firmer ground" (Lahman, 2008, p. 283).

Images and Stories: Creating Multi-Voiced Narratives

Throughout the 10 weeks of Wildcat Art, basically everything that happened within the context of the classroom was sourced as data. The artwork that the children created was photographed and there were images and videos taken of the children working in the classroom. Additionally, there were also photographs and videos created by the children themselves and by the two assistants and me upon the children's request. Both the assistants and I took audio recordings of all classes as well as wrote journal entries after every class session. This resulted in a massive amount of data: 75 hours of audio recording, over 900 images and videos of children working, over 30 pages of journal entries, and over 250 images of student artwork.

As I sat down to begin to write about this experience, I was overwhelmed with the mass of data in front of me. There was no way I could transcribe 75 hours of audio recording before even beginning to write. Rather, I began by brainstorming specific moments, artworks, and interactions that stood out to me as especially meaningful and were connected to the larger questions I had hoped to explore. In a similar fashion to Sunday (2015), I sought moments where adult/child binaries were disrupted and spaces of "curricular transgression and lines of flight that occur in the overlooked corners, in the margins of established structure, and in the moments when children are left on their own to explore ideas" (Thompson, McClure, Schulte, & Sunday, 2015, p. 401). Then I organized these ideas based on which research questions they addressed and teased out connections among them (see Figure 1). I challenged myself to consider how these

moments, artworks, and interactions were connected to each other. Through this process I landed on three big ideas that would come to ground my data explorations: freedom, collaboration, and play. This way of thinking allowed me to focus on the children's art and experiences first and use them to ground my larger theories about ways to challenge power, knowledge, and authority in early childhood art education. Throughout this document, my data is presented through a narrative structure, which, as Sunday (2015) argues, offers a way to "reflect and complicate events that have happened" (Thompson, McClure, Schulte, & Sunday, 2015, p. 400).

Figure 1. A mind-map I created in attempts to organize my data and research questions.

Narrative: Sharing the Stories

The stories of my experiences with the children in this research ground my data presentation and analysis. Storytelling, "quite possibly, is the principal way of understanding the lived world. Story is central to human understanding—it makes life livable, because without a story, there is no identity, no self, no other" (Lewis, 2011, p. 505). It is through the sharing of stories, or as Thompson (2013a) refers to them "representative anecdotes," that I aim to bring meaning to these experiences. Thompson explores these kinds of stories as ones that "encapsulate important dimensions of the research narrative to follow…[they] embody pervasive themes and stand for the whole, hinting at but not exhausting the richness of the interpretations that follow" (p. 161). As such, they are stories that serve as entryways into the research, capturing its essence. Central to this practice is the idea of weaving theory in and through the stories that are shared, considering experiences both lived and learned as a way to bring new ideas and practices to light.

This kind of narrative inquiry offers a means to explore and understand the experiences that the children, my assistants, and I shared within the classroom. It is a way to honor lived experiences as a source of important understanding and knowledge through the exploration of the stories that people both live and tell (Clandinin, 2013). Throughout this process, I engage with narrative inquiry as a means to represent and explore the lived experiences of the children and me within the classroom space (rather than a methodological research practice itself – i.e.: researching children's narratives). I am drawn to the creation of narratives as a way to describe the instances and occurrences within the classroom, a way to explore moments of children's artmaking and interactions,

and a way to represent my own experience as teacher and researcher. It is "through the telling of our lives we engage in the act of meaning making" (Hendry, 2007, p. 495).

Narrative inquiry is often explored through the lens of an arts based research practice, evoking the practice of literature writing by embodying "language that is metaphorical and evocative…designed to call forth imaginative facilities…language choices [that] are expressive and connotative rather than direct and denotative. They are designed to enhance meaning in a roundabout way" (Barone & Eisner, 1997, p. 75). While I am not engaging in arts based research practices within this study, the evocative and descriptive forms of writing described above most certainly guide my narrative constructions. I aim to create thick descriptions "so that the complexities adhering to a unique event, character, and/or setting may be adequately rendered" (Baron & Eisner, 1997, p. 76). Additionally, the kinds of descriptions and vernacular speech that often appear in narrative inquiry have a rich history in the field of teacher research itself.

Within this context, narrative has often been utilized as a way for educators to offer metaphors for the complex relationships of teaching and learning (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). Rich narratives offer readers a glimpse into classroom spaces inhabited by teachers and students, asking readers to "reconceptualize the educational process through intimate disclosures from the lives of individual educators and students" (Barone & Eisner, 1997, p. 82). By crafting narratives about classroom occurrences that include both teacher and student voices, we are able to contribute to a mutual way of knowing and the fostering of new spaces in research practices. These narratives become,

> A process of collaboration involving mutual storytelling and restorying as the research proceeds. In the process of beginning to live the shared story of narrative

> inquiry, the researcher needs to be aware of constructing a relationship in which both voices are heard. (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 4)

Understood in this way, narratives reflect the voices of myself (as teacher-researcher) and the voices of the children who make, play, and exist in the classroom space.

I am interested in the ways in which narrative, as a way of describing and representing experience, can reflect this duality of voice and experience. Clandinin (2013) sees this as a type of narrative inquiry "where lives meet in storied ways, where spaces between open up" (p. 23). Narratives do not have the "explanatory power to recount original experience" (Hendry, 2007, p. 489) but exist as windows into the "contradictory and shifting nature of hegemonic discourses" (Chase, 2011, p. 422). They form new spaces that are created in between people's stories and experiences. From the perspective of teacher-researcher, these stories are "co-composed in the spaces between us as inquirers and participants" (Clandinin, p. 24), and also in the spaces between teachers/researchers and children.

Creating Multi-Voiced Narratives: Weaving Words and Images

Throughout this process, it is my aim to write by merging the children's voices and my own. I approach the term "voice" broadly, considering the children's words, images, and artwork as means to share their thoughts and ideas. Storytelling, conversation, and images work together in this research to create narrative descriptions of classroom happenings that are multi-voiced. Through this process I aim to challenge a singular way of knowing or experiencing. I embrace ideas of "multivocality" as defined by Farrar and Pegno (2017), creating "complex exchanges…[that reject] speaking *for* another" (p. 170). They continue to argue that, "when speaking for another, we risk

presenting underrepresented minorities as objects for a voyeuristic audience" (p. 170). The inclusion of stories and storytelling in narrative research practices opens up spaces for voices traditionally marginalized to be heard (Hendry, 2007). Hendry (2007) positions narrative research as a means to give voice "to those traditionally marginalized" (p. 489) and a way to "'add' stories that had been traditionally excluded from educational research" (p. 490). However, as Farrar and Pegno note, the phrase *giving voice* is "problematic" in that it positions these groups as "weak and voiceless…instead of recognizing their voices already existed" (p. 171).

The voices and experiences of children have historically been marginalized and underrepresented, especially in research practices. Contemporary researchers argue that children's own perspectives on their experiences should now play a central role in research practices with children. James and Prout (1990) suggest that, "children must be seen as actively involved in the construction of their own social lives…they can no longer be regarded as simply the passive subjects of structural determinations" (p. 4). This speaks to a larger movement where children's own ideas and voices need to be considered in relation to their experiences; this can be understood as a "need to listen to and respect children's views and experiences" (Emond, 2005, p. 136).

Swadener and Polakow (2011) state that contemporary research with children should focus on their voices, "voices that are not distilled by adult constructs or mediated by adult prompts and interventions. Giving children time and space to express and articulate their own concerns and wishes is central to this enterprise" (p. 708). Within this research, I include the children's voices and ideas as a part of my own writing. Their theories, ideas, discussions, and artwork play a central role in both my data presentation

and analysis. I include careful transcriptions of conversations between the children and the two assistants, and the children and me. Images and video stills of the children at work and images of their final artwork help to bring these transcriptions to life. Citing the work of Riessman, Chase (2011) speaks to the power of the image, arguing that,

> Visual images are so central to our everyday lives that social scientists must attend to them if they are to understand more fully how people communicate meaning…narrative researchers who study visual images treat them as socially situated narrative texts that demand interpretation. (p. 426)

Through the inclusion of the children's voices via words and images, it is my hope to create a new space for multi-voiced narratives. Grounded in Myerhoff's ideas about writing in a third voice (as cited in Kaminsky, 1992) and Mazzei and Jackson's (2012) notion of writing between-the-two, I explore ways that the theories, ideas, and experiences of the children and myself can work together to create a newness of experience and writing. Myerhoff's conceptualization of a third voice rejects traditional anthropological and ethnographic discourses; instead, she considers a type of narrative that gives more power to the voice of the informant. It is "neither the voice of the informant nor the voice of the interviewer, but the voice of their collaboration" (Myerhoff, as cited in Kaminsky, 1992, p. 127). Mazzei and Jackson describe writing between-the-two as a "process of producing something not possible outside the space of the threshold where the 'two' produce thinking not possible otherwise" (p. 451). Merging my own narratives with the children's words and images is a way to combine "bits and pieces of each other" together (p. 451), meeting "halfway, in the in-between spaces…[as a] way to move toward justice, equality, and liberty" (Diversi & Moreira, 2016, p. 583). Embracing

multi-voiced approaches that consider multiple perspectives also has the power to make writing “richer, more nuanced, [and] more authentic” (Zeni, 2001, p. 161).

Yet this attempt does not ignore the politics of power tied up in writing and research. Greene and Hill (2005) posit that while some researchers do work hard to foster children’s involvement in all areas of research practices, “ultimately, however, it is the adults who control the world of publishing, policy making, the universities, the social services, and so on, so children’s independence and autonomy as researchers are fundamentally and intrinsically constrained” (p. 12). Routledge (1996) adds that, “the spaces within which, and from which we speak and write, are imbued with relations of power/knowledge. That we, the intellectuals, are privileged and not without complicity in a variety of oppressive structures and relations” (p. 402). For Routledge, the single voice only represents fragments of the reality it attempts to explore. It is the third voice that is able to articulate the ambiguity of reality.

I approach the kind of multi-voiced narrative embodied within my research as not “giving voice” to children, but creating spaces where the children’s voices can be made visible and listened to seriously. I make efforts not just in my writing but also in my teaching and research to include the children’s voices and ideas. I seek to make the children’s voices visible, creating “conditions of possibility” (Ailwood, 2011, p. 29).

Sharing ideas: Telling stories, documentation, and artwork on display. Upon initially conceptualizing this research, it was my hope to create a sort of amalgamation of the children’s voices and my voice. In order for this to happen, the children needed to be involved in the crafting of my research and the writing itself, rather than simply enacting the lived curriculum and pedagogy. Because I was interested in what the children were

interested in and how they navigated those interests in the classroom, I hoped to create space for them to talk about the nature of these interests. I wished for us to engage in dialogue about why they wanted to do the things they did, but I did not want to coerce them into these conversations. Rather, I had hoped that perhaps I could set the stage for conversations to occur without demanding that they happen via forced interactions, such as interviews.

The first step in this process was to show the children that I cared about what happened within the context of the class. I did this by creating documentation boards that primarily showed images of the children at work, with short textual descriptions of the kinds of things that interested them most from last Saturday. I also made sure to hang children's artwork from previous sessions somewhere in the room where the children could see and access them. Yet these attempts spurred no interest from the children other than the casual glance at the images or smile at seeing their work on the wall.

Motivated further to attempt to get the children involved in the process of reflecting on their experiences, I decided that I would craft narratives that told the stories of our experience together last week. I would read these stories while sharing images from last week's class. It was my hope that perhaps the children would comment on my story and add their own perspectives. On the fifth Saturday I introduced this idea to them:

> *Shana*: I wanna tell you guys a story. Do you remember on the very first day of art class I told you guys that I'm doing research and I'm trying to find an answer to a question? The question I'm trying to answer is, how can adults like me and Jessica and Amanda work with kids like you to make an art class where we are all working together, right? And it's not just us telling you guys what to do but

> sometimes you tell us what you want to do. Right? And part of my research is I want you guys to tell me about the kinds of things we've been doing in art class, okay? So what I'm gonna do is I'm gonna read you guys a story that I wrote about what we did last week. And I'm gonna show you guys some pictures to go along with the story. And then, when I'm done, you guys can tell me, like, if I got the story right or if there're things that I missed that we did last week, or if they're things that you want to add. Okay, do you guys think you can help me with that?

The children enjoyed this process and really liked seeing the images projected on the large screen in the classroom, but did not really seem to care to add anything in. They made some comments here and there about the fact that they also participated in some activity that I had described, or made "ohhs" and "ahhs" when seeing themselves or their work on screen, but nothing more.

Still engaged with the notion that they could inform my writing in some way, I changed this idea slightly and in addition to the stories and projected images, I created tri-fold documentation boards that had images with white paper next to them. I invited the children to add their ideas to the paper (or, if they didn't want to or couldn't write to ask a teacher to help them). I thought perhaps they would feel a desire to engage with this process outside the pressure of a large group meeting. But still they seem uninterested in this process and resisted my attempts to add their interpretations.

It was my goal to create a kind of "(re)presentation" where the children were "presented with representations of research data in order to gain their input so the researcher may (re)present their data as informed by the children's input" (Lahman, 2008, p. 295). The stories and images I shared with them during these moments were

experiences that stood out to me at the time as being consequential, though I had not yet had time to formulate theories about why. Some of them were moments or artworks that appear within this document and some were not. I was frustrated that this third voice amalgamation was not coming to fruition. However, I simply let it pass. Rather than a third voice, what came to the surface was the notion that children find their own means to resist power, even in spaces where it is limited. This attempt to ask them about their work was forced, and the children sensed it just as much as I did. So rather than push it further, I let it go, following the children's lead and interest to simply play and create rather than contemplate. This positioned them as experts in their own practice of learning and making.

What Was Not and Could Not Be

As with any research project, there are some clear and identifiable limitations to this inquiry. First and foremost, the scope of the research itself is limited. I researched with one small group of children and one teaching experience. There is an inherent lack of generalizability within such small projects. My findings will certainly be most relevant to the specific group of children and classroom environment that I constructed with the children. They may not necessarily be transferrable to other classrooms or teaching experiences.

The age of the children with whom I worked and the style of program constructed for the research are also pertinent limitations. I worked with pre-school and kindergarten-aged children. This very specific age demographic is important to note, especially in relation to the degree of traditional educational experiences the children may or may not have already experienced. Also, this research did not take place in a

traditional pre-school or elementary school classroom. The experiences and ideas drawn from this research, in a unique and specialized Saturday morning art class, may not be generalizable to a more traditional school experience, even with children of the same age.

Additionally, my own position as teacher-researcher can also be seen as a limitation. I certainly bring a degree of bias and assumption to the research process. Throughout this process, I am especially cognizant of my own positionality, as well as the positionalities of my assistants. It is important to note which ideas were generated by the children alone, and which ideas were formed in collaboration, as well as who initiated any collaborations. As this research deals primarily with issues of power exchange and authority within the art classroom space, it is especially important for me to recognize that I might have different ideas than the children about what constitutes power and authority. I was careful to provide space for the children to make choices that they were comfortable with, rather than simply doing the kinds of things *I* thought they should be doing in order to equalize our power relationships.

Finally, as I note above, my research questions within this inquiry are grounded in ideas about power and authority. Thus, I am mindful to when and how these ideas arose and were negotiated within the research process. However, there obviously are other actions brought up and actions embodied throughout the time span of the art program that relate to ideas outside of the lens of power/authority. While I remain primarily focused on the research questions at hand, other issues are not necessarily discussed within my data analysis process.

CHAPTER FOUR

MAKING IN THE NOMADIC SPACE: EXPLORING THE AFFECTS OF POSSIBILITY, FLUIDITY, AND AMBIGUITY

"The Biggest Castle Ever"

It was our second to last day of Wildcat Art. The children, showing a high interest in both building/construction and preserving their creations, had used up almost all of the wooden blocks in various endeavors with hot glue guns. They had made things such as volcanoes and bird houses. There were almost no blocks left, but I wanted to continue to foster the children's interest in building, so I decided to offer the children various recycled materials to build with. Lisa, who often spent her time quietly drawing or painting, was drawn to the small pieces of cardboard in this area. She approached Jessica calmly.

Lisa: Will you help me make a castle?

Jessica: Can I help you make a castle? What do we need to do?

Lisa: Make walls.

Jessica: Walls, okay. Like this?

Lisa: Yeah.

Jessica: And another one? Like that? Do you wanna put the tape on?

Lisa: Tape together.

Jessica: Yup. And then we need to get another one.

Lisa: I need alotta tape….The castle needs a lot. It looks like it needs some more. It looks like it needs some more shiny tape.

Jessica: I don't know if we have any more. I think this is all we have. Do you want me to tape it on this side?

Lisa: The castle needs a lot of tape…to hold it up. I need one more piece.

Jessica: One more piece…

Lisa: Somebody needs to buy some more shiny tape….My daddy is gonna be so proud of me. And my momma.

Jessica: Your mom and dad are gonna be so proud of you!

Lisa worked on her castle for close to 40 minutes, slowly adding pieces of cardboard to make it bigger and bigger, creating "the biggest castle ever!" (see Figure 2). She stopped only when her materials (cardboard and shiny tape) ran out. She spoke often of how proud her parents would be of her, as well as her desire to make the best and biggest castle ever.

Figure 2. Lisa's castle in the classroom and installed in the final exhibition

The creation of Lisa's castle serves as an example of the types of experiences open to the children in the Wildcat Art classroom: opportunities for them to work through and bring to life their own artistic ideas. As a space created for children, grounded in notions of trust, reciprocity, and respect, the children were not only encouraged to create their own opportunities for making, but also to challenge what it means to exist and make in the early childhood art classroom. Positioned within the historical conceptions of the early childhood education institution and the art education classroom space, in this chapter I attend to the how traditional early childhood educational spaces can be reimagined by deconstructing and reconceptualizing historical understandings of what it means to learn and make art in early childhood classrooms. I explore the ways in which Wildcat Art serves as a type of nomadic space (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987) that fosters many possibilities for both learning and making, valuing notions of fluidity, complexity, and ambiguity.

Problematic Spaces in Early Childhood Education and Art

Within the histories of both early childhood education and art education, there have been various understandings of the goals of the early childhood and art education classrooms. These goals have come to be understood as dominant constructions (Dahlberg et al., 2013). They exist in relation to ideas about children, education, art, teachers, and classrooms, and tend to argue for ideal ways for these elements to interact together. As institutionally sanctioned practices, these goals form mainstream ideas and truths about the best ways to engage in educational practices with young people. MacNaughton (2005) notes that truths which have been approved by those in positions of

power create an "authoritative consensus about how to 'be' that it is difficult to imagine how to think, act, and feel in any other way…the officially sanctioned 'truths' discipline and regulate us, i.e. they govern us" (p. 32). In thinking about early childhood, what we think we know about children, childhood, education, or families is quite dependent on the truths created by those who have been offered (or who have taken) the "right" to speak these truths (Canella, 2005).

Subscribing wholeheartedly to these practices is precarious because they contribute to close-minded perspectives. One way of doing things becomes the best way, and then the only way. Through critical inquiry, these truths can be renovated and transformed into deeper and more complex perspectives about the nature of teaching and working with young people (Alloway, 1997). These dominant discourses need to be first recognized, and then reexamined in order to understand where and why they originated. It is with this understanding that we can begin to challenge these ideas as "truths" and develop more meaningful and respectful ways of being with children in educational settings.

Through the exploration of these mainstream perspectives, I attempt to position this research as both a deconstruction and reconceptualization of possible spaces of early childhood art education. Within what follows, I offer ideas about mainstream constructions of the early childhood institution, the art education classroom, and early childhood art education, after which I briefly discuss the ways in which these dominant understandings can be challenged.

Production, Development And Control: The Early Childhood Education Institution

In a modernist conception of early childhood education, the child comes as tabula rasa, an empty vessel needing to be filled with knowledge (Dahlberg et al., 2013). Therefore, the role of the early childhood institution becomes that of a producer – of both care and child outcomes (Dahlberg et al., 2013). In the beginning of the 19th century, early childhood education became a space for the support of moral goals (Bloch, 1987). These types of educational spaces (which were not only confined to early childhood) were grounded on the belief that certain types of children, those from "poor families or from new immigrant or culturally 'different' families…needed educational training as well as moral guidance to become good American citizens" (Bloch, 1987, p. 30). These families were positioned as "dangerous, whose behavior must be governed through standardization and regulation" (Canella, 1997, p. 88).

This type of education as social intervention was understood as a space for the protection of society (Dahlberg et al., 2013), developing from a fear of those who are different (Canella, 1997). Dahlberg et al. (2013) define this as a space of social progress, a "form of social immunization or medication which will reduce current social ills or protect against future infection" (p. 70). In these experiences, children are viewed as in deficit; they are in need, weak, at risk, and dependent on adults (Dahlberg et al., 2013). Through this perspective, the role of the early childhood institution is both to moralize and prepare children for society.

The notion of preparing children for something to come later resulted not only in a focus on social issues, but also preparation for future school and work experiences. The early childhood institution became a space for the transmission of knowledge that would

help to ready children for the experiences of schooling in general (Dahlberg et al., 2013). Children were being taught to read and write as the early childhood institution moved to a focus on fostering progress in academic subjects (Bloch, 1987). Early childhood institutions began to make sure that children started school ready to learn (Dahlberg et al., 2013). Additionally, spaces of early childhood education began preparing young children for the world of work, focusing on manual training and emphasizing "conformity to an organization, [and] obedience to authority" (Bloch, 1987, p. 40).

As early childhood education moved away from ideas of social and moral intervention to a focus on school preparation, ideas about the best ways to develop children's academic knowledge were growing. In 1986, the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) introduced the developmentally appropriate practice (DAP) framework, which "prescribed best teaching practices" (Canella, 1997, p. 131) for early childhood. Since the introduction of DAP, many early childhood educators have questioned and challenged the idea of developmental truths of young children. Alloway (1997) argues that these "universalistic truths about stages of child development are being rigorously contested, reinterpreted, and struggled over" (p. 2). Citing the work of both Delpit (1988) and Jipson (1991), Alloway postulates that one of the many issues with DAP lies in its problematic nature for those children who live in cultures that are neither white, middle class, nor Anglo-American. In these universal assumptions, individual, social, cultural, and political contexts are often disregarded (Deans & Brown, 2008) in favor of all encompassing sets of facts/experiences that should fit the needs, lives, and education of all children.

Many early childhood reconceptualists argue that developmentalism in early childhood problematizes the field in various ways. First, it positions these culturally specific ideas as sets of facts about children. Dahlberg and Moss (2005) argue that DAP provides a singular way of understanding children and how they learn, thus normalizing them to a certain way of being. These understandings regulate and govern educators, parents, and children because, without them, we "cannot act appropriately or correctly with children, understand them, or even think about them" (MacNaughton, 2003, p. 84). It is these ideas that lead educators to believe that certain topics or materials are not meant to be explored with young children. Mueller (2012) explains that this creates a decontextualized form of curriculum in early childhood education, presenting the notion of curriculum as "a product that can universally guide student learning and development in a preconceived, measurable, accountable manner" (p. 60).

Prevailing ideas about what and how children should learn in spaces of early childhood education most often results in curricula that, in essence, hinder children's learning and experiences. Within these kinds of spaces and curricula, knowledge is understood as something that is to be communicated to and learned by the child, as absolute and fixed (Dahlberg et al., 2013). In thinking about this type of controlled curriculum, "the assumption is made that the teacher can control the learning environment (and by implication even the interactional behavior of the learner) in such a way as to achieve particular outcomes" (Canella, 1997, p. 103).

Cahill and Gibson (2012) argue that when teachers base what and how they teach on ideas about how children develop and what they (as teachers/adults) believe children should know, often the rich context of children's lives is left out of the experience.

Instead, these spaces of education become focused on helping children to learn ideas, behavior, and knowledge that are defined solely by the teacher (Bloch, 1987). This type of early childhood curriculum often results in the silencing of the voices of children to promote *our* knowledge of what is best for them (Canella, 1997). This "knowledge" is, of course, a narrow conception of knowledge, a singular piece that a person or people in power have decided is worth knowing.

The Art Teacher as Magician: School Art Under Control

Singular conceptions of what is worth knowing have also plagued the art classroom, resulting in narrow conceptions of what children's art in school should look like. Historically, this has often had a certain look. Efland (1976) describes it as "the school art style" (p. 37). This kind of art can be seen where good-intentioned teachers control their classroom so carefully that the children ultimately have no choice about what kind of art they make or what materials they use. Wilson (1974) argues that in traditional school art, "we give children materials and ideas and encourage them to make art in the ways we think they should with the subject matter we believe appropriate, and, sure enough, the work comes out looking just the way we knew it would" (p. 3). Within these kinds of experiences, children are not encouraged to explore ideas or concepts that are interesting for them; they are simply doing what they are told.

Wilson (1974) goes on to argue that this kind of school art is very different from the play art of children. He states,

> This art has seldom been allowed into our highly controlled art classes. It is the spontaneous play art of young people…it has little of the polished lushness of art

classroom art, but once one learns to look at tatty little drawings done in ball point on lined paper, a whole world of excitement unfolds. (p. 3)

This is the art that children make for themselves, rather than for adults. However, in traditional art classrooms, this type of art is rare. Rather, art educators often favor a more controlled space, where students engage in art making projects that are pre-planned and carefully designed.

Historically, this approach can be traced back to the early 20th century, when the field was exploring a formalist approach to art education (Gaudelius & Speirs, 2002). These curricular and pedagogical practices were grounded in a particular view of what art is; there were certain standards and qualities agreed upon when talking about "what makes a work of art successful" (p. 7). An inherently modernist approach, this view of art education focused on formal qualities of art (i.e., the elements and principles) and how they were represented in any one given artwork, child or adult created. These terms provided a language for talking about art, and defined certain artistic qualities that could be upheld or defied within an artwork. In this formalist view, Eaton (1988) notes that when looking at art, "we should not attend to *what it represents*, but to *how it presents*" (i.e., form over content) (as cited in Gaudelius & Speirs, 2002, p. 7, original emphasis). Thus, the purpose of art education was to teach children the formal elements and principles of art, and how to properly utilize them in order to create exemplary artworks.

While the early 20th century did give rise to an interest in formalistic approaches, at any given time, the field of art education has embodied multiple perspectives about what it means to teach, learn, and make artistically. Its history, in a way, is much more rhizomatic than linear. During this same period (and much earlier), there were those who

were more interested in fostering a child-centered or progressive philosophy within education and art education specifically (see Cane, 1924; Dewey, 1900, 1902, 1938; Hall, 1897; Jarvis, 1997; Rousseau, 1762/1979; Shaw, 1934). These perspectives rejected the ideas that grounded the formalist approach in favor of a perspective that focused on the inner thoughts and feelings of children. It was believed that children are born with an essential creative core – they are innocent, natural artists whose artwork needs protection from the dangerous outside influences of society and cultural corruption. Thus, if children are inherently creative, a type of natural unfolding of the child's art is the best way to approach art education; as such, children's visual arts experiences should be immune to not only outside cultural influences, but the intervention of adults as well (Thompson & Bresler, 2002). These ideas can be seen clearly in the work of Austrian art educator Franz Cizek, whose primary goal was to keep children's art free, naïve, and spontaneous (Eisner, 1973; Wilson, 1974). This approach was then reinvigorated by the work of Viktor Lowenfeld in the middle of the 20th century. His child-centered pedagogy prevailed in the field of art education, grounded upon the child's freedom of artistic expression and a non-interventionist approach from the teacher (Deans & Brown, 2008; Lowenfeld & Brittain, 1964/1987).

Today, the field of art education exists in a type of binary space. Many art educators recognize that there is more to teach than formal properties, however do not believe that a completely hands off approach is the right perspective either. In the early childhood and elementary classrooms this binary often results in projects that are more school art than not (Gude, 2013). Hathaway (2013) conceptualizes this form of art teaching (school art) as a type of magic act, where the teacher acts as a magician. In this

metaphor, the art classroom functions as a type of performance space, where, through magic, the teacher is able to get his or her students to produce works of art worthy of adult praise. First, the educator introduces the project or the "trick," explaining to students what their assignment is, and what they are expected to create or produce. Students are then given time to engage in this structured experience, often with little choice or control of what their final product looks like. The magic act culminates with the "final bow" where the resulting artwork is ready for display. Hathaway argues that this project is so "carefully engineered that all the problems have been solved (in advance, by the teacher), [and] so precisely orchestrated that every student is guaranteed success" (p. 10).

This type of art teaching is still unfortunately common in the field of art education. One must only look to Artsonia.com for evidence of these types of school art projects. Within this type of art education it is the educator who is in control.

> The art teacher, not the child, is the inventor, the selector, the decision maker, the problem finder, and the problem solver. She chooses the project, decides what materials are used, and plans how long students will toil. She may even choose the subject, color palette, style, and purpose of her students' artwork. (Hathaway, 2012, p. 11)

In this all too common art education experience we are teaching children what they do not know, teaching them things they cannot do without our help, all based on an adult conception of "good taste" (Thompson, 2013b, p. 94). In early childhood settings, this kind of school art was introduced when a more formalist approach to art education was embraced. Many early childhood art educators misjudged the relationship of art to

children's lives, and discounted art as a way to express meaning in favor of a focus on elements of art and formalist properties (Thompson and Bresler, 2002).

Process vs. Product: Polarities in Early Childhood Art Education

While this kind of school art can be clearly seen within early childhood art education classrooms there is another kind of artmaking that is also present: process based art. When progressive philosophies began to take root, early childhood art education was understood through the "*laissez-faire* style where the old slogan, 'the process is more important than the product', dominates teachers' philosophies and classroom practices" (McArdle & Piscitelli, 2002, p. 13, original emphasis). In this perspective, ECAE was thought of as a way to simply unlock the child's creativity (Eisner, 1973) through providing the space and materials for children to experiment and explore freely.

In 1973, Elliot Eisner identified seven pervading myths of art education, many of which continue to be relevant to the field of ECAE. The first myth he identified is that children will progress best in art when they are left to their own devices, provided that the teacher offers emotional support and plenty of art materials for them to explore. Thus, we are simply setting the stage for the child's natural creativity to flow from them. Additionally, he argued as falsity that the best type of art curriculum for young children provides the broadest variety of art materials with which one can work. These myths are perpetuated through the notion that when children are born into this world, they automatically understand how to communicate through art (McArdle, 2008).

The notion of process over product, perpetuated by the above myths, has come to dominate ECAE (Hamblen, 2002). This idea propagates the notion that all children need

to express themselves in art is the opportunity to engage with materials in a space where teachers don't "teach," and adults ask no questions. As McClure (2011) argues, this myth is perpetuated when people assume children only need the right conditions to release their essential creative energy, with the right conditions being conceptualized as free exploration.

The focus of "freedom over discipline" within ECAE is problematized further by McArdle and Piscitelli (2002) when they compare this type of art education to other forms of learning, such as literacy or numeracy. They posit,

> While most early childhood educators believe it is the right of every child to be taught the disciplines of language and mathematics, "freedom" still takes precedence when it comes to the right of every child to become visually and artistically literate. (p. 15)

It is here where we begin to encounter the problematic space where ECAE tends to find itself: either on one end of the spectrum or the other. This dichotomy of either/or positions us in a complicated space of truths regarding ECAE. In the classroom, art experiences for children tend to be one or the other: activities designed simply for exploration and expression or over-planned and premeditated cookie cutter projects (McClure, 2011). McClure (2011) adds that these extreme polarities in ECAE curriculum simply act to reinforce the myth of children's inherent creativity by refusing to occupy a space in between.

Critically Engaging: Thinking About Space in Early Childhood Art Education

It is this "space in between" that I aim to explore. It is within this space where dichotomies or truths can come to be challenged. We can move beyond process/product,

freedom/structure, and content/form. In order to begin to visualize what this space might look like, we must begin to engage critically with these prevailing constructions of educational spaces for young children. To engage critically is to "challenge the assumed consensus that comes with the dominant group, to make way for the contradictions and inconsistencies that accompany all forms of diversity, and to undermine issues of homogeneity" (Grieshaber, as cited in Cahill & Gibson, 2012, p. 515). Through this type of inquiry, we can begin to consider and feel comfortable with new visions for what early childhood art education can look like.

This begins with a changing idea about whom these types of spaces serve: adults or children. Dahlberg et al. (2013) note that within the dominant constructions of early childhood introduced above, it is the adults' interests that are served. These are spaces "where children are acted upon to produce predetermined, desirable outcomes" (p. 70) rather than spaces *for* children. If we resituate these early childhood educational spaces within a bigger picture of a civil society, Dahlberg et al. argue that they can now become places *for* children. This means a much bigger reimagining of the way in which both children and education are positioned within society at large. Civil society can be understood then as "'the space of un-coerced human association' where individuals can come together to engage in activities of common interest, which may be of many kinds – cultural, social, economic, and political" (Dahlberg et al., 2013, p. 76).

While this research does not claim to change society as a whole, it does attempt to challenge the micro society of early childhood art education, and the ideas about teaching and learning, as well as the relationships between adults and children, that occur within these spaces. This begins with the hope that the early childhood art classroom can

function as a micro civil society, grounded in notions of trust, reciprocity, and respect (Dahlberg et al., 2013). A powerful aspect of this space is the consideration of a multitude of perspectives and the acceptance and appreciation for difference, spaces conceptualized as sites of possibility, fluidity, complexity, and ambiguity (Dahlberg et al., 2013). A vision of this type of early childhood education can be seen in Reggio Emilia, where schools are "open and democratic, inviting exchange of ideas and suppressing distance between people" (Malaguzzi, 1993, p. 10).

Experiences for children and those fostered between teachers and students within this type of space are grounded in a co-construction of knowledge and identity, occurring "not from young children being taught but from what children do themselves, as a consequence of their activities, relationships, and the resources available to them" (Dahlberg et al., 2013, pp. 80-81). Through this practice, curriculum is developed not for the children, but alongside and with them. Children's ideas and theories help contribute to curriculum, fostering children's power and forming a type of lived curriculum (Cahill & Gibson, 2012). This type of "curriculum-as-lived" explores the experiences of learning, a type of "learning [that] is not *applied* to lived experiences; learning is living" (Davis & Sumara, 2011, p. 27, original emphasis). Rather than focusing on predetermined learning outcomes, a lived curriculum focuses on the "doing, being, making, creating, and living qualities of learning experiences" (Irwin & Chalmers, 2007, p. 179). With this type of curricular pedagogy ambiguity and possibility are valued and understood as something that is constantly changing (Fredriksen, 2012). It is "constructed in the process of exploring learner's [sic] emerging meaning making and new discoveries" (Hyun & Marshall, 2011, p. 48).

Within Reggio Emilia, teachers foster this type of living curricular space. Malaguzzi (1993) notes that it is their hope to create an "amiable school—that is, a school that is active, inventive, livable, documentable and communicative" (p. 9). Teachers and children engage in both active exploration and creative production, without "complete certainty" of where it might take them (Malguzzi, 1993, p. 9). This type of collaborative inquiry between adults and children begins with an imagining of what is possible, rather than beginning with a final end point in mind (Cahill & Gibson, 2012). As such, the curriculum becomes a creation of the classroom context, allowing both teachers and children to affect its progress. Cahill and Gibson (2012) argue that, as such, learning experiences "emerge uniquely with materials…that are defined by the specific context" (p. 98).

These types of learning experiences are offered, in part, by providing students with the "tools and resources for exploring and problem solving, negotiation and meaning making…[and] giving children the possibility to express themselves in many languages" (Dahlberg et al. 2013, p. 81). This perspective speaks directly to the possibilities offered to young children through art. Through explorations of both materials and processes children can begin to understand the languages of various artistic mediums and have opportunities to communicate in these languages. In this way, art becomes a form of meaning making – art can be used to help children realize their thoughts and actions, to form opinions, and to engage in relationships with other people (Knight, 2013). Art becomes embedded – rooted deeply into the life of the classroom and everything that occurs within it (Tarr, 2008).

Through a living curricular approach, early childhood art education can be understood as multifaceted. Art is recognized as a pretext for dialogue and interaction, as a way for children to represent what they already know and what they desire to know, as a way for us to learn and for children to communicate their experiences (Thompson, 2013b). The purpose of early childhood art education in this way is tied to understanding and developing art as a symbolic language, and as intellectual and interpretative activities (Thompson & Bresler, 2002) that allow children to communicate in and interpret their world (Deans & Brown, 2008). Art education curriculum for young children should foster the notions that children are capable of constructing knowledge through art experiences that are both guided and spontaneous; children exhibit multiple ways of knowing and learning through art; and children should be encouraged to both represent and share their thoughts, ideas, and theories through art (Tarr, 2008). This perspective follows Pinar's notion of curriculum as being a type of "understanding" rather than a transcendent process (as cited in Mueller, 2012).

Following this perspective, we can understand a critical approach to early childhood curriculum within the micro civil society of the art classroom as a "sociological, contextualized *process* laden with issues of power, authority, phenomenology, and interpretation" (Mueller, 2012, p. 58, original emphasis). This conceptualization of the early childhood art education space asks all of us (educators, researchers, and children) to engage in a space endowed with postmodern ethics, each of us taking responsibility for our choices (Dahlberg et al., 2013). Dahlberg et al. (2013) add that, as such, children are offered a great deal of responsibility—for themselves and for developing their own ideas about knowledge, identity, and their own possibilities. They

continue that this type of educational space gives "children opportunities to use their curiosity and creativity, to experiment and take responsibility, to make choices concerning their life and future…[contributing] to the emergence of a pluralistic patchwork quilt of co-existing world views and life experiments" (p. 60). It is with this image in mind, an image of a deconstructed and reconceptaulized view of early childhood art education built within a new social space of childhood, that I engaged in this research.

Experiences in a New Social Space of Early Childhood Art Education

As a result of this type of space and curriculum, the children in Wildcat Art encountered many possibilities for making, learning, and doing that fell outside the traditional confines of early childhood art education. In the vignettes that follow, I share examples of how the children altered their way of being within the classroom to match the opportunities offered to them, developed and followed through on the creation of their own ideas, and rejected the traditional boundaries of materials.

Being In The Classroom

Although one of the broad aims of this research was to create a space where the power and control of the adult educators was inherently challenged, there was still, of course, authority that rested upon me as lead teacher and researcher. This was unavoidable, and I in no way wish to reflect otherwise. There were many choices that I made that affected, sometimes unconsciously, the classes themselves and the children's experiences within them. However, there were very deliberate choices that I made at the beginning of the program that contributed to the culture of the class itself; these were designed to help challenge these ideas of power and control. These choices were both physical (such as the design of the classroom space and the materials offered) and

emotional/conceptual (reflecting ways of being or acting within the space). All of these choices aimed to provide a space where there were multiple ways to exist as both adult and child and various ways to create.

The Wildcat Art classroom was thoughtfully curated to suggest an openness of possibility and interaction (see Figure 3). Directly to the left upon entering was an array of two-dimensional materials organized by color – markers, colored pencils, sharpies, crayons, and construction paper. Available in the same area were other items like rulers, scissors, hole punchers, tape, pipe cleaners, and staplers. These materials were located directly near the children's sketchbooks, which were often the first things they worked on when they came in in the morning. In other areas of the room there were also different types and sizes of paper, watercolors, tempera paint, and a variety of loose parts for the children to use (both natural and manmade). Additionally, there were two overhead projectors and a light table always available.

Figure 3. Two-dimensional materials, natural loose parts, provocation offered on light table.

At the beginning of the program, the children's ways of interacting with the materials offered to them were fairly traditional. They would often ask before using or touching anything, and they did not spend a lot of time exploring all the materials available. They would wait until Jessica, Amanda, or I would directly offer them something to use. Additionally, when they requested a certain material, like scissors, they were reluctant to get it themselves or even look hard for it when they were pointed in the right direction. They felt much more comfortable when they were physically handed any sort of material.

My hopes for their experience within this space were quite the opposite. The materials were out in the open and available for the children, and I had hoped they would use them freely. However, their prior experience in other types of educational or child care settings and with adults had conditioned them otherwise. They were not accustomed to having the opportunity to simply get what they wished or needed. Adults were, in the past, the dispensers of everything – choices, materials, instructions, and rules. They came to this class with predetermined ideas about what it means to be a good child and/or student, almost with an engrained fear of doing something wrong or pushing boundaries.

This was also evident in the way the children engaged with the classroom itself. At any given point throughout the 2.5 hour class, there were many provocations set up for the children, and opportunities for them to freely engage with materials/processes. However, they would often ask if they could switch activities. They simply did not feel comfortable moving from one area of the room to another without permission from an adult.

These trained behaviors were also visible in the ways in which the children reacted to adult requests or questions. There were times throughout each class where I asked the children to meet on the rug so we could have communal conversations. During one of the first few classes, Lisa made a comment that when we sit on the rug we should sit "criss-cross applesauce." While I did make the request that the children join me on the carpet, I offered no requirements on how or where they needed to be or sit. Lisa inherently connected my request that we all sit on the floor together with the control of her own body (and suggestions for ways to control other children as well) during this time. She interpreted my teacher request with other typical teacher requests, and as a result, automatically disciplined her body in a way that I did not ask her to.

Yet, as the children began to feel more comfortable within the classroom and with the types of interactions they had with Amanda, Jessica, and me, they started to develop their own relationship with the space and materials. During our third class, we were gathering on the carpet for a discussion, and Ben resisted this communal gathering. When he was probed a bit further to join the group, he replied that he was in the middle of working on something important that he could not stop.

Saul also began to challenge these group meetings where I asked the children to pause their work for a few moments and come together. In our fourth class, Saul came to the carpet for our conversation, but refused to pause his work. For the past few weeks he had been increasingly interested in using the flip digital video cameras. He would spend large amounts of class time engaged with the video cameras, walking around and filming the classroom while narrating various events. On this day, he brought the camera to the carpet with him and recorded about 1.5 minutes of video during our conversation. Within

this time he filmed me speaking about our upcoming museum visit, other children in various positions on the carpet, as well as himself – moving the camera from his shoes, to his legs, and finally up to his face, turning it around so he was filming himself. It was obvious to me that Saul was filming, but I felt no need to stop him. However, as our conversation drew to a close and we were getting ready to head to the museum, I did intervene.

> *Shana:* Saul, I'm gonna need for you to give me that camera. Can you stop your recording for me?
>
> *Saul:* Uh, okay.

My intervention in his process at this point was not due to the fact that he was doing something that I did not approve of, or even perhaps that he was not listening to our conversation (which focused on what we could do and not do within the museum), but more so because we were in a moment of transition. I needed him to pay attention at this point to his surroundings and my directions about getting to the museum.

As the children began to spend more time in the Wildcat Art classroom and more time with Amanda, Jessica, and me, their fluidity with materials and the classroom space began to grow. They reached a point (between the fourth and fifth class sessions) where they no longer asked before using materials that were out, and they began to request additional materials that they did not see. Additionally, their physical movement in the classroom began to become more fluid as well. They would switch from one activity to another on their own, without asking permission. This shift was very noticeable, and I argue that it was the fluidity within the classroom that led to the possibility for the children to engage with their own artmaking ideas.

Creating Projects: The Projector Stories

During the length of Wildcat Art there were some materials that were constantly available for the children to work with. Among those were two old overhead projectors. Accompanying these projectors were various solid, transparent, and translucent loose parts; transparency images of things the children expressed interest in (such as castles, volcanoes, rainbows, and underwater animals) and things I had offered (such as desert scenes and cacti); as well as blank transparency sheets that could be drawn on (see Figure 4). These projectors were a constant source of interaction among the children, and most often they used these materials as I had assumed they would. They placed materials on the projectors that created impermanent designs, interacted with the projections on the wall physically, and even took photographs of their work. However, the open ended nature of the materials and the lack of direct instruction on how they should/could be used did open up possibilities for the children to develop their own ideas about what they could create with what they were offered.

Figure 4. Ben and John interacting with a projected image, loose parts on the projector, Ben experimenting with various materials.

On the second day of Wildcat Art, Saul began to spend time with the overhead projectors and specifically the image transparencies that accompanied them. Amanda noted him sitting on the floor in front of one of the projectors with some of the image transparencies alongside him. After putting a castle image on the projector, he proclaimed, “Look you can see the castle up on the wall!” He then found a volcano transparency and put it on top of the castle one, declaring, “I made the castle on fire! I put the volcano on the castle and now it is on fire!” At the very end of class, with his mother impatiently waiting, Saul extended this interest in layering the transparencies into a storytelling experience. Still sitting on the floor, he explored layering a volcano image over a desert landscape, noting, “and finally when someone was walking across the desert they realized ‘huh! This desert was once a volcano!’”

Though I’ve utilized these same materials with various children over the course of many years, I had never observed this type of storytelling before – it was not something that I was prepared for. However, it was something that was repeated by Saul as well as by Seth throughout Wildcat Art and extended into video documentation as well. During our third class, Seth asked me to film a story he had created with the transparencies. Employing the same technique as Saul, he layered each transparency on top of another, adding a new one with each arc of the story (see Figure 5).

> Seth: There was a beautiful rainbow on a field of houses. And then, right before their eyes, a castle showed up. And then an explosion! And then after the explosion…you…oh, there it is…we were all under water. So three jellyfish, the stinger jellyfish was the deadliest jellyfish of the sea. And then they saw a

beautiful seahorse. And then an underwater catfish. And then land came back.

The end.

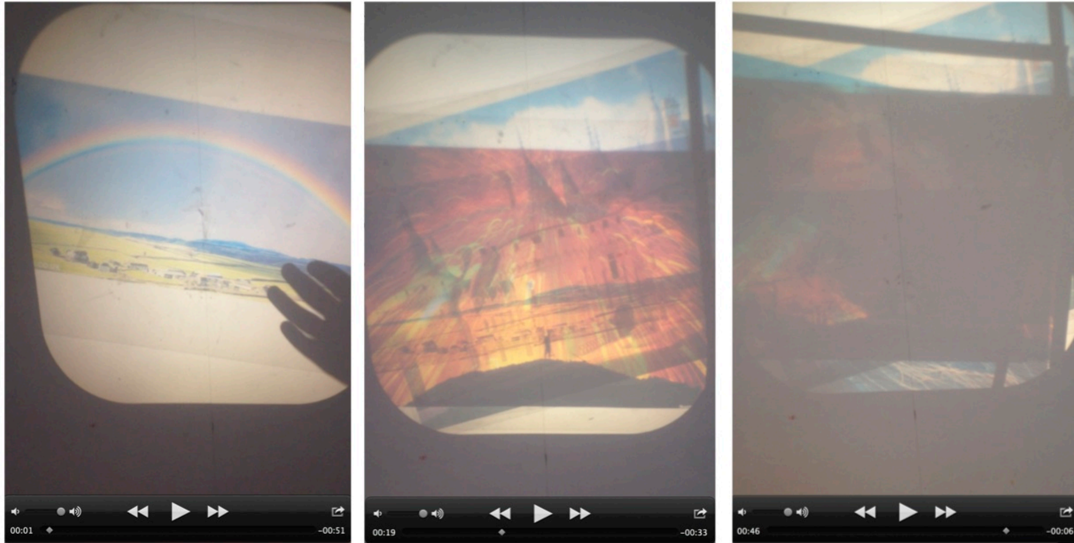

Figure 5. Stills from the video of Seth's story; transparencies are layered on top of each other.

Seth, enjoying the experience of both storytelling and using the projector, retold this story over and over. While a few words changed each time, the essence of his story remained the same. While he worked, he faced away from the wall, looking primarily at the projector as he added each new image, focusing on the story arcs rather than the images he was projecting. During his second retelling of the story, which was also being video recorded, I decided to extend Seth's experience by asking him to focus on the projection itself rather than the story.

Seth*:* One day there was a beautiful rainbow on a field of houses. And then, right before our eyes, a castle showed up. And then after the castle showed up, there was an explosion. Boom boom boom boom. And then they were all under water…the deadliest one in the sea. When it stings, then you'll be dead. One

touch, and then you'll be dead in the death stream. And then we saw a sea horse that doesn't, that doesn't sting [at this point Seth placed the jellyfish transparency on top of the volcano explosion image].

Shana: Can we see the sea horse though Seth? Look at the wall.

Seth*:* Oh [he pulls the jellyfish transparency off, realizing that because there are so many images on top of each other you can't see anything in detail].

Shana: So what can we do so that we can see?

Seth*:* Hmmmm [he pulls all the transparencies off]. How about when we do the story, we should take off each one?

Shana: Oh, ok. So you should take off each one?

Seth*:* One day there was a beautiful rainbow on a field of houses [he takes off the rainbow and adds the castle]. And then, right before their eyes, and then a castle showed up [he takes off the castle] and then there's an explosion. Boom boom boom boom [he takes off the volcano and adds the underwater image]. And then we're all under the sea [he takes off the underwater scene and adds the jellyfish] and then we saw one of the deadliest jellyfishes. One touch, and then you'll be dead. One touch, and then you'll be dead in a death stream [he takes off the jellyfish and adds the seahorse]. And then, there was a seahorse [he takes off the seahorse and adds the cactus]. And then after the seahorse, we saw an underwater, and then after that we saw an underwater cactus [he takes off the cactus]. And then after that we saw a, land showed up [he adds the image of the double rainbow]. The end.

As Seth moved each single transparency off the projector to make the next image

visible, he placed them down on the floor, in a singe line, reflecting the order of the images and thus, the story. When our recording was done, I noted his careful arrangement of the transparencies and he asked me to take a photograph of the line of images (see Figure 6).

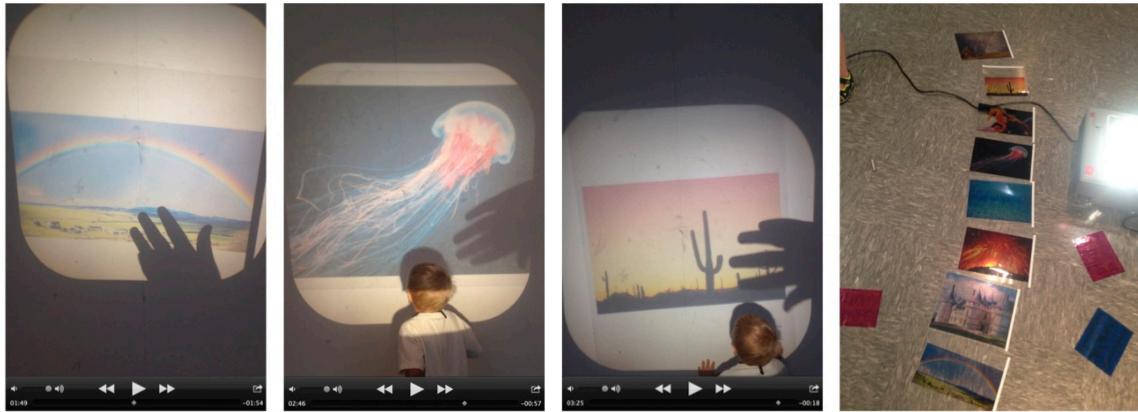

Figure 6. Stills from the third video of Seth's story - he takes each transparency off before adding the next image; transparencies on the floor in a line after they have been removed from the projector.

Both Seth and Saul enjoyed telling stories with the projector images, and built off each other's knowledge and experience within this process. The chaotic nature of the Wildcat Art classes made it hard to note exactly how these ideas were communicated among Saul and Seth, however the experiences recorded through classroom documentation help to create some sort of timeline. Saul's first storytelling encounter most likely inspired Seth to do the same, and Seth's realization of the effects of layering did not go unnoticed by Saul. During our fourth class, Saul created another story with the images, this time rejecting the layering technique and taking up Seth's process of moving each transparency aside as the story unfolded.

Saul: Once upon a time there was a castle. Then it formed and got blown up. Then, in its place was, and in its place was a cactus. And the cactus lived for lots of years. And it got blown up by a volcano. Perwww. Berwww. Then, in the cactus's place was a canyon. And then in the canyon, along came a dry jellyfish that perched on the canyon. Vvvvvvv. And then the canyon got destroyed by the jellyfish. And in its place was a fiery volcano. And then the volcano got destroyed by a jellyfish. Then in the volcano's place there was a valley. Then the valley got exploded by a volcano. Then in its place was a castle. Then the castle got destroyed by a jellyfish. Then lots of volcanoes came. This volcano came, and this volcano came, all the volcanoes. Look at this big volcano.

Lisa's castle (described at the beginning of this chapter) and Seth and Saul's projector stories serve as examples of creative activities initiated by the children themselves rather than adults or teachers. While both artmaking experiences exist within the confines of what could be termed appropriate classroom activities (as they were using art materials in appropriate ways for the sake of making), they were in no way pre-planned or teacher presented projects. These works resulted from the time and opportunities the children were given to create based on their own ideas, questions, interests, and theories.

Challenging Material Boundaries: Making Marks on Nature

While planning Wildcat Art, I knew that I wanted to find a way to "teach" that would inherently challenge the traditional early childhood art experiences that were usually offered to children. One of the methods that I employed to directly engage in this was to gather the children together during our first class and ask them what kinds of art

experiences they wished to have. During this meeting Alex replied that he really wanted to make art outside. Many of the other children agreed, and so for our second class I came up with some ideas about how the children might engage in this “make art outside” experience. I shared the land art of Andy Goldsworthy and Richard Shilling with them before we moved outside, thinking that this might inspire creation with natural materials. Yet there was no formal lesson planned nor any type of required making. Together (children and adults), we carried various art making materials out to the courtyard. We brought natural materials as well as more traditional ones – sticks, rocks, leaves, pinecones, paper, string, watercolors, markers, etc. Some of the children even selected their own materials to bring outside – things that they really wanted to use in making, such as pipe cleaners.

Figure 7. Children painting one of the trees outside; marks on one of the painted trees.

Some of the children were inspired by the artists that I had shared and set to work creating animal houses with natural materials. However, there were other children who chose to combine the man made with the natural, and began experimenting with

traditional material boundaries. Elissa began her outdoor artmaking experience with a strong declaration of "I'm going to paint the tree." Jessica, observing Elissa's plan, noted that she marched over to one of the large trees in the courtyard with a paintbrush full of watercolor in hand. After the initial marks had been made, breaking the conventional classroom custom of painting only on paper, other children joined in. Soon there were at least three other children who all worked alongside Elissa in her task of painting the tree (see Figure 7). Danielle and John seemed inspired by the idea of painting on a new and unconventional material. Rather than join in the tree painting, they embarked on a different route of "painting rocks." For them, this was primarily a tactile and sensory experience, resulting in the dropping of small rocks into jars of water that were tinted with watercolor (see Figure 8). This was, clearly, how you painted rocks.

Having observed the children's desire to paint on natural materials, during our third class I offered them the opportunity to paint on things from nature inside the classroom. I proposed this project to the children at the end of our second class, after watching them paint rocks and trees, and many of them were very excited about this prospect. So the next week I offered the children pieces of bark, sticks, pinecones, and rocks (both large and small), as well as painting materials - pallets with paint, brushes, and small jars of water to wash their brushes. Though there was no direct instruction, the natural materials were offered in lieu of paper as an invitation to create using only the materials provided. John and Danielle, seeing some of the same materials they had enjoyed so much last week (the jars of water and small rocks) got to work creating in the same manner – they put rock after rock into the small jars of water until they began to overflow, spilling water all over the table and the floor (see Figure 8). While it was

clearly my intent that there was no single way to explore these materials, this was not exactly what I had in mind. For safety reasons, I felt the need to intervene at this point. I was worried about children slipping on the water on the floor, so I stopped Danielle and John from "painting" any more rocks, and cleaned up the mess they had made.

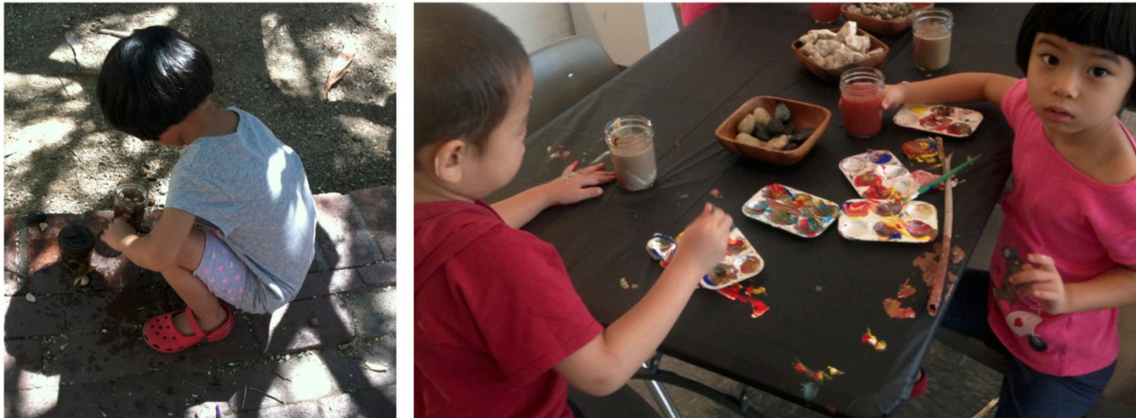

Figure 8. Painting rocks outside and in the classroom.

In each class session I continued the practice of engaging in conversation with the children about things that they were interested in, and then attempted to bring these elements back into the classroom through various provocations or invitations. A few of the young girls expressed an interest in flowers, so I brought some into class during our fourth meeting to extend this inquiry. I offered two small bouquets of flowers on the light table, alongside magnifying glasses, painting materials, and paper. Two children engaged with this opportunity - Beth and Danielle. Beth participated in a very traditional way, the way I had originally imagined. She created two observational paintings – one of each bouquet. Danielle, however, interacted with these materials in a less conventional manner. Engaging once again in a more sensory and tactile experience, she used the paint and brushes available to paint on the flowers themselves (see Figure 9). She created no art

product per se, but more so used the materials available to participate in a creative experience, challenging the established ideas that both Beth and I had about the provocation itself. The painting of trees, rocks, and flowers, at their core, inherently confront established norms about behavior within an art educational space, while at the same time worked to reject traditional boundaries of materials and their appropriate uses.

Figure 9. Beth's painting of the yellow flowers; Danielle painting on the yellow flowers.

Being Nomadic

The opportunities for the children to modify their ways of being and interacting within the classroom, engage in artmaking inspired by their own ideas, and explore the possibilities of materials was possible because the classroom was constructed as a space of possibility and fluidity. Drawing upon the theories of Deleuze and Guattari (1987), I argue that the Wildcat Art classroom can be understood as a type of nomadic space characterized by change, movement, and improvisation rather than rules and structure (Sherbine & Boldt, 2013). Within the following sections, I explore how the children's experiences shared above can be conceptualized through Deleuze and Guattari's (1987)

understanding of nomadicism. First I explain the key concepts related to nomadism as a whole, and follow that with an analysis of the children's art and experiences through the lens of nomadic theory.

Nomos And Logos

Deleuze and Guattari (1987) present the notion of the nomadic first through an understanding of a "nomad science" or a "minor science," arguing that it represents a type of understanding grounded in notions of becoming and heterogeneity (p. 361). They introduce the idea of "nomos" as a way to conceptualize this idea. Nomos reflects a way of arranging people, thoughts, or spaces "that does not rely on an organization or permanent structure" (Roffe, 2005, p. 184). It stands in contrast to "logos," a space where "everything has its right place; it is a structured and ordered conception of existence" (p. 185). Logos space is characterized by boundaries and structure. If nomos is understood as a minor science, logos is considered a "'royal' science, one based upon universal values…[that] naturally leads to truth" (p. 185).

This interpretation lays a solid groundwork for understanding ideas about the nomadic as a space or way of thinking/being that rejects notions of universality. It is a space that has no intrinsic structure and can be viewed as open. "Nomad thought…does not ally itself with [a] universal thinking subject…it does not ground itself in an all-encompassing totality but is on the contrary deployed in a horizonless milieu that is a smooth space" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 379). It is conceptualized as a site of possibility grounded in movement.

Smooth vs. Striated Space

The notion of a "smooth space," which characterizes the nomadic, is understood as one that has no homogeneity; it is never constant but rather always in a state of multiplicity (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 371). The smooth space is an open space where one is not required to move in any singular way or direction; "the movement is not from one point to another, but becomes perpetual, without aim or destination" (p. 353). One's experience within this type of space can never be characterized in any one way; it is situational because the space is always in a constant state of flux. Sherbine & Boldt (2013) describe the experience of the nomad in this smooth space as "loyal not to the rules but to her/his own receptivity to the possibilities that emerge in the present assemblage" (p. 85).

This smooth space of the nomad stands in contrast to what Deleuze and Guattari refer to as the striated space. The smooth "operates in an open space throughout which things-flows are distributed, rather than plotting out a closed [striated] space for linear and solid things" (p. 361). They liken the striated space to a game of chess – each piece moves in very specific and deliberate ways, and they are unable to move in any other way. It can be understood as a space that values intrinsic properties that determine how people relate to each other and the space itself (Colebrook, 2005). Both striated space and those that inhabit it are coded with certain identities that they act out.

The State vs. The Nomad

Deleuze and Guattari (1987) present the notion of the nomadic (or nomos) in contrast to ideas about the State (or logos), which is understood as a space of control.

> One of the fundamental tasks of the State is to striate the space over which is reigns…it is a vital concern of every State not only to vanquish nomadism but to control migrations and, more generally to establish a zone of rights over an entire "exterior," over all of the flows traversing the ecumenon. (p. 385)

Sherbine & Boldt (2013) describe the notion of the State as a way to "represent that which is the static, the rigid, the homogenized; it is adherence to the rules out of habit or fear" (p. 85). It is understood as a form that remains identical and reproduces itself in the same way over and over (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987).

Conceptualized in this way, the State represses the nomad. Deleuze and Guattari (1987) offer the metaphor of an archer shooting an arrow as a way to understand this subjugation. In the smooth space, the arrow being shot does not necessarily go in a straight line from point a to point b, but rather can be sent to any point and is affected by both the archer and the target (p. 375). They go on to argue that when a "thinker" or perhaps a nomad shoots an arrow, there is "a man of the State" that wants to assign him a specific target or aim (p. 378). The State works to create and foster striated spaces that limit both mobility and possibility.

Education as a Striated Space

Through the lens of Deleuze and Guattari (1987) traditional schools and classrooms can be viewed as striated spaces controlled by the State. They are governed by structure; there are certain ways to exist as teacher and student within a specific type of classroom and there is often little room for negotiation of these roles. Its curriculum functions in a similar fashion, grounded in notions of "sameness" (Sherbine & Boldt,

2013, p. 79) or commonality. Classrooms are not open, but built with “walls, enclosures, and roads between enclosures” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 381).

Understood in this way, this type of educational space is, as Deleuze and Guattari describe of striated space, both limited and limiting: “it is limited in its parts, which are assigned constant directions, are orientated in relation to one another, divisible by boundaries” (1987, p. 382). This conceptualization of striated space, they note, actually works to “contain” smooth spaces, slowing and preventing its growth.

There is an inherent level of control that exists here, an “arborescent type that centers around organs of power” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 358). This is a hierarchical approach to education where knowledge comes down from those endowed with it (the State: teachers, administration, testing authorities, etc.). This space stands in contrast to the nomadic, actually working to break down smooth spaces.

> The State does not give power (*pouvoir)* to the intellectuals or conceptual innovators; on the contrary, it makes them a strictly dependent organ with an autonomy that is only imagined…if the State always finds it necessary to repress the nomad and minor sciences…it does so not because the content of these sciences is inexact or imperfect, or because of their magic or initiatory character, but because they imply a division of labor opposed to the norms of the State. (p. 368)

Making and Engaging in Nomadic Space: The Children and the Classroom

The experiences of the children described earlier within this chapter (ways of being in the Wildcat Art classroom, creating their own projects, and challenging material boundaries) were possible because the classroom was constructed as a type of smooth

nomadic space. There was no single way to be or exist in the classroom, no requests by teachers for children to sit "criss-cross applesauce" or need for children to ask permission before using materials. Neither the space nor the experiences within it were defined in advance. Rather, they were constructed and altered as children and adults moved within it and created it. It became a "space with extrinsic properties…produced from the movements that then give that space its peculiar quality" (Colebrook, 2005, p. 182).

The notion of movement grounds the Wildcat Art classroom as a nomadic space. Roffe (2005) explains, "nomadic life takes place in a non-structured environment where movement is primary" (p. 185). Sherbine and Boldt (2013) refer to this as a "freedom to wander, to make use of the known while pursuing the new" (p. 84). This quality of movement was evident within the classroom, and grew as the children became more comfortable with the idea of this space as nomadic. Their initial reluctance to move, their need to ask permission for a change in process, and even the idea of disciplining their bodies while sitting were rejected the more time they spent in the classroom. Soon they became comfortable with the act of getting up when they wanted to, acquiring the materials they needed to complete a creative task, or even rejecting teacher requests to pause their work and be still.

The children's role in the Wildcat Art classroom can be likened to that of a nomad. As Deleuze and Guattari (1987) explain,

> The nomad has a territory; he follows customary paths; he goes from one point to another….although the points determine paths, they are strictly subordinated to the paths they determine, the reverse of what happens with the sedentary….a path is always between two points, but the in-between has taken on all the consistency

> and enjoys both an autonomy and a direction of its own….even though the nomadic trajectory may follow trails or customary routes, it does not fulfill the function of the sedentary road, which is to *parcel out a closed space to people*, assigning each person a share and regulating the communication between shares. The nomadic trajectory does the opposite; *it distributes people (or animals) in an open space*, one that is indefinite….a space without borders or enclosure. (p. 380, original emphasis)

The children travelled in the classroom as nomads. They moved from point to point, from process to process, from choice to choice. However, there were no predetermined paths for them to follow; how they moved among these points was not laid out in advance. They could interact with each process as they wished or even not at all. There were no required activities or means to engage with the provocations offered.

The children's rejection of the traditional boundaries of materials can be understood as a type of nomadic creation. In these moments, they were making in these types of in-between paths, challenging preconceived trajectories. In a way, the materials and the space both became nomadic as well – there was no single way to use or create with them or in them. The trees outside became a canvas for painting, a place to put a birdhouse, and an offering of shade to play under. The flowers in the classroom offered something beautiful to look at and a pliable surface for paint. The classroom functioned as a space that did not limit them with "borders or enclosures" but rather encouraged multiple ways of knowing, being, and interaction.

In a more traditional classroom endowed with qualities of striated space, teachers and students have specific roles and identities, and their interactions with each other and

the classroom itself are acted out based on those prescribed definitions. These types of classrooms are grounded in the rejection of movement and an appreciation for order or structure. In the Wildcat Art classroom there were no required ways of being; children were free to pursue their own interests, desires, and actions. They were nomads. Conceptualized in this way, the classroom was, in essence, created by the experiences of those within it. Each child's (or adult's) actions and experiences affected everyone else and their experiences. Deleuze and Guattari (1987) describe the experience of the nomad in a similar way,

> The nomads are there, on the land, wherever there forms a smooth space that gnaws, and tends to grow, in all directions. The nomads inhabit these places; they remain in them, and they themselves make them grow, for it has been established that the nomads make the desert no less than they are made by it. (p. 382)

Embracing the nomadic in the Wildcat Art classroom allowed the children to reject the boundaries and associations that come with traditional classroom spaces. Additionally, they developed a level of control over the space because their actions helped to shape it.

The ways in which the children altered their ways of being in the classroom provide a nice example of how the space affected and was affected by the children (understood perhaps as a co-construction of space). As they became more comfortable with the classroom, the values that undergirded it, and the materials available, they began to create in unexpected ways and affect each other's experiences. As Seth's and Saul's projector stories developed over numerous classes, it became clear that while they created them primarily independently, the actions of the other were taken into consideration and built upon. They were not offered the projectors and transparencies with specific

outcomes or required uses, but were given the freedom to engage with these materials as they would. As such, their interactions with the materials grew and developed based on each other's experiences rather than a singular way of knowing or using. This in turn affected what was possible to create within the classroom space itself.

Lisa's experience creating her castle out of tape and cardboard can also be attributed to the co-constructed nature of the classroom. While the cardboard was part of a planned provocation that I initiated for the students, the tape was not. The tape entered our classroom with Alex, who brought it along perhaps with intent to make something with it or perhaps just because its aesthetic qualities were lovely (silver, shiny, and firm). However Alex's engagement with the Wildcat Art classes were sporadic – at times he was happy to engage with materials and artmaking processes, while at others his desire to simply wander and explore overtook his desire to create. This particular class was an exploration rather than a creation day for Alex and his interaction with the tape exhibited this craving. Sitting on the floor alongside the recycled materials, Alex rolled the tape throughout the classroom and wildly chased it as it extended beyond his reach. At some point the novelty of this game wore off, and the tape was left on the floor near the recycled materials, eventually being picked up and used by Lisa in her castle creation.

The development of Lisa's castle was due as much to her freedom to create whatever she desired as to the availability of the shiny silver tape offered by Alex. Both the acquisition of the tape from Alex as well as the introduction of the tape into the classroom space itself reflects qualities of the nomadic. The classroom as a smooth space was able to "change meaning drastically depending on the interactions they [the spaces] are part of and the concrete conditions of their exercise or establishment" (Deleuze &

Guattari, 1987, p. 387). In this type of shifting space, the nature of teaching, learning and creating can be altered in meaningful ways that are not always foreseeable.

Conceptualized in this way, the classroom and the actions of the children within it are understood through the lens of nomos, where it is possible to follow rather than copy (Roffe, 2005). A space of logos, grounded in the idea of copying, can be likened to a regime of truth: something is done the same way over and over simply because we are told that that is the right way for it to be. Materials are used in certain ways, children engage in prescribed and developmentally appropriate activities, and both children and teachers live out their traditional educational roles. Yet the notion of following creates a different kind of space. Following suggests an exploration of ideas, the ability to go in multiple directions or travel various paths. The provocation of the flowers offered in Wildcat Art offers a way to think about this notion of following in the classroom. The flowers were not presented as a closed material; they were simply introduced into the space alongside other materials. While Beth chose to paint them in an observational sense, Danielle painted them in a literal sense. Because of how the flowers, as a material, were offered, a space was created where the children were encouraged to follow.

As the children made the space what it was due to their choices and actions, the space in turn helped to "make" the children, their experiences, and their artistic creations. By embracing qualities of the nomadic in the classroom, the atmosphere of the space helped the children to understand that their ideas and ways of being are just as important as the teachers'. The welcoming of their own artistic theories, projects, and materials communicates to the children that their own beliefs and actions are worthwhile; that they have important ideas that deserve to be developed and heard.

CHAPTER FIVE

COLLABORATIONS BETWEEN ADULTS AND CHILDREN IN ETHICAL SPACES

“This is Gonna be Looking Great”

It was our third day of Saturday morning art class. Seth walked over to me, one of the flip video cameras in his hands. “Will you build something so I can film you?” he asked. Flustered with the class full of 14 preschool aged children, I responded to Seth that perhaps he could find a friend to work him instead. Instantly, I realized I had made an error. Why didn’t I want to help Seth create his video? My realization came just in time, and as Seth turned around to walk away, I called out to him. “Seth, come back. Of course I’ll help you.” Seth was very clear on when I should begin. He started filming, offering me positive feedback on how my sculpture was coming along, and even encouraging me to use certain blocks rather than others (see Figure 10).

Me: So I’m gonna build something. I don't know what it is yet though.

Seth: I know…can you use these two pieces next?

Me: Sure! [I add the two pieces that Seth requested I use].

Seth: Okay. This is gonna be looking great.

Me: It looks great?

Seth: Yeah, it’s gonna *be* looking great.

Me: So it’s *gonna* look great. It doesn't look great yet?

Seth: Yeah…just add one more piece and then it’ll look great. [I add one final piece].

Me: Is it done?

Seth: Yeah. [Seth ends the recording].

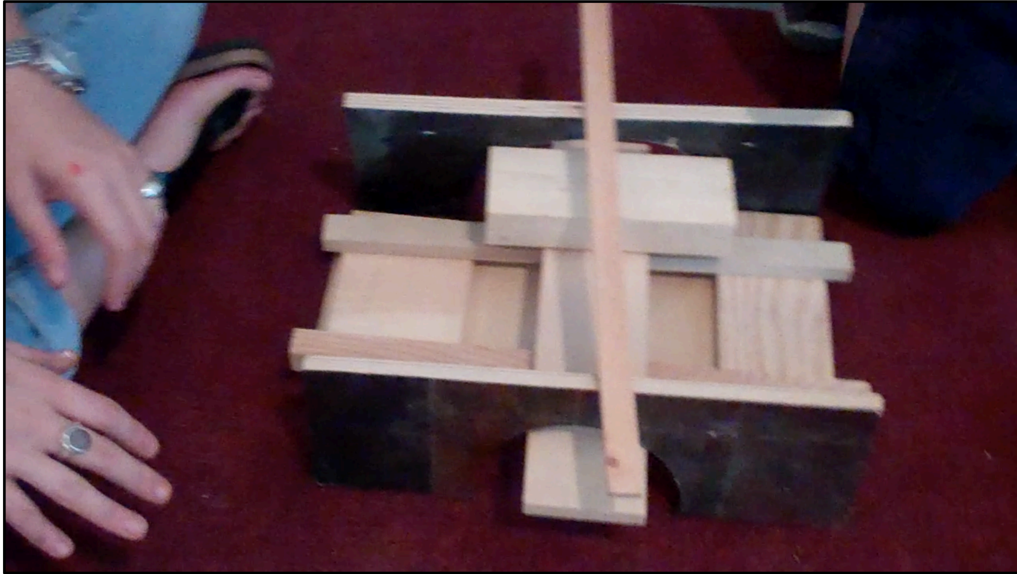

Figure 10. Still of Seth's video of my construction

This experience serves as an example of what I refer to as child led collaborative encounters. Throughout the course of this ten-week program, there were a number of these types of collaborations that occurred between the children and me as well as between my assistants and the children. Within the context of this chapter, I explore these types of collaborations as ethical encounters and respectful interdependent relationships. First I ground these conceptualizations in theories surrounding the role of the early childhood art educator and of collaboration. Next I share collaborative experiences between the children and the assistants and me, concluding with an analysis of these collaborations through the framework of ethics and care in work with young children.

Teaching Art in Early Childhood Education

My first instinct to suggest that Seth find a friend to collaborate with and my initial disregard for his attempt to work with me is grounded in historically rooted ideas about the purpose of art education and early childhood art education (as discussed in Chapter Four) as well as the image of the early childhood art educator. These ideas are

especially important to understand within the context of this research, as it was my hope to destabilize some of the more outdated regimes of truth that surround early childhood art education. In rejecting these traditionally held conceptions about what it means to teach and learn art in early childhood (which is explored below), I attempt to foster a newness of experience for both myself and the children, rejecting historically grounded truths about what it looks like for us to meaningfully interact with each other in a classroom space.

Traditionally, the role of teacher in early childhood art education can be understood as two extremes on a spectrum of relationships, grounded inherently in our image of the child. If our view of the child is that of an innocent, if we believe the myth that children are inherently creative, then we believe that children simply need space and materials to express themselves. This reflects the role of the teacher as simply a curator – organizing the classroom to best suit the needs of the children, and then standing back to watch it unfold. In this way, teachers don't really teach. They become people who simply set up a rich environment. Some might argue that it is this type of teacher who enables children to reach their greatest potential (Eisner, 1973).

Teachers who fall prey to this type of pedagogical practice will often try to argue that, as an art teacher, they don't "teach," and instead use terms like "facilitate, guide, encourage, nurture, [or] support" (McArdle, 2008, p. 367). These same types of teachers may argue that children will naturally pass through organic developmental stages, and so there is no need to formally instruct (McArdle, 2008). This notion can be traced historically to the idea that the teacher's job is to remain primarily hands off (Derham, 1961; Kellogg & O'Dell, 1967; Lowenfeld & Brittain, 1964/1987).

This idea is directly connected to the purpose of ECAE explored in Chapter Four. McArdle (2008) notes that for art education, the "regime of truth, then, is the insistence that in order to do it 'properly', teachers must *teach without teaching* and *manufacture the natural*" (p. 367, original emphasis). They must create conditions where children can produce the types of artwork that adults feel comfortable with, a type of school art (Efland, 1976) that reinforces children's spontaneity, expression, and innocence. Yet, this idea itself is manufactured. In manufacturing the natural, the teacher begins to shift away from the sidelines, and begins to plan more formal and structured lessons. Brent Wilson (1974) writes that typical school art activities for children are "conventional, ritualistic, and rule governed…[using] conventional themes and materials fed to children which result in school art with the 'proper' expected look" (p. 6). It then becomes the role of the teacher to create and execute such activities for children. McArdle and Piscitelli (2002) argue that school art can often result in projects or activities where the children are more "acted upon, rather than being active participants in artistic processes" (p. 12). Here, teachers are conveyers of artistic rules and certain types of knowledges that are acceptable within the school art classroom. Thus, we are presented with a double-sided truth about the role of the art teacher: as either facilitator/guide or as rule maker/conveyer of artistic knowledge.

However there are, of course, many other ways of being an art educator, many of which reject the aforementioned truth in favor of an approach founded on collaborative relationships between teachers and children (Boldt & McArdle, 2013). In this way, the role of the teacher becomes one of co-collaborator with the children; it is participatory. Rather than simply stand back or control, the teacher exchanges their skills, knowledge,

and ideas with the children with whom she is working, creating a climate of cooperative learning (McArdle & Piscitelli, 2002).

This image of the teacher as participant and co-collaborator is grounded upon the image of the postmodern child. This child is more than simply capable and knowledgeable; they become "co-players, co-artists, and co-learners with the adults who work and play alongside them" (McArdle & Boldt, 2013, p. 3). Here, perhaps we can see the image of the teacher and his or her relationship with children as co-choreography, a "reciprocal, interactive, creative, spontaneous process, where each partner…is entitled to creative agency and input" (Anttila, 2013, p. 121). However, this teacher must also be open to accept a position as becoming, as one whose practices shift and change depending on the needs and experiences of the children.

Working Together: Understandings and Values of Collaboration

When teachers embody a position as becoming, they learn to balance their ideas and interests with those of their students. They ground their teaching on what the children need and what they hope to teach, always being open to shifting their role based on the particular context at hand. Wilson (2007) notes that we need to consider more deeply the ways in which "children and adults interact and influence one another" (p. 6). In describing Franz Cizek's Juvenile Art School, Wilson argues that the artworks that the children produced were actually examples of co-productions between an adult and children. This argument is grounded in the conceptualization of Cizek's teaching style as actually having much more to do with him and his own ideas about children's art rather than the children themselves. Wilson posits,

> In virtually every lesson, Cizek assigned the topic that all children should paint. Once assigned, Cizek's rules for completing the topic were highly specific. Orient the paper horizontally rather than vertically. Make objects big! Paint directly on the paper without making a pencil outline. (p. 8)

He continues that because these children were being so carefully controlled and scripted in their artmaking, the creations that they made cannot be understood as true examples of child art since the children were not acting as "creative agents" but were simply following the dictates of Cizek. Extending this argument even further, Wilson posits that much of the art that is created in traditional school classrooms functions as co-productions rather than the sole work of the children whose personal hand may have physically created it. Teachers most always have a role in the work that children create in the classroom, often dictating stylistic influences, color palette, size, and other factors.

For Wilson (2007), artwork created by children but based on the choices and/or influences from adults exists not as the work of the child (most commonly understood as child art) but as a form of "*other than* child visual culture and *other than* adult visual culture" (original emphasis, p. 9). However, there are levels of value associated with this concept of the "collaborative other than," and differences between work created under the label of co-production or collaboration. Traditional school art is understood as a type of hybrid other than, not collaboration but more of a coercive co-production (Wilson, 2007). In a more democratic type of collaborative other than, both adults and children would offer ideas and ways of working together, where each is able to maintain a level of equivalent status (Wilson, 2007). In these types of deliberate relationships, the ideas of both children and teachers are valued and considered as a part of the pedagogical context.

In this way, other than child and other than adult collaborations work to challenge the power/authority/knowledge structure that normally exists in classrooms. These experiences bring children's ideas and interests to light, which, as Wilson notes, are normally hidden.

In addition to activating children's "subjugated knowledges" (Foucault, 1980, p. 82), democratic collaborative encounters between teachers and children form a type of "newness" (Bhabha, 1994) where both parties are contributing to ideas and experiences. In writing about collaborations between architects and artists, Kelly (1995) argues, "collaboration is a process of mutual transformation in which the collaborators, and thus their common work, are in some way changed. Most importantly, the creative process itself is transformed in a collaborative relationship" (p. 140). This idea of mutual transformation, understood also as a form of accepting ambivalence (Bhabha, 1994), is an important element in the rejection of traditional teacher authority in the classroom.

These true collaborations can only occur when both parties embody this idea of working together. If teachers merely reject their own authority and allow children to simply create whatever they like in any way they like, collaborations do not necessarily occur. It is the togetherness created when working collectively that truly transforms pedagogical spaces and practice. Green (2001) understands the idea of collaborations between two parties (artists specifically) as a type of manipulation of the singular figure. In these relationships, he argues that there is a deliberate rejection of the singular identity in search of a composite identity, extending beyond the single role of teacher, student, adult, or child. Thus collaboration creates "new understandings of artistic authorship" (p.

x). In this context, these artistic identities are also extended to identities that reflect not only artist, but also learner and teacher.

When we (teachers/students, adults/children) engage in true partnerships, we are able to "confront our shifting realities and search for new solutions" (John-Steiner, 2000, p. 3). It is through these relationships where newness can come forth. As such, the space created by these collaborations can be understood as a third space, where traditional ideas about our own ways of being and realities are rejected. When we work together, the self is stretched (John-Steiner, 2000) in new and previously unknown ways, and becomes something other than, as Wilson (2007) notes. Collaborations, artistic or otherwise, have the ability to create a "third independent existence" where the boundaries between the partners are annihilated (Green, 2001). Yet, the destruction of these boundaries (or traditional identities) does not eliminate the difference among those involved. There is not a loss of singular or personal identity or needs, but moreso a translation of understanding, Green argues. As understood by Bhabha (1994) translation activates communication and openness to change or new understandings. Therefore, these types of partnerships have the opportunity to change the domains in which the collaborators work and expand understandings of the field (John-Steiner, 2000). In the context of this research, it is the traditional space of early childhood art education that is being challenged, and specifically in the relationships and interactions between children and adults in that space. If both teachers and students can understand their positionalities in new ways, this opens the door for a more democratic exchange of ideas and learning.

In an educational context, collaborations between adults and children in the classroom foster the value of multiple ways of knowing and/or experiencing. These ideas

are drawn from sociocultural theory of Lev Vygotsky (1978). Vygotsky argues that all thinking occurs in a social context, in the jointly mediated activity of people engaging with each other. Therefore, according to Vygotsky, knowledge is always something that is embedded in the cultural or historical moment in which it is formed or expressed (John-Steiner, 2000). If we accept this interpretation of knowledge, then it becomes something that is co-constructed rather than passed down from the person who knows to the person who does not.

In collaborative encounters between adults and children in a classroom, space is provided for knowledge to be co-constructed; in this space children share what they know, what they wish to know, and adults and children engage in this process of coming to know together. John-Steiner (2000) understands this as a type of constructed knowing that "emphasizes situated, contextual, and integrated modes of thinking over the more traditional and prevalent separate mode of knowing" (p. 6). Within this understanding, each person involved in the constructed knowledge exists as an instrument of social change, in that we are always engaged in re-enacting and re-constructing social experience and thus knowledge.

When Children Lead and Teachers Follow

It is in this type of space that this research is situated. Understood through this context, the classroom experiences that the children and I shared fostered the appropriation of new roles (student vs. teacher vs. collaborator) and opportunities for those who often experience limited power (children) to become empowered (John-Steiner, 2000). This empowerment exists in opportunities to direct adults, engage in play or collaboration with teachers, create work inspired by their own ideas, and learn in a space

where knowledge is co-constructed rather than passed down from above. In the vignettes below, I share experiences from the WCA classroom where the children took on roles of leaders and directors in their own artmaking, engaging the assistants and me in collaboration encounters. I share these encounters through two larger frameworks: activities that required collaboration and those that moreso rejected ideas about independence.

When Collaboration is Required

Often times the children would invite the assistants or me to collaborate with them because they were interested in things that they simply could not do alone, such as the collaboration between Seth and me which introduces this chapter – he needed someone to build so that *he* could record. Saul's interest in recording his sketchbook drawings serves as a nice example of this practice. Over the course of the program it became clear that Saul had a passion for storytelling. He would work, silent and dedicated, on stories in his sketchbook. Sometimes his stories were encapsulated in a single page, while others spanned several pages. As Jessica, Amanda, and I walked around and engaged in discussion with the children about their drawings, Saul would frequently pull us aside to share his story. We would often ask to photograph his drawings, and eventually this progressed into Saul asking *us* to film him sharing his stories. He would show his drawing and narrate the story for digital documentation, always asking to view the video once it was complete.

This practice of documenting his storytelling occurred with other media as well. During the sixth class, he spent a long time creating four different animal sculptures out of wire. His construction of these animals occurred alongside Jessica, who sat with him

during the whole process. She created photographs and videos of his artistic process, and then he requested that she take a video of the animal fight (see Figure 11). Jessica reflects that,

> There was a lot of problem solving while making these animals and Saul talked out loud while thinking of the possibilities and processes. For the elephant he told me to do the feet, I suggested he do the feet and he said, “let’s both do the feet” and we each took one to work on. After all of the creatures were finished there was a fight between them and he wanted me to record it; the giraffe was the only survivor…Afterwards he wanted to watch the video. “That was fun.” He smashed the remaining creatures up even more but agreed to let us keep the giraffe for the art show despite initially wanting to take it home to show his mom and dad. “Now they look just like one piece of wire all smashed up. They will know next time.” (personal communication, October 11, 2014)

Figure 11. Screen shot of Jessica’s video of Saul’s fighting wire animals.

This kind of documentation would have been nearly (though not totally) impossible for Saul to do by himself. However, it is clear that he really needed a collaborating partner in these moments. He enjoyed the act of performing for both the teachers and the camera. He liked being able to control what was said, and the way he showed his drawings or sculptures to us.

Sasha also often sought out our collaboration to help her accomplish that which she was unable to do on her own, also in the vein of storytelling. During our fourth class, she chose to work with a small blank book (purposefully created and offered for children to record their stories). She asked Jessica to help her create the book by writing down her words next to each image. She drew six images in total, and Jessica recalls that the meaning behind each image often changed, being finally determined only when Jessica wrote down her words.

> There were several times that I had to leave the table and each time I returned the story Sasha was working on became more elaborate than if I had stayed seated with her the whole time. On one of the pages she'd originally told me about a volcano and then changed it to a tornado. She dictated the text she wanted to use for each page as well as where it was written and what color it was written in. When she reached the last page she wasn't ready to end the story so decided to leave it open-ended. (personal communication, September 20, 2014)

Two weeks later Sasha enlisted Jessica in more story writing collaborations, this time moving beyond the pre-fabricated book structure we had provided. She requested a long piece of paper off a roll and wrote two short stories, each containing only one image (see Figure 12). The first was a story about a coyote, while the second featured Seth (who

was her friend outside of WCA too). She also created her own book, made from folded paper and tape. This story, three pages long, told of Seth and Sasha and their non-dating friendship. Jessica reflected on the nature of this type of collaboration with Sasha, and noted that, "she talks very fast and wants to include a lot of information, which changes each time she retells it" (personal communication, October 4, 2014). Additionally, Jessica shared that, "Sasha likes writing stories and mentioned that she never has the opportunity to do so at home because her mom is too busy to write for her" (personal communication, October 4, 2014). Jessica's role as scribe was important and necessary for Sasha's books to come to life. She wanted and needed Jessica to write down her words, as she could not write them herself.

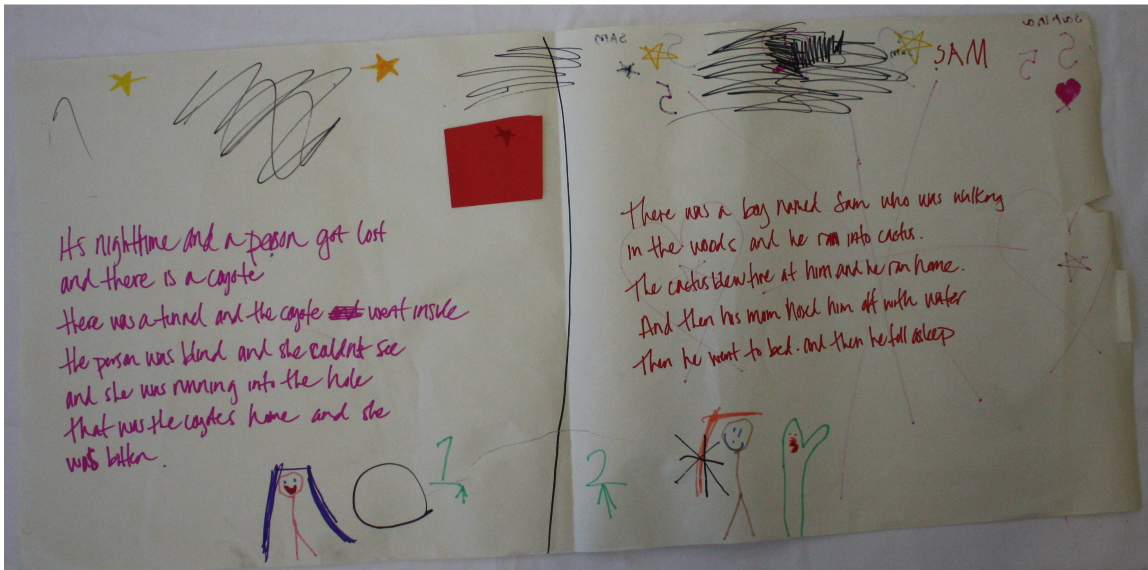

Figure 12. Sasha's second story, dictated to Jessica.

When Independence is Rejected in Favor of Collaboration

While these kinds of collaborations were easy to embrace (since we were truly needed in these moments), there were other situations where the children invited our

collaboration simply because they wanted it. They could have created these works on their own or with a friend, but (for whatever reason) they didn't want to. They rejected their independence in these moments. The experiences each of us shared with Michael are lovely examples of this practice. Throughout the course of the program, Michael often sought out the company of Jessica, Amanda, and me. During our voluntary sketchbook drawing time he would often ask for our opinions on what he should draw or even what colors he should use. Usually he would reject our ideas or suggestions, and come up with his own ideas. However it was clear that he felt most comfortable drawing while in our presence and engaging in dialogue with us. Jessica discusses her experiences drawing with Michael during sketchbook time, noting the way he rejected her ideas:

> Michael was struggling with what to draw in his sketchbook and asked me for suggestions. I gave him a few ideas and prompts to think about but he wasn't interested in any of it. He ended up drawing a sun and then wanted to know how many rays a sun had. I told him he could draw as many as he wanted and he counted as he made them: 37! He is very detailed oriented. (personal communication, October 11, 2014)

Michael also often engaged us in collaborations using paper. He would spend time carefully creating small drawings on colored construction paper and then ask us to cut them out for him. We all developed a similar schema for cutting his drawings, cutting carefully around his images thereby creating a small border as to not invade his drawing space. At the end of the program it became clear that these works were especially meaningful for Michael, as he selected some of them for inclusion in the final exhibition (see Figure 13).

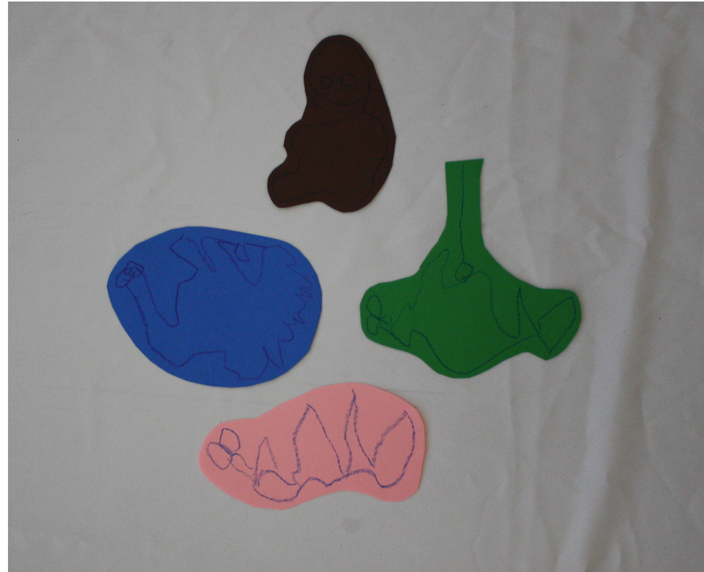

Figure 13: Michael's drawings: A tiger, a whale, a caterpillar, and a shark (clockwise from top).

This type of directed collaboration became a common occurrence in our working experiences with Michael, and as his interest grew in building with the blocks we had available, he directed us there as well. Jessica reflects on one of these moments:

> [He] came over and asked that I help him by gluing blocks together. He strategically placed each block and told me exactly where to glue. We did this for 27 minutes. During this time Elissa, Yasmine, and Sasha [other children in the program] all came over to have me glue things for them and Michael was less than happy about this distraction. He was clearly frustrated and was ready for me to glue the next block as soon as there was a break in the line of students…After our class conversation Michael asked me finish gluing the sculpture he started. Before he left to work on his new project he showed me exactly what to glue and how to position them; when we started I was helping him and by the end he was telling me what I needed to do to see the project through. Telling me as he was

walking away "remember to build it" and "you know what to do, right?" (personal communication, October 11, 2014)

It's evident in this narrative that Michael's experience collaborating with Jessica was grounded in differing ideas about what it means to work together. Michael felt comfortable working alongside Jessica, directing her on when and how to add glue or position blocks. Additionally, he felt confident to walk away from this partnership to complete a different work, trusting that Jessica would finish building his piece as he had directed. It seems that both types of "collaboration" were equally comfortable for Michael. Yet Jessica felt differently. While she was happy to work together with Michael while he was next to her, she seemed frustrated when he told her what to do to finish his work.

This feeling could also be attributed to my initial rejection of Seth's offer to collaborate. I thought to myself at the time: there is so much going on and this is something he doesn't really need *me* to do! However, unlike Jessica I quickly realized that these kinds of requests were important. I wasn't sure how at the moment, but the idea that the children wanted us to help (rather than needing our help) seemed meaningful. Grounded in this realization, when Seth asked for my collaboration at other times throughout the program, I was always eager and happy to comply. On the same day as the story shared earlier, Seth also requested that I film him and Ben building a city and a volcano outside. By this point, he had realized that he could film himself by standing the flip camera up on its end carefully, pushing the record button, and then stepping in front of the camera to act or build (this will be explained further later within this chapter).

Based on this, his request that I film Ben and him clearly had something to do with my participation in the activity since it was something that he could do on his own.

Seth also engaged me in collaborative drawings, specifically in two images of him standing on Jupiter (see Figure 14). While creating the first image he asked for me to help him color in Jupiter, assigning me half of the planet to fill orange. A few weeks later he wanted to create the same image. This time he asked me to draw Jupiter and color it in. He then added the red in the center of the planet and himself standing on top. Seth directed me quite clearly in these moments. He had an idea of what he wanted to create, as well as how he wanted me to participate. But again, he was completely capable of creating these images entirely on his own.

Figure 14. Seth's two drawings of himself on Jupiter (second drawing on top, first drawing below).

It is interesting to contrast these collaborations with the ones where the children needed our help. Jessica in particular was much less comfortable collaborating with the children when it was based on a want rather than a need. Perhaps she assumed that her participation was legitimized when she was helping them accomplish things that were hard or impossible for them to do on their own. She seemed frustrated when Michael left her to complete his work and directed her so strongly to do so. I (as noted above) became quickly comfortable with the children wanting my help. I enjoyed these moments of working together and liked the feeling of the children seeking out my participation. Upon reflection, I am now able to see that all of these collaborations are grounded in the idea that knowledge is something that can be co-constructed. Additionally, when adults and children work together based on ideas that come from the children themselves, we create new ways of being in relationships together.

Ethical Encounters

In addition to fostering new ideas about knowledge production and child/adult relationships, I also understand these child-led collaborations as types of ethical encounters between teacher and student, between adult and child. In the remaining portion of this chapter I draw upon the ideas of Emmanual Levinas (1987, 1988, 1989a, 1989b) and his understanding of the ethics of an encounter as a way to frame this conceptualization. The analysis of these events as such runs counter to a more modernist and universalistic idea about ethics and the ways in which people (in this case specifically adults/children or teachers/students) interact with each other.

Modern vs. Postmodern Ethics

A universalistic idea of ethics is based on a normative relationship between right and wrong that is inherently void of social or historical context (Dahlberg & Moss, 2005). Dahlberg and Moss argue that in the case of universalistic ethics, the ethical relationship is grounded in a generalized understanding of how we (as people) should act and/or think in any given situation. There is a balance between rights/responsibilities and duties/expectations in a linear sense; there is one way to interpret a situation, one right action, one wrong action, one consequence. This interpretation can be seen as "an individualistic and narrowly conceived" interpretation of ethics (p. 67).

In examining the relationships and interactions between teachers and students through this universalistic view, there become singular ways to be both, one ethical way to be a teacher (for example, maintain control over your class, communicate your knowledge to your students, teach skill and technique) and one way to be a student (listen and obey your teacher, complete your work on time in the correct manner, follow directions, for example). In the same way, collaboration can also be interpreted through this framework; collaboration must be grounded in an equal relationship between collaborators, where ideas are exchanged back and forth and both parties contribute equally to the final result. In the case of the interactions between teachers and students in a classroom, this might also extend to the notion of rejecting children's requests for help or assistance in moments when they can complete the same activity by themselves. A universalistic idea of ethics also closely resembles Foucault's (1980) ideas about regimes of truth (singular ways to be, know, and act).

In rejecting this modernist conception of ethics, a postmodern perspective is grounded in ideas about "responsibility, relationships, situatedness, and otherness"

(Dahlberg & Moss, 2005, p. 69). Rather than seeking a generalized truth, this new conception of ethics paid careful attention to the competences of individuals and the value of the relationship. The complexity of making decisions substantiated the value of each person's ability to determine what is best in any given situation, resulting in trust for people's capability to make valued judgments rather than simply following generalized rules that dictated behavior (Dahlberg & Moss, 2005). Thus, ethical relationships were understood as a complex moral activity rather than a single action with a single consequence. Sevenhuijsen (1998) discussed notions of the relational self, understood as "a moral agent who is embedded in concrete relationships with other people…The self is not conceived as an entity, but as the protagonist in a biography which can contain all kinds of ambiguities and unexpected turns" (as cited in Dahlberg & Moss, p. 75). Thus, ethical relationships were understood as spaces of responsiveness, responsibility, and attentiveness to the needs of others.

Unknowability of the Other

For Levinas (1987, 1988, 1989a, 1989b), these notions are of particular importance. From his perspective, in order to ethically engage with others, we must accept the unknowability of the other. If we presume to know the other, we simply reduce them to sameness; we reject their possibility to be other (Dahlberg & Moss, 2005). At the same time, this idea is a denunciation of notions of universalistic ethics of sameness, and an appreciation for unknowing and difference. Through this perspective, Levinas additionally offers a rejection of knowing and modernist ideas of knowledge.

> But in knowledge there also appears the notion of an intellectual activity or of a reasoning will – a way of doing something which consists precisely of thinking

> through knowing, of seizing something and making it one's own, of reducing to presence and representing the difference of being, an activity which *appropriates* and *grasps* the otherness of the known. (Levinas, 1989a, p. 76, original emphasis)

In this interpretation, knowledge is something that can be truly known, understood. However, as we have come to realize, a more contemporary perspective considers knowledge as something that is co-constructed, related to socio-cultural and/or historical context. Therefore, our postmodern conception of knowledge as constructed compliments Levinas' value of unknowability.

Levinas (1987) argues that this type of ethical relationship with the other is not simply unknown, it is unknowable; we recognize that the other is like us, resembles us, but exists as exterior. Our relationship with them is, in ways, a mystery. Valuing alterity (the state of being other or different) creates an ethical relationship because, in essence, the act of knowing is the personification of seizure or grasping (Levinas, 1989a). And these ideas of possession, of knowing, of grasping, are synonyms of power (Levinas, 1987).

This type of ethical relationship (one that leaves room for the singularity of the other), is characterized by ideas of uncertainty, ambiguity, dissymmetry, and interruption (Dahlberg & Moss, 2005). It is only when we can "know" the other that we banish uncertainty and ambiguity. The value of ambiguity is echoed also by Bhabha (1985), discussed as an element necessary for the creation of a third space. Ambiguity is created when singular truths (or a single way of knowing) are rejected. Levinas (1989a) suggests that ambiguity exists within ideas about the identical; the identical cannot exist as such, but in a space of uncertainty. As such, he rejects the notion of symmetry when interacting

with the other, favoring notions of dissymmetry (Levinas, 1988). He argues that it is "the most important way of conceiving of the relationship between self and other which does not place them on the same level" (p. 179). The intersubjective space, which is where the ethical relationship between self and other exists, is not symmetrical (Levinas, 1987).

Fostering Interdependency

Rather than grasping or attempting to know the other, Levinas argues that one must think "'otherwise than being' – beyond essence and the autonomous and rational self" (Dahlberg & Moss, 2005, p. 79). Dahlberg and Moss continue that,

> It is responsibility for the Other, rather than autonomy, independence, and rights of the self, that constitutes an ethical relation. Indeed, for Levinas, freedom comes not from the exercise of choice and independence but through affirmation of the Other and one's own responsibility. (p. 79)

Levinas calls for a type of interdependency rather than autonomy, understood as "the recognition that we are all in more or lesser degrees dependent on the care, attention, and respect of others" (Sevenhuijsen & Williams, 2003, as cited in Dahlberg & Moss, 2005, p. 82). Additionally, this notion of interdependency rejects traditional ideas of independence as good or normative and dependence as bad or abnormal, rather existing in a space in between.

At its core, the notion of interdependence is connected closely to the act of collaboration itself. When any two parties rely on each other for work to be produced or to continue, it creates conditions for care and respect. John-Steiner (2000) argues that this idea is closely related to the feminist notion of the "self in relation" where one's own identity is developed in the context of her or his meaningful relationships with others (p.

79). This type of intersubjective relationship is, as Levinas (1987) argues, one that allows people to enter into relationships with each other without allowing their self to be "crushed" by the other (p. 77). Interdependence and the exchange of ideas that occurs through working with another in an ethical relationship helps to foster trust and a positive emotional environment for collaboration (John-Steiner, 2000).

While interdependence and collaboration may nurture the idea of self in relation, these concepts also work to overpower the traditional boundaries that exist between people working together (Green, 2001). However, Green reminds us that eliminating these boundaries is not the same as eliminating difference (p. 181). As Levinas argues, ethical relationships, at their core, are about accepting alterity, not attempting to reject it and "know" another. Green posits that this type of relationship implies a sense of translation rather than loss of identity. Translation suggests not one idea or identity becoming another, but an openness to flux or change which activates knowledge and communication (Bhabha, 1994); an idea that is very much connected to the notion of knowledge as something that is co-constructed rather than grasped.

Responsibility and Respect

Rather than grasping or attempting to know the other, Levinas (1987, 1988, 1989a, 1989b) calls for respect and responsibility for the other, which he often interprets as a form of love. This respect is not only a respect for difference but also an acceptance of difference. The conditions of a relationship grounded in interdependence offers opportunities for love, friendship, and human togetherness (Dahlberg & Moss, 2005). Levinas (1988) posits,

> The other is unique, unique to such an extent that in speaking of the responsibility for the unique, responsibility in relation to the unique, I use the word 'love.' That which I call responsibility is a love, because love is the only attitude where there is encounter with the unique. (p. 174)

Levinas (1987) argues that it is only by showing the ways in which love or responsibility for the other contrast ideas of power or possession over the other that we can discuss ideas about communication. He argues that this is neither a "struggle, nor a fusion, for a knowledge" (p. 88), but a relationship grounded in respect and appreciation for difference.

Particularly, this type of respect and responsibility is not approached through the practice of putting oneself in the position of the other. It is not a representation of sympathy or communion (Levinas, 1987), but responsiveness. This concept moves beyond simply trying to think of how you would feel if in the position of another, but is grounded in a simple acceptance and recognition of difference at its core. Dahlberg and Moss (2005) argue that responsiveness is a major element in understanding the ethics of caring, and something that also persists within the field of early childhood. In writing on the image of the teacher in early childhood art education, Tarr (2008) argues that one must be a responsive educator; this position is crucial to upholding the quality of arts education for young children. She notes that children need a responsive educator who values children's thoughts, ideas, abilities, and interests; one who understands and supports the ways that children use art to represent their thoughts, feelings, and perceptions; one who supports the ways in which children create meaning through various forms of artmaking; and one who observes, listens, and reflects upon children's lives and experiences (p. 23). These ideas of responsiveness, responsibility, love, and

respect all ground ethical encounters with children. Levinas (1987, 1989b) notes that it is only when one becomes truly responsible for another that they can enter into dialogue with them. He understands the idea of dialogue broadly, framing it as something that is not simply the exchange of words but conceptualizing it as a kind of responsibility. When we embrace dialogue and responsibility, we can truly preserve and value alterity.

Child-Led Collaboration as Ethical Encounters

I interpret the child-led collaborative work with Seth, Michael, Sasha, and Saul as moments of ethical encounters. I frame this position in the perspective of first person, writing specifically about the way that I interpret these collaborations, even the ones that I did not experience first hand. While Jessica and Amanda may have different ideas about the value of their collaborations with the children in this program, the curricular and pedagogical practices in place allowed these experiences to occur, and I hope that they encouraged these young teachers to reconsider the meaning and value of their encounters with children.

In these moments, by letting myself be directed, I was offering the children the opportunity to control both their experience and my level of participation in it. I was not assuming that I knew or understood their plan or ideas – this is their unknowability. If I aimed to control my type and level of participation in our collaboration, then I would have assumed that it was possible in that moment for me to fully know or understand both them and their ideas. This idea can be extended to position the encounters between teachers and children in traditional classrooms as spaces of coercion (Wilson, 2007). In conditions of early childhood art education, this can be seen most clearly in Efland's (1976) ideas about school art (discussed in Chapter Four). In traditional school art, "we

give children materials and ideas and encourage them to make art in the ways we think they should with the subject matter we believe appropriate, and, sure enough, the work comes out looking just the way we knew it would" (Wilson, 1974, p. 3). Within these kinds of experiences, children are not encouraged to explore ideas or concepts that are interesting for them; they are simply doing what they are told. These types of artmaking experiences leave little to no room for children's individual ideas to be included. In rejecting these types of coercive encounters, I embrace these young children's alterity, I quietly offer spaces for them to explore their own ideas and decide if and how they wish for me to be a part of their making.

Through these collaborations, I fostered the idea of interdependency rather than independence. There were moments where I could have encouraged the children to work alone, moments when *my* presence was not completely necessary. I could have scaffolded their experiences, offering Seth a tripod for him to film himself building, or one to Saul for him to film his own stories. I could have encouraged Michael to cut out his own drawings, of which he was fully capable. However, I chose to engage in this work with them instead (and encouraged Amanda and Jessica to do the same), being aware of the fact that I did not, or could not, fully understand the children's desires for me to participate. Perhaps Michael liked the aesthetic quality of the smooth edges that I could achieve with the scissors and he could not. Maybe he simply enjoyed the attention and time we shared as we sat together in a loud and often rambunctious classroom. Perhaps Seth and Saul desired to be filmmakers rather than performers. Maybe Seth wished to direct me in artmaking and construction, as he was often directed by his own teachers. Perhaps Saul wished to be only a storyteller. However, through the lens of Levinas'

theories, these conjectures are not necessary in order to legitimize my participation. When we accept the idea of unknowability, we don't need to speculate reasons, we simply act and accept that which we do not and cannot understand.

In the case of Sasha, her collaboration (specifically with Jessica) was grounded in a more tangible sense of interdependence, as Jessica's work in their collaboration was something that Sasha could not complete on her own. Being in kindergarten, Sasha was probably already experiencing instruction in letters and perhaps even words; she could clearly write her own name. While most developmentally appropriate schools will encourage children to write, their writing at this stage can often be unintelligible by anyone except themselves. While I cannot speak to Sasha's level of written literacy skills, it was clear that she desired for Jessica to be her scribe. One can assume that she wished for her stories to be able to be interpreted on a widespread scale, allowing any viewer/reader to understand them. Rather than attempt to know these children in these moments, I became comfortable in this ambiguous space and accepted our interdependence on each other. This perspective is a new way of thinking about our interactions with young children in classroom spaces. Rather than simply lurking on the sidelines or encouraging children to work alone or with their peers, educators can become partners in learning, changing the roles of both teacher and student. It is in these types of spaces that adults and children can truly co-construct knowledge together.

Interestingly, the children extended all of the experiences about which I write here. While many of the fourteen children in the class bounced around to various projects on different days, the collaborative work initiated by these children in particular were mediums/projects that they often revisited each week, and sometimes worked on

independently. Saul was enthralled with the notion of recording – stories, the classroom, other children. While he continued to create stories in his artwork and asked us to record him retelling or acting them out, he also worked extensively with the flip video camera to create stories of his own. Sometimes these were imaginative stories grounded in his drawings, and sometimes they were simply videos of him narrating class events that were occurring.

Additionally, Seth also grew fond of using the flip video cameras to document, in particular, his own work and experiences. The same day he requested that I build for him and film the volcano city he built with Ben, he came upon the realization that he could film himself (as I note earlier). Finding a space on the carpet, he cautiously stood the camera up on its bottom, balancing it ever so carefully. He hit the record button, and then moved in front of the lens, and began building with the blocks. The experiences of filming me and being filmed by me led to his realization that perhaps he could film himself.

While both Seth and Saul worked diligently with the cameras, they also would often explore other materials and ideas available to them. In contrast, Michael felt most comfortable with the materials he had explored in collaboration with Amanda, Jessica, or me. Drawing and cutting, and building with the blocks became staples for him. Over the course of ten weeks, he became increasingly comfortable with the language of these materials, and his work developed. By the end of the program he was comfortable getting the materials he needed on his own and beginning work unaccompanied. He developed stories about his work, and spent careful time making.

Finally, Sasha's interest in storytelling was most certainly fostered and encouraged by these collaborations. After creating the first story she was eager to create more. It was clear that she enjoyed the individualized time Jessica devoted to her in these moments. While this was not an activity she could chose to continue on her own, it was clearly something she valued. The time taken by Jessica to listen to her stories and write down her ideas word for word was something missing from her experiences with her mother (as she herself noted) and perhaps at school as well.

The fact that these experiences that began as child-led collaborations fostered further interest in medium, technique, and even product speak powerfully to the value that we as adults have in collaborative experiences with young children, especially when we sit back and allow ourselves to be guided by the children themselves. I understand this reversal of the traditional and non-collaborative teacher-student relationship in favor of ethical collaborative encounters as transformative and powerful. They create relationships grounded in mutual appropriation and new ideas about collaboration as well. Although Seth directed most levels of my participation in his video, I was offered the opportunity to create my own sculpture, as well as the chance to either accept or reject his direction. He had control over filming as well as the power to direct me and my artistic choices. Michael asked us to cut his drawings, but we had power over the cutting style itself. Even though we, as adult educators, were primarily following directions, we were also modeling ways that we work, as both teachers and artists, as well as ways to work together. This scaffolding helps to build children's collaboration skills, such as the "ability and willingness to take partners' questions and needs very seriously, and to hear their concerns" (John-Steiner, 2000, p. 93). In these moments, a third space is created,

where I am able to see the children with whom I work in new and exciting ways. At the same time, the children begin to see me (and other adults) in new ways as well, as partners or collaborators rather than just teachers.

It is interesting to note, however, that the invitation to collaborate already comes from the children's ability to see me (as well as Jessica and Amanda) as something other than simply a teacher. Their enticement into this type of directed collaboration is born perhaps of their understanding that we will participate in these experiences with them. Upon considering this study after the experience with Logan shared earlier, I pondered the conditions necessary for these types of shared moments to occur. In both classroom spaces (one significantly less structured than the other) some, not all, of the students seemed to have an inherent understanding of my role as something more than simply "teacher": as someone who was interested in their ideas and their voluntary art, as someone who could be enticed to play or create with them.

In my elementary classroom space (where I shared the secret hideout play with Logan) this was communicated through time devoted during each class to voluntary sketchbook drawing. During this time I walked around, discussed with the children their drawings, and often wrote down the ideas/stories that accompanied them. In the Wildcat Art class, I began our first session (and every subsequent one) with a similar sketchbook drawing practice, accompanied by other voluntary artmaking experiences with various mediums, thus inviting the children to create on their own terms. Additionally, on the first morning, I invited the children to join me in a conversation about our art class, and what my hope for it was. I told them that I was not only a teacher, but also a researcher – someone who was interested in asking questions and finding out the answers to them. I

told them that this class was all about what *they* were interested in; I hoped they would tell me the kinds of things they wanted to do and what they wanted to experience, and then I would do my best to make that happen for them. We would meet together each class and talk about something related to our research class (what they wished to do next week, their favorite part of class today, interesting things I noticed about their work, special moments I shared with them last week, etc.). This was a much more deliberate attempt to balance the sense of power normally weighted in the adult's direction in a classroom environment. In either case, how much my students understood my interest in their work and ideas, or my desire to foster spaces of collaboration with them, is not clear. Yet what is clear is that, for some of the students, they sensed my willingness to work with them, either in tandem, or simply as a classroom partner who was happy to facilitate their exploration of their own ideas.

By deliberately engaging in these pedagogical artistic collaborations with these young children, I believe that together we created a third space of possibility. This space explores not only what early childhood art education might look like, but also ways for teachers and students to work together, opportunities to foster interdependence in the classroom, and ideas about asymmetrical collaboration. Additionally, I believe that by engaging in any type of encounters with children where we do not aim to understand or know them, we communicate a sense of trust in their ideas and abilities, as well as in our relationship with each other. These types of teacher-student connections are grounded in respect and responsibility, and though they may appear unbalanced from the outside, function as examples of ethical work with young children.

CHAPTER SIX

THE EDGE OF CHAOS: A SPACE FOR PLAY, ART, AND POSSIBILITY

"All children and young people need to play. The impulse to play is innate." (Kilvington & Wood, 2010, p. 4)

"Touching the Tape"

It was our eighth session of WCA. I sat next to Yasmine on the floor as she prepared to use the mini shadow puppet theater. She was busy drawing the outlines of the puppets she planned to use, thinking critically about the aesthetics of her design. After she was done with the drawings I helped her to cut them out.

Yasmine: It looks like a big poofy bird.

Me: Do you want me to cut out different parts of it? To look more like a person?

Yasmine: Ummmmmmmm, no.

Me: No? You like it?

Yasmine: Yeah.

Me: 'Cause we could cut out these parts also.

Yasmine: I don't want to.

Me: You don't want to? Okay.

She was working on constructing a woman and a ghost (this was just before Halloween), but her woman ultimately transformed into a bird. After she was finished with her puppets, she invited me to play with her behind the screen. I was offered the role of the ghost while she played the bird.

Yasmine: Now the ghost is dancing. The bird touches the ghost and then the ghost falls down and dies.

Me: How does the ghost come back to life?

Yasmine: By touching the tape.

Me: By touching the tape?

Yasmine: Yeah. So they're touching the tape.

Me: Yea!!! Whooo whoooo [the sound of me being a ghost]. And if the ghost touches the bird, does the bird fall down also?

Yasmine: No, because the bird flies up to that [inaudible words] and touches the spike. Then the bird falls down.

Me: Okay.

Yasmine: Because it needs the spike.

Me: To stay up?

Yasmine: Yeah.

Me: Okay. Woooo woooo. Boop [the bird touches the ghost so the ghost dies]. And now do I touch the tape to bring him back to life? Birp [the noise I make as the ghost touches the tape]. Is the ghost a good ghost or a bad ghost?

Yasmine: Uhhhh, good ghost.

Me: A good ghost. Should we add another character?

Yasmine: Yeah.

Me: So we have the ghost, and we have the big crazy bird, what else should we add?

Yasmine: Uh, um, uh, human!

Me: A human? Okay.

Yasmine and I continued playing with her shadow puppets (see Figure 15), ultimately being joined by Ben and Beth. The story line shifted to include the human woman, who is almost hurt by the ghost, now played by Ben. As the ghost is happily spinning around and around he nearly hits the lady who is pushed to safety by the bird just in time. The bird meets an untimely death rescuing the woman, but is successfully brought back to life. Yasmine continues:

> The ghost is spinning around and doesn't know, and then the bird sees the ghost coming and then pushes her over so she doesn't, um, get hurt. And, um, instead the bird gets hurt and dies here… and and and and and and he touches the tape, this long thing touches the tape, she comes alive again.

Figure 15. Yasmine and me playing with her shadow puppets.

When Beth joins the play she takes up the role of the woman, who now becomes a ballet teacher. Yasmine describes, “Oh, ah. We're in ballet class. This is in ballet class, and then the ghost touches her and she dies and the ballet class touches her with the spike and then she’s alive.” As roles change and the story shifts, the reoccurring theme of dying and being brought back to life remains.

It was clear to me that the children’s enjoyment of this project was grounded in their ability to play and act out their own stories and ideas, rather than in the making of puppets. They moved rather quickly through the two dimensional art of silhouettes and puppet construction, the puppets being hastily drawn with little detail. They weren’t the main event, but simply a prop used to bring Yasmine’s stories to life. The acts of storytelling and playing with the puppets behind the small screen were most enjoyable.

In Chapter Four, I defined the WCA classroom as a nomadic space that offered children opportunities to redefine their experiences in being and making. This understanding was grounded in a deconstruction and reconceptualization of historical understandings of what it means to make and learn in early childhood art classrooms. In this chapter, I extend upon these ideas to explore the role of play within the WCA classroom. I argue that the types of play in which the children engaged were only possible because of the construction of a nomadic space. Additionally, the art created as a part of the children’s play allows us to reconceptualize children’s art making and learning in new ways.

Within this chapter, I share some ideas about how we can understand play, explore the relationship between play and art in the school classroom, and contextualize the play experiences in WCA through the lens of playwork. I conclude by exploring the

WCA classroom through the lens of complexity theory, which invites us to look at WCA as existing at the edge of chaos, the only space where play can truly flourish. This offers a way to consider what a space for play really looks like, ways that we can engage children in play art processes, and how embracing play art forces us to rethink what we may expect about children's art and artistic learning.

Understanding Play: Varying Perspectives

Play is a complex idea that is imbedded deeply into the sphere of early childhood education. The goals and definitions of play will often vary depending on the context of the situation at hand. Eisner (1990) explains that the term "play" itself can refer to many different types of activities: exploratory practice, the act of playing games, or simply the nature of being playful itself. While I do not explore all definitions of play here, I do introduce two main approaches to thinking about play that are relevant to early childhood education and early childhood art education.

In the context of early childhood education, the integration of play into the classroom can be viewed on a continuum from "didactic" to "ludocentric" (Russell, 2008). The didactic approach encompasses the majority of the types of play that one is likely to see in a classroom environment. It is grounded in the widespread idea that "children learn and develop through play" (Russell, 2008, p. 85). This idea is further rooted in the images of children as "developing" and early childhood as "preparation" that were previously discussed in Chapters Three and Four; childhood is viewed as a time of immaturity and the structure and facilitation of children's play by adults helps them learn "the right kinds of things…[through] socialization, inculcating values (whose?), and teaching children how to behave towards others" (Russell, 2008, p. 86).

As Rogers (2011) notes, "the concept of 'learning through play' has a long and established history/tradition in educational contexts" (p.10). This idea encourages the use of play to serve bigger adult (and educational) agendas, including but certainly not limited to the image of play helping to improve children's social, emotional, and cognitive development (Rogers, 2011). We can see the roots of this definition in the historical conception of early childhood education as preparation (as discussed in Chapter Four). This type of definition addresses play as "being educational in function" and the using of play to "further human well-being" (Brown & Cheesman, 2003, p. 2).

Within this kind of work oriented play pedagogy, play is "adult led with clear learning objectives and outcomes derived from official curriculum documents" (Rogers, 2011, p. 12). Wisneski and Reifel (2012) refer to this as a "facilitate play approach" where teachers feel that they are able to "enhance some forms of play to promote positive outcomes" (p. 178). By encouraging children to engage in certain forms of play, they are able to support children's developmental and educational growth. Teachers offer children opportunities to engage in make-believe play, board games, and group play to support social skills (taking turns, working together) and math/logic skills (Wisneski & Reifel, 2012).

In contrast, on the other end of the continuum is the understanding of play as a ludocentric activity. These types of play are understood as undirected, spontaneous and goalless (Russell, 2008). Brent Wilson (1974) describes ludic activities as "diversionary, stimulating, pleasureful endeavors" (p. 5). Here, the benefits of play are related directly to the "intrinsic and personally directed nature" of play itself, rather than external adult determined goals (Russell, 2008, p. 86). Penny Wilson (2010) argues that in both theory

and practice, play is understood as "a set of behaviors that are freely chosen, personally directed, and intrinsically motivated" (p. 5). Adults who value this type of children's play trust that children know "how they want to play" (Russell, 2008, p. 86) and we can leave them to it rather than carefully orchestrate play to meet larger developmental outcomes.

Play in Art Education

> "Children's play is not separate from art making. In fact, children's play is a form of art" (Szekely, 2015, p. 3).
>
> "Both art and play, like imagination and fantasy, are not regarded as a part of the serious business of schooling" (Eisner, 1990, p. 43).

While I have written in other iterations that the relationship of play and art is natural (Cinquemani, 2014a), it is not always easy. Within the history of art education, the field has struggled to legitimize itself. In Chapter Four I presented a brief analysis of the changing face of art education, looking at the formalist and more progressive agendas embraced in the field. However, this discussion did not include any dialogue about the perspective on the art classroom held within education broadly. This idea is very much connected to the way we think about the role of art in school and, as a consequence, the type of artmaking experiences we encourage in educational spaces.

It is the sad truth that today, forty years later, Efland's (1976) ideas still ring true: art "is one of the last subjects to be added to the curriculum and the first to go when funds are short" (p. 39). Because of the peripheral nature of art, art educators have struggled to maintain its value in schools while at the same time working to elevate its importance. Historically speaking, art has been traditionally categorized as "easy and fun" or even used art as a form of therapy (p. 41). Efland continues,

> Though most art teachers find such talk pejorative, the fact of the matter is that art is one of the areas that is used to vivify school life and break up the deadening routine…when art teachers try to make their subject more rigorous or intellectually challenging, such efforts meet with resistance. The last thing that many art teachers feel they can do is to make art another academic discipline. (pp. 41-42)

In order to legitimize the field, art teachers (despite the challenges they faced) began to move away from this fun and therapeutic view of art.

Thompson, Bresler, and Costantino (2010) note that a widespread attempt to justify the relevance and need for art education appeared in the 1950s and 1960s as America entered the arms race and became worried about being left behind technologically. They continue that, as a result, individual disciplines (like art) were forced to defend and validate their "inclusion in the curriculum in terms of their contribution to the total enterprise of education" (p. 424). It was this need, in part, that fostered the rise of the discipline-based arts education (DBAE) philosophies that were grounded in a combination of aesthetics, art criticism, art history, and art production. Thompson et al. (2010) argue that this approach was based on the idea that art could be taught as an intellectual discipline and, as such, promoted an "academic respectability for the arts, based on a sophisticated body of knowledge and exemplary artworks" (p. 424). The rise of DBAE and the larger educational policies that came with it (Thomspon et al., 2010) have played a factor in the sorts of art experiences offered to children, with teachers making efforts to keep their lessons fun but also academically rigorous.

In discussing school art vs. play art, Wilson (1974) argues that these academically based art experiences within school are still examples of ludic activities (i.e.: fun and pleasurable), but lean more towards a rule-based and structured experience. Citing Victor Turner's classifications of ludic behavior, he refers to school art as existing on the liminal end of the ludic scale. Art lessons are compulsory and children are often expected to follow the rules of the project laid out by their teacher. He likens the art classroom to a sort of game, with winning being comparable to doing the project well and receiving a good grade. Yet, Wilson continues that despite their liminal nature, children do have fun in school art experiences. "Actually young people appear to enjoy the art classroom game, just as they enjoy most games. Indeed art classroom games are among the more stimulating of school games" (Wilson, 1974, pp. 5-6). Wilson makes a clear distinction between school art and play art, the second of which would fall on the liminoid end of the ludic scale. Play art (the things they create on their own outside of school) encompasses those activities that are "more open, novel, and playful, concerning the innovative aspects of art, music, [and] dance" (p. 5). He concludes with the broad argument that children's play art and their school art are quite different.

While Wilson (1974) posits that children's true play art cannot really exist within a school space, there are some who believe that we can merge children's art and play within school through the incorporation of elements like choice. George Szekely has written extensively on the relationship between art and play in the classroom. He argues wholeheartedly for the inclusion of play and playful behaviors within the school art environment, noting that this approach does run counter to how many teach within the art education field. Szekeley (2015) writes,

> Adults send children to school to teach them how to think and behave like grown-ups, and this includes the art classroom where children are taught to make art like adults. Rather than learning to explore, to see and think creatively, children learn to use conventional art processes and follow traditional rules and principles to essentially make adult art. Because of this, art becomes like other school subjects where they learn to do as they are told in order to get a good grade. In the process of learning the game of school, children forget that they have great ideas and forfeit playful behaviors and artistic thinking. (p. 30)

In some ways this perspective mirrors Wilson's (1974) thoughts written over forty years earlier, likening the art classroom to a game that can, in essence, be won with conformity and acceptance of teacher rules. However, Szekely continues that we can and should reject this type of space for one that allows and encourages children's liminoid play while making art, in essence challenging the type of art education that has come to dominate our field.

Szekely describes a type of "play-based art" that aims to reject traditional ideas about what artmaking and art learning look like, noting, "play is an alternative to the typical school experience where everything is managed and predefined, made up of rules, how-tos, and approved actions" (p. 13). Play-based art rejects adult-directed experiences and polished and perfect looking outcomes; it is free from the constraints of art historical perspectives and adult definitions of what art should look like or how it should be made. Szekely goes on to carefully describe what play art looks like in the art education classroom. In a play-based art space children are free to move their bodies and create not just on tables: they are able to explore, manipulate, and organize materials; encouraged to

come up with their own techniques and approaches to making; take the lead and define their own agendas; and experiment with processes and outcomes. "Play challenges students to search their surroundings, consider multiple possibilities, and try the unlikely. Instead of demonstrations of what is known, play offers opportunities for discovery, a time for adventure and exploration" (p. 40).

This perspective of play art challenges us, as art educators, to reconsider what our art classrooms and lessons might look like. Many years earlier, Elliot Eisner (1990) wrote about the way in which play (conceptualized as a form of "playing around") functions as an exploratory activity where one is able to "discover the possibility of experience" (p. 44). This idea is well reflected in Szekely's approach to play art. Eisner posited that children make sense of their world through exploring the possibilities for experience, noting, "the phrase *making sense* is significant. What we know about the world is ultimately dependent upon our sensory experience…the qualities of the world are not simply given; they must be constructed" (p. 45, original emphasis). He argues that "sense" is not something that can simply be had or found, but needs to be created.

When we look at this idea through the lens of school art experiences, it reflects an approach that encourages children to play and explore, "rather than search" for meaning (Eisner, 1990, p. 44). In order to do so we need to let go of our traditional teacher-directed art experiences in efforts to create artmaking spaces that foster playful encounters with art materials and ideas. "Relinquishing the constraints of convention in order to explore in the mind's eye the unconventional might provide one of the most important arenas in which creativity itself could be generated" (p. 45). This must be a conscious act on our part; when we neglect to create opportunities for children to explore

and make sense of their world, we silently work to diminish play and socialize children to make and exist in conventional spaces of art education (Eisner, 1990). Our contemporary art world is the perfect sounding board for encouraging play-based approaches to school art as perspectives are currently "wide open to reconsidering what makes something art" (Szekely, 2015, p. 11).

The kind of play art experiences proposed by Szekely (2015) mirror many ideas about children's ludocentric play experiences as described earlier. Defining the art classroom as a "space for potential" he argues that play-based art "has nothing to do with art supplies and everything to do with the ability to play with every object and determine what makes it interesting" (p. 16). Allowing children the time and space to engage with their own ideas and theories is at the core of his approach. This idea also permeates the field of playwork, which places a high value on children's self-directed play.

Playwork

The ludocentric interpretation of play offered earlier is drawn directly from a definition of play offered by playworker Penny Wilson (2010). In playwork, children are offered opportunities to "determine and control the content and intent of their play by following their own instincts, ideas, and interests, in their own way, for their own reasons" (p. 25). Bob Hughes, a prolific writer on playwork, argues that "the 'content and intent' of play should be determined by the child" (as cited in Brown, 2008, p. 10). Additionally, Brown and Cheesman (2003) offer some of the following ideas as inherently connected to theories surrounding playwork including,

> Creating play opportunities that enable children to pursue their own play agendas; enriching the child's world by providing opportunities for experimentation and

> exploration… facilitating opportunities for children to develop a sense of self; [and] introducing flexibility and adaptability into play environments in order to enhance the prospects of children achieving their full potential. (p. 4)

At its core, playwork is concerned with the kinds of voluntary and spontaneous play that children engage in on their own rather than play encouraged by adults. It is within this kind of play that children are able to explore their own ideas/theories and develop a sense of who they are and how they fit within our world. Playwork embraces values such as "child-centredness, empowerment, self-directed play, opportunities for risk and challenge, growth of confidence and self-esteem, individuality, new experiences and cooperation" (Taylor, 2008, p. 46).

Playwork itself is often recognized as something that exists outside the confines of a classroom and as embracing more free roaming spaces of play, such as adventure playgrounds, which are defined broadly as "place[s] with materials that children could manipulate" (Wilson, 2010, p. 6). Wilson goes on to describe that adventure playgrounds, essentially understood as the spaces of playwork, should always be in a state of flux, "directed, informed, and executed by the children and their playing" (p. 7). These types of spaces are staffed by "playworkers" whose primary role is to support the children in their play. Playworkers should not lead children's play but rather work with the play (Wilson, 2010) to help the children accomplish whatever their play agenda might be. They walk a delicate balance, supporting but aiming to not control or influence.

Merging Art and Play: Wildcat Art as a Playwork Site

Within the context of this research, there are certain elements of playwork that are especially relevant to the kinds of play the children in WCA engaged in, specifically the

definition of play held, the conditions and materials required for play, and the role of adults in children's play. In the sections that follow, I explore each of these elements of playwork in more detail and connect them with specific examples from WCA. Through dialoguing the relationship between playwork and early childhood art education, I aim to conceptualize WCA as a playwork site.

Understanding the Kind of Play Embraced in Playwork

The kind of play embraced by playwork is a free, unadulterated type of play that is initiated by children themselves, not coerced by adults; it is play that is "spontaneous, child led and intrinsically motivated" (Rogers, 2011, p. 6). This type of play stands in contrast to what we would normally expect to see in a classroom space, where there is more structured play coupled with formal teacher led activities (Rogers, 2011). Rogers goes on to define free play as moments when children "exercise choice and control over where, with whom and what they played" (p. 12). Additionally, I would add that free play also offers children the chance to decide if they want to play to begin with. While we might see free play opportunities offered within the context of school (recess, choices in classroom centers, etc.), these kinds of play are still "governed by the official and rational pedagogic discourse of teaching and learning" (Rogers, 2011, p. 11) due to the way they are structured and managed by adult educators.

In contrast, playwork seeks to reject these larger discourses. Hughes argues that playwork should be "child empowering" (as cited in Brown, 2008, p. 10). The play process itself should take precedence (Kilvington & Wood, 2010) over any sort of pre-determined educational or developmental outcomes. "Playwork serves and supports the play needs of children as *defined by them*" (Kilvington & Wood, 2010, p. 7, original

emphasis). In playwork, the children are the leaders – they engage in play experiences that are grounded in their own ideas and explorations. While adults offer space and materials (this idea will be explored further within this chapter), it is the children who bring the content of their play.

Free play in WCA: Blocks and shadow puppets. Within the context of WCA, the children were primarily engaged in free play art experiences. Materials (and sometimes suggestions on how to use them) were offered, but the majority of their experiences were grounded in them following their own agenda; they were creating “the original, imaginative work of children” (Szekely, 2015, p. 8). Much of the children’s art created with wooden block remnants are nice examples of what free art play might look like, mainly because no ideas were offered by adults on how to use this material.

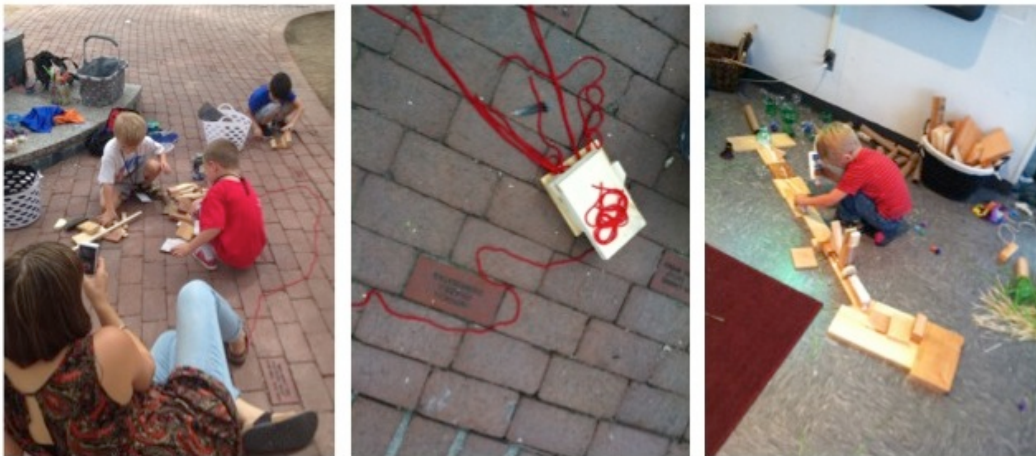

Figure 16. Seth and Ben building volcanoes outside (left and center); Ben working on a block sculpture in the classroom.

These randomly and imperfect block pieces (sourced from local woodworking shops) were a frequented choice by many of the children. They shifted back and forth between creating permanent structures with hot glue, and building temporary pieces that

were deconstructed that same day. These constructions were brought outside to build volcanoes and make insect homes, they were used as props for creating videos, and they were often used to build structures that were simply knocked right back down (see Figure 16).

During the seventh class, Ben was particularly engaged with the blocks, and spent a long time building and playing with them, incorporating into his work a small plastic lizard he had brought in from home (see Figure 17). Showing Amanda his sculpture, he shared his vision: “I made a spaceship for all lizards. I made a spaceship for all lizards. And this is so, so when somebody [inaudible words] and so when people put the bug on here, the bug slips because it’s really slippery.” A bit later, when I asked Ben about his work, his point of view shifted slightly as his work changed form. “It’s an obstacle course. I’m making an obstacle course for the lizard and the HEXBUG, okay?”

Figure 17. Ben working on his sculpture; the nearly finished obstacle course.

Initially, Ben was working alone. However, when I approached him, Alex, Yasmine, and Seth (the owner of the HEXBUG, also a toy brought from home) were alongside him. The collaborative nature of the lizard, bug, and block creations led to a more fluid interpretation of what in fact was being made. Creating together and sharing ideas allows for more possibilities and the chance for students to fulfill their own fantasies (Szekely, 2015). Additionally, because there were no requirements or rules in place for this experience, as there often are in art classrooms, the children were able to simply create and build what they wanted. The notions of creating spaceships and obstacle courses were ideas born entirely from the children and their desire to incorporate their own toys and interests into their art. Szekely (2015) notes that art teachers need to "take a closer look at what children create on their own but also respect these creations as valid art" (p. 9). This block structure may not look like a conventional sculpture – it is impermanent, unfinished, and lacking in formal sculptural qualities. However, it served the needs of the children who created it and offered them the chance to make their own choices about what and how they wanted to create (key elements of playwork).

The vignette I shared earlier with Yasmine and the shadow puppet play also serves as an example of this same kind of play, where the experience of playing is validated in and of itself, with children taking the lead. Although this shadow puppet play had elements of traditional artmaking embedded within it, it was the experience of creating stories and acting them out behind the screen that had value for Yasmine, and she was certainly not the only child who felt this way. Before the mini shadow puppet theater was introduced, I had set up a provocation for the children focused on the exploration of colored light and shadow. This was based on the children's interest in light

that had come up during previous sessions. During our seventh class I constructed a light exploration station: red, blue, and yellow lights each held up with a tripod, and a white sheet to shine the light on (see Figure 18).

Figure 18. John, Liam, and Yasmine exploring the colored lights; Liam looking at lights from behind and in front of the curtain; Saul and Liam trying to mix the colors of the lights.

After the children had a chance to explore these materials freely, I showed them how we could use them to create shadow puppets by moving the lights behind (rather than in front of) the sheet. I offered them black construction paper and wooden skewers to make shadow puppets. The children worked through the challenges of this project, and ultimately figured out that they simply couldn't draw their puppet on the black paper, but it was the silhouette of their drawing that needed to be emphasized in order for their full effect to be realized. We began to work in collaboration; the kids would draw their designs and I would cut them out. At first they were frustrated that their puppets didn't appear the way they had intended; a silhouette simply doesn't include the same sorts of detail that these children were prone to include in their initial drawings. However, once they had the chance to use their shadow puppets and watch others do the same, the

experience of moving their puppets behind the screen and having others watch them took over (see Figure 19).

Figure 19. Alex recording shadow puppet play; close up of one of the shadow puppets; some of the shadow puppets being created.

In these moments they created and directed their own experiences. I was there to assist when needed and document their work (often through digital videos that they would happily watch after the fact). Wisneski and Reifel (2012) note, “free play allows children to engage with what is important to them…in this view the play process itself empowers children to take charge of their lives and their learning” (p. 178). Just as playwork theory emphasizes, the children’s intent and ideas took precedence. Though I knew the children would have fun with the elements of light and shadow and enjoy playing with the theater, I thought that they might explore the ways that different shapes could be translated via the shadow puppets themselves, or delve into detailed story lines. While Yasmine’s story was complex, she was the only child who spent time in this way. The others relished in the openness of the provocation, running around behind the screen,

and playing with each other and their puppets. Wisneski and Reifel argue that play should be a "negotiated, co-constructed, relational space….this requires educators to attempt to view play more from the child's perspective" (pp. 183-184).

Though I had expectations and perhaps even hopes for how the children might engage with all the materials offered to them over the course of the program, the children were also free to use the materials as they saw fit (within the limits of safety). This nomadic element of the space and the materials is what allowed the children to engage in their play so freely and openly. As Balke (1997) notes, "play begins within a play space – which is not only a physical space…but also a psychological space that gives an atmosphere of freedom and emotional contact" (p. 357). He continues that, "time for play and space enough for playing" are often more important than materials or even those you play with (p. 359). Time, space, and materials for play were abundant within WCA, and the children sensed this as each Saturday passed. Their play experiences became, in part, just as important as their traditional physical artwork itself.

Play Spaces: Conditions and Materials

As a methodological practice, playwork embraces a certain type of space. Brown (2008) argues, "the first aim of playwork is simply to create the sort of rich environment that enables play to take place" (p. 8). Within the lens of playwork theory, this is a space defined by flexibility, movement, and the presence of loose parts (Taylor, 2008). Brown (2003) explains that, "flexibility in the play environment leads to increased flexibility in the child" (as cited in Taylor, 2008, p. 45). He refers to this as "compound flexibility"; the presence of being and playing in a flexible environment offers children the opportunity to become more adaptable themselves. The value of flexibility is not a new

idea. Dewey (1938) introduced the notion of "'flexible purposing,' [understood as] the ability to shift gears in midstream, to avoid rigid adherence to a predefined script or plan, to welcome unanticipated opportunities, and to exploit them for their potential" (as cited in Eisner, 1990, p. 54). It is important for children to practice being flexible and a flexible environment allows them to do this.

In terms of play, a flexible space is one that can be used and played with in a variety of ways. As a nomadic space, the WCA classroom was grounded in flexibility and movement. In addition to these ideas, the presence of loose parts, defined as objects/materials that have no specific directions regarding their use, are also integral to a flexible play space. They can be big or small, but are movable in some way and are transitional. Simon Nicholson (1970) introduced the theory of loose parts in the article *What Do Playgrounds Teach?* In this text he argues that children should be offered play spaces where they can be creative or inventive. In order to be so, they need spaces that are self-instructional. These spaces embrace "components which, if assembled in ways invented by the participants, may construct a whole which exhibits properties that are more than the sum of its parts" (p. 4). In essence, this kind of space allows the players to control how they use the space and, as such, what they can create in it. This is only possible through the inclusion of components or materials that have a variety of uses.

Nicholson (1970) argues that in order for children to be creative, there needs to be various elements of invention in their play spaces. He asks, "How inventive can the average child be with fixed iron bars on an asphalt 'playground' surrounded by a tall chain-link fence?" (p. 6). He advocates for play spaces that are grounded in invention of

the environment, invention of components (materials), and invention by the users of the components.

> The creativity – the playing around with the components and variables of the world in order to make new experiments and discover new things and form new concepts – has been explicitly stated as the domain of the creative few, and the rest of the community has been deprived of a crucial part of their lives and life-style. This is particularly true to young children who find the world incredibly restricted – a world where they cannot play with building and making things, or play with fluids, water, fire, or living objects, and all the things that satisfy one's curiosity and give us the pleasure that results from discovery and invention. (Nicholson, 1971, p. 30)

Based upon the ideals of both playwork and loose part theories, children can really only truly play and be creative when they have a space that is open to their needs, interests, and desires as well as materials to manipulate. Nicholson (1971) posits, "in any environment, both the degree of inventiveness and creativity, and the possibility of discovery, are directly proportional to the number and kind of variables in it" (p. 30). He posits that there is a direct correlation between creativity and the inclusion of loose parts in play spaces.

Loose parts are an integral aspect of playwork. Echoing the ideas of Nicholson, Taylor (2008) argues that children's creativity is directly connected to the inclusion and manipulation of loose parts within their play and play spaces. Taylor goes on to add,

> Loose parts become transitional phenomena in playing. Children use them to stand in the place of something else, as symbolic representation….when shared

> and involving others, [loose parts] create the transitional space, the to-ing and fro-ing of imaginations, through which meanings and relationships are formed. (p. 45)

This idea speaks to the power that materials have for transformation, especially when there are no prescribed rules for how they should be used.

The WCA play space: Loose parts and the rejection of a product. WCA embraced both the type of play encouraged and the kind of play space advocated for in playwork and loose parts theory. Specifically, it embodied the three principal types of invention necessary for creativity that Nicholson (1970) advocates: the invention of the environment (both physical and social elements of the classroom), the invention of components (artistic materials utilized), and the invention by the users of the components (how the children use the materials).

As a nomadic space, movement and non-linear perspectives were nurtured in the WCA classroom. The space itself was designed to encourage choice and play, and to foster the children's own creative ideas. Its invention was certainly purposeful in both the physical and social contexts (as discussed in the previous chapter). Because the space and activities that took place within it were not fixed, the children had many opportunities to engage in the kinds of free play experiences described earlier due to the flexible curriculum and components.

The materials offered to the children were an amalgamation of traditional artistic media and various loose parts. The content of the loose parts was broad. The children were offered various natural materials (seashells, dried starfish and seahorses, pinecones, sticks, rocks, bark, feathers, cactus spines, etc.) as well as human-made materials (small colored glass gems, beads, keys, small glass photographic slides, plastic charms, beaded

necklaces, sea glass, pieces of broken jewelry, etc.). They were given no specific instructions on how they could or could not use these materials. They were placed on a table in the rear of the classroom or sometimes placed next to (or on) the overhead projector or light table to encourage exploration (see Figure 20).

Figure 20. Loose parts on the projector and on the light table.

Interestingly, while the children used these loose parts quite often (many children played with these materials during each class over the course of the ten week program), a very large majority of the artistic work they created was non-permanent. These materials were "played with" in the traditional sense of the phrase and generally no final artistic product was produced with them. The loose parts were often played with on the projector, as the children explored the different levels of transparency each object had and what their projected image looked like (versus the object itself). They engaged in a lot of putting on and taking off materials, moving them around on the projector, as well as moving the head of the projector itself to shift the projection from the wall to the ceiling, sometimes even landing on their own bodies or the bodies of others (see Figure 21). In

these moments, their play was grounded in an exploration of the materiality of each loose part itself. They worked and played with each material carefully in order to learn what its capabilities were, to make sense of it or know it well. As Eisner (1990) argues, "sense-making requires an active organism; *knowing* is a verb and always in a state of flux" (p. 45). The idea of playing around with materials is a way for children to "explore the possibility of experience, [and] is one of the primary means through which the child makes sense of the world" (p. 45).

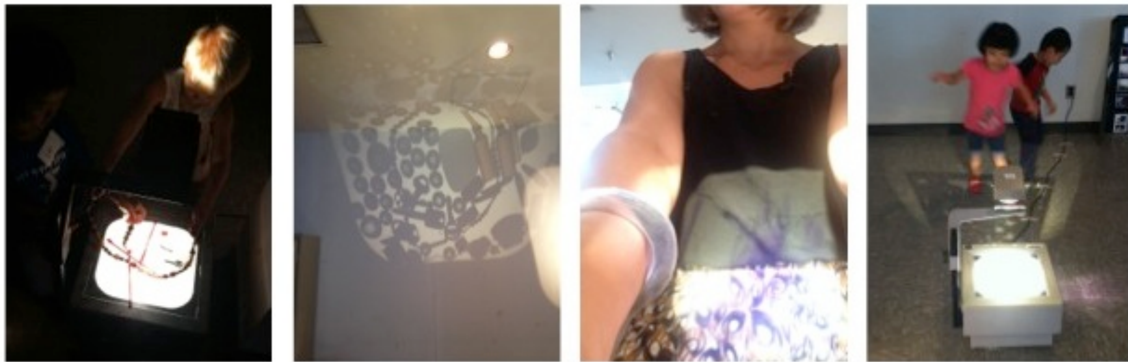

Figure 21. Ben using loose part son the projector; projection of loose parts on the ceiling; John's projection on me; John and Danielle dancing on their projection on the floor.

These loose parts also moved beyond the projector into other realms of the classroom and beyond. Yasmine in particular developed a strong connection with many of the ocean/beach themed objects. In addition to playing with them on the projector, she also spent time looking at them carefully through magnifying glasses, exploring them with various senses such as touch and sound, and including them in other artistic work. She went so far as to even create a home for one of the miniature sea horses out of clay (see Figure 22).

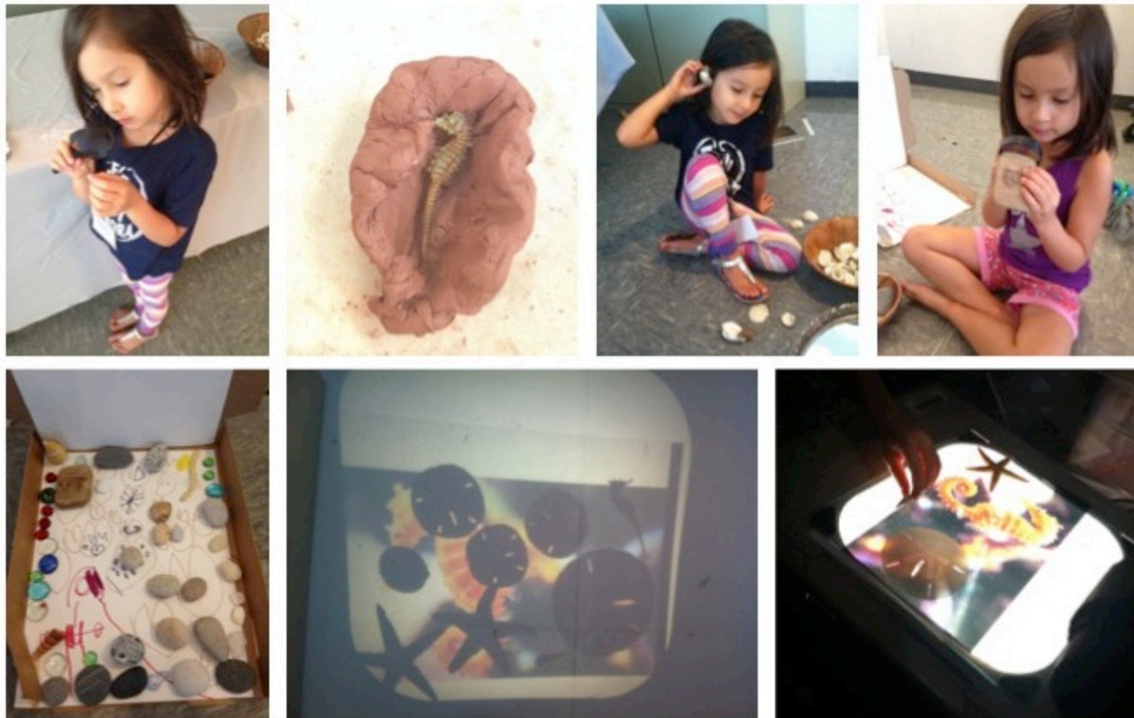

Figure 22. Yasmine and loose parts: looking closely at the seahorse; her home for the seahorse out of clay; listening for the ocean in a sea shell; looking closely at a piece of driftwood; loose parts integrated into one of Yasmine's artworks; projector of underwater scene; seahorse, starfish, and sand dollar on the projector.

Additionally, more traditional art media (such as yarn and wood blocks) were embraced as loose parts for play. During the very first day of class the children expressed an interest in volcanoes (which ultimately became a reoccurring theme for them throughout the program). On this first Saturday a small group of children worked together to create volcanoes out of the wooden blocks. They were not attached to each other as a traditional sculpture would be, but rather stacked and balanced together. The children then desired to have lava and went about cutting small pieces of red, pink, and white yarn to act as such. They spread the yarn around the room just as lava from a volcano would flow all over (see Figure 23). This project was continued by two of the boys a few weeks later outdoors in the courtyard.

Figure 23. Saul, Alex, and Seth building volcanoes out of blocks with yarn lava.

The beauty of loose parts such as the ones described is that there is no right, wrong, or singular way to play with them. As noted above, they are transitional; they can function as what they are and be valued for the beauty of their shape, size, texture, or color. Or they can stand in place of something else, like scarves being used as wings for flying dinosaurs (see Figure 24). However, it is not only traditional loose parts that can be flexible in this way. The children in WCA also explored customary artistic media, like paint, in a similar fashion.

Figure 24. Yasmine and Elissa pretending to be flying dinosaurs outside in the courtyard.

On our second Saturday I offered the children the chance to engage with color mixing. They were given some small cups full of red, blue, yellow, and white paint along with empty pallets, brushes, and blank white paper. I encouraged them to experiment with mixing different colors of paint together to see what new colors they could make. This was a messy endeavor but for the most part the children working at this table kept their paint to their pallets and painted images with their new colors. In contrast, Alex desired to embrace this activity with a greater sense of fluidity and playfulness (see Figure 25). He used his hands and fingers to mix the paint together on the paper itself, bypassing the pallet and eventually extending beyond the paper onto the table. He created a rich brown color in the process. He used his fingers to manipulate the paint, taking it out of the cups and then pushing/pulling it all over the paper and table. Rather than using the paintbrushes, he used the paint cups themselves to make marks in the paint. Beth was working next to Alex and had already mixed some lovely shades of pink that she used to paint a picture of two girls outdoors. However, most likely inspired by Alex's non-traditional use of the materials, she also began to explore the paint with her hands. Using the brush she added some color to the table (which was covered with a black plastic sheet) and began to use her fingers to mix it around. She then used the brush to add paint to her hands themselves, rejecting the pallet, the paper, and the table.

While paint is not normally perceived as a loose part, it can become one when used in exploration. This can happen when the classroom is invented as a "laboratory-type environment where they [children] can experiment, enjoy, and find out things for themselves" (Nicholson, 1971, p. 31). Due to the open nature of the WCA classroom, the children felt free to use paint as a type of loose part, not feeling constrained by a brush,

paper, or pallet. They were able to invent rather than follow directions. “Improvisation within accepted conventions is, of course, one of the features of creative activity in art” (Eisner, 1990, p. 46). Both Alex and Beth rejected using the paint in a conventional way, choosing instead to invent their own painting process. It is this quality of invention that loose parts possess, and what allows the paint to act as such. As Szekely (2015) notes, “play with interesting objects of all kinds stimulates creative thinking for all ages. Forms and toys that are open and least structured contribute the most opportunities to innovate” (p. 16).

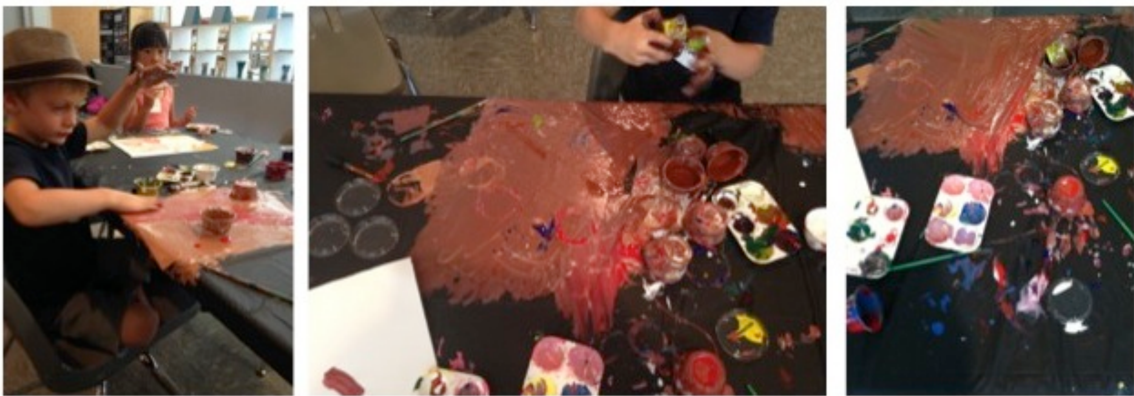

Figure 25. Alex exploring mixing paint on the table (Beth visible in the background).

Adult Control: Balancing The Role of Playworker and Educator in WCA

These vignettes nicely illustrate the blurring of art and play that takes place when children are given choices and open materials in a flexible space. However, it seems important to add that some of these play experiences were stressful for me as adult/educator/researcher. During the volcano and lava construction, I admit to feeling a weight upon me as I watched the children cutting the small bits of yarn and scattering them around the room. There were pieces everywhere and they were not simply cutting

from the end of a single string, but sticking the scissors into the middle of the whole skein, ultimately making the yarn next to impossible to use in a more traditional way (as in knitting, weaving, or any use requiring a long continuous piece). Additionally, watching Alex rub paint all over the table was exciting and frustrating at the same time. I loved the fact that he was able to explore this medium in his own playful way, but aware of the fact that now the table would need to be cleaned before any other child could use the space and that the beautiful space I had created was a blur of brown paint. Similar feelings would sometimes overcome me while observing the children use our sweet and fragile loose parts at the projector. Standing back to watch a child dump a small bowl of glass gems or rocks onto the glass top of the projector is not without stress. Would something break? Is this really a thoughtful and careful use of the materials?

These concerns speak powerfully to the role of adults in children's play and artmaking. Often children's intentions and ideas about play differ greatly from those of adults or educators (Wisneski & Reifel, 2012). "Child's play rarely follows the logical anticipated path that adults often expect. A common critique of educators' understandings of play is that our logical conceptions of play are often too rigid and our representations of play too scripted" (p. 181). If we are open to children's free and unstructured play, it most often looks very different than we would expect or may be comfortable with. This is a challenge to our role as adults and educators.

In playwork, adults are there primarily to help maintain the play space and work "with the play" (Wilson, 2010, p. 8). Brown (2008) argues, "the role of the playworker is to create flexible environments which are substantially adaptable or controllable by the children" (p. 9) and they must "ensure that wherever possible they are

following the child's agenda" (p. 10). This is a complex role; a playworker needs to design and preserve a safe and exciting play space but also be as invisible to the children as possible (Wilson, 2010). This allows the children to maintain their control over their play spaces and experiences. Wilson (2010) adds, "The ideal playworker leaves the children free to play for themselves but intervenes in carefully measured ways to support the play process. She is aware of her own playfulness, but does not impose it upon the children" (p. 8). Additionally, Kilvington and Wood (2010) add that often the playworker is responsible for helping the children to create the kind of space that they need.

An important aspect of the playworker's role is the ability to not control children's play and experiences playing. They "do *not* exist in order to: correct or control children's behavior…entertain children; lead to direct children's play; plan activities for children; [or] teach children what they need to learn" (Kilvington & Wood, 2010, p. 7). It is through this lens of playwork that I approached my role in WCA. It was not a collaborative experience (as described in Chapter Five) but more so a conscious effort to not control nor direct their play in whatever form it took. This role can be looked at as a kind of amalgamation of playworker and educator, occupying a space in between each position.

As Brown (2008) writes, "most adults who come into contact with children bring their own agenda to the relationship" (p. 10) and this can most certainly be said for myself. My agenda, in sorts, was to create a space that rejected traditional relationships between adult art educators and young children, hoping to create a space grounded in exploration, collaboration, and play. As such, I was very careful and conscious about how and why the children would make art and engage with materials within the WCA

classroom. I was reluctant to control their experiences, art or otherwise. This is one of the reasons why the children were not engaged in step-by-step artmaking experiences, required to complete certain activities, or even use materials in the ways that I had imagined. I was very consciously rejecting traditional conventions of art classroom experiences.

Yet there is a clear "tension between the desire to invent and explore and the need to share and work within social conventions" (Eisner, 1990, p. 46). This tension can often be seen with children's play and artmaking in school where it is suggested that there are right and wrong ways to create and good or bad kinds of play. Eisner offered the example of a child playing with their fork to catapult peas across the room, a fork that obviously should only be used for eating. In this kind of situation (or perhaps even the example of the young children in WCA painting on trees), "the child is encouraged to think about an object or idea only with respect to its conventional function rather than to redefine it. Play is diminished as socialization to conventional expectation prevails" (p. 47). The nature of playing with materials in artmaking is grounded in the notion that there is no singular way to engage with any material or project offering. Encouraging and supporting children's play in art often looks like a happy rejection of the conventional functions of materials themselves.

As I note above, although it was my agenda to encourage play and exploration of materials, the children often pushed me to and beyond my comfort levels. On the seventh Saturday of class I stood near Ben as he approached one of the two painting easels in the room. They had small jars of tempera paint in front of them along with brushes and water,

and paper in place. They were ready for use. Ben's interest however was in mixing the paint, and not on the paper.

Me: Are you gonna paint a picture, Ben?

Ben: I'm just gonna make new paint.

Me: You want to make new paint colors?

Ben: Mm hmm. See what happens with so much. I've never tried that.

Me: You've never tried that. So you wanna see what happens when you mix….what color was it before you mixed the red in?

Ben: Um, I don't know

Me: You don't know.

Ben: It will be red. It's purple.

Me: It's turning purple. You're right.

Ben: This one is turning purple.

Me: Do you want me to get you so more jars? Some empty jars? Here, I'm going to get you some empty jars so you can mix some more. [I bring back some empty jars]. Here, you can mix some new colors if you want to…what color is that?

Ben: I think I made a dark red!

Me: That one still looks red, huh?

Ben: Now, is that the color I think it will turn to some color. I'm mixing red with blue now.

Me: Okay. So you had a lot of blue and a little bit of red, right? Uh, more red, okay.

Ben: I'm gonna paint and this has to be red in here.

Me: You're gonna pour the paint into there.

Ben: Because I don't need this one! Look it, this side is brown.

Me: You're right. It has a little stripe there, doesn't it?

Ben: And I think I was mixing black.

Me: You thought you were mixing black.

Ben: I need to make it go this way [balancing one jar on top of the other].

Me: Okay, so you're just gonna leave it there to let it drip?

Ben: Mmm hmmm. Now I'm gonna let the blue [the jars crash to the floor].

Me: It's alright. Just pick it up. I don't know if that's gonna balance. You're gonna have to be really careful.

Ben: I will.

Me: Okay.

Ben: So now this, after I put these colors inside here I'll mix the yellow and then this because those ones hAlex't been mixed.

Me: Hmmmmm

Ben: This one and this one and this one.

Me: You're right.

Ben: Not those ones.

Me: Not those.

Ben: But I think this one has been mixed!

Me: What makes you think that one's been mixed?

Ben: I think it was yellow because it looks all yellow.

Me: You're right because we can see different colors on it, huh?

Figure 26. Ben pouring paint into jars; two jars balancing on top of each other; Ben's final mixed colors.

In this moment, Ben rejected my offering easel painting in favor of mixing all the colors together, in essence "ruining" the purity of the primary colors I had presented to all of the children (see Figure 26). He poured the paint from one jar directly into another rather than mix on a pallet or the paper. This was certainly not my intention and the tension in me rose as the colors became muddied and mixed. But I did not stop him from mixing in this way. As Szekely (2015) notes,

> adults might want to recognize that in play, they do not have to be in charge. In fact, it might be useful to think of the child as the leader and the adult as the follower, where the adult takes direction and cues in order to become more familiar and comfortable with play. (p. 20)

Ben was not only thinking about how to create new colors (as he additionally said), but also considering the way that the paint drips from the jars, how it looks as it blends together, and what happens when you mix large amounts of paint together. Though I was frustrated by what I considered to be the ruining of my pure jars of paint, I remained by his side during this exploration and got him the materials he needed (empty jars) to further his investigation of color mixing and pouring.

This release of control is important to fostering play, especially in an artmaking context, which traditionally tends to be fairly structured. Playwork theory puts the children's play at the forefront and tries to encourage the adult playworkers to follow rather than lead. Balke (1997) posits that in moments of play,

> adults' wishes may not be what is most important for the child at the moment, however, and the child's preferred activity may lead to more learning than would a structured learning environment. It is a question of timing: who is dominating the time and space made available for the child. (p. 357)

This idea asks us to carefully consider what it is we are hoping for children to learn or experience in spaces of education. Do we want them to know simply what we want them to know? Or do we want to create spaces where they experiment and play in order to discover what they themselves want (or need) to know? Bruner (1986) notes, "in play, we transform the world according to our desires, while in learning we transform ourselves better to conform to the structure of the world" (p. 78). The WCA classroom was transformed by the children rather than vice versa.

Wildcat Art as a Complex System: Play at the Edge Of Chaos

The presence of both stress and pleasure on my part during the children's play existed due to the complex nature of the WCA classroom. Drawing upon Battram's (1998, 2008, 2015) ideas about complexity/chaos theory and its relationship to children's play/playwork, in the following sub-sections I position the WCA classroom as a complex system existing in the space between order and chaos: a space of play. I argue that the WCA classroom sits at the edge of chaos (or in the zone of complexity), which is the

perfect environment for play itself. The children's play art was able to flourish because of the possibilities open in this space.

The Zone of Complexity

Through the lens of complexity science, the zone of complexity is understood as a system state that exists in between the states of order and chaos. "In complex systems the complexity is found in the middle, at the fuzzy boundary between states" (Battram, 1998, p. 18). Complexity can exist in man-made and natural systems, and in social structures (Çambel, 1993). Complex systems are, in essence, unpredictable and non-linear. They are dynamic, unbalanced, "like a journey, not a destination" (Çambel, 1993, p. 4). Battram (2015) argues that when a system is complex, it is unable to be controlled. Complex adaptive systems are systems that are able to adapt to their environment. They are "constantly revising and rearranging their components in response to feedback from the environment" (Battram, p. 35). A complex system is, in many ways, similar to a nomadic space: open to change, movement, and possibility.

The Edge of Chaos

As complex systems exist in between order and chaos, they exist at the edge of chaos itself. The edge of chaos is a term that describes "the point in a complex system where ordered behavior gives way to *uncertain* behavior; a phase *transition*, such as the chance from ice to water or water to steam" (Battram, 2008, p. 90, original emphasis). It is a space where order shifts to complexity. Battram (1998) explains that here "order" is understood as stereotypical behavior and predictability. It is conceptualized as something that doesn't adapt or respond to change; it is a state where patterns are simply repeated, "complacent and unresponsive" (Battram, 1998, p. 141). Chaos is understood as an

"unstable system of disorder" (Harri-Augstein, as cited in Battram, 1998, p. 145). Chaos systems are disorganized and often have little or no internal structure guiding them (Battram, 1998). "Chaos implies the existence of unpredictable or random aspects in dynamic matters" (Çambel, 1993, p. 15). Langton argues that at the edge of chaos things "never quite lock into place, yet never dissolve into turbulence either...[systems are] spontaneous, adaptive, and alive" (as cited in Battram, 1998, p. 140).

Possibility as a Creative Space

According to Battram (2008), true creativity and learning are "initiated and nurtured at the edge of chaos, in uncertainty" (p. 89). "All the edges of any system/s are where the interesting things happen – ideas, change, creativity" (Battram, 2008, p. 92). Understood in this way, the edge of chaos becomes a space of possibility.

> Possibility space is the place where all our ideas live before they are brought into being. Possibility space is real in the same way that an organisation is real: it is created in language. It is an extended metaphor for both the exploration of possibilities and the design of space for the creation of possibilities. (Battram, 1998, p. 105)

The possibility space is where creative ideas come into existence; it is a place where there are always possibilities, but not too many (Battram, 2008).

The Classroom Space: Exploring Order, Chaos, and Play

Through the lens of complexity theory, classrooms can be explored as system states existing in order, chaos, or something in between. As order is conceptualized as being both predictable and stereotypical, it becomes an interesting way to think about a traditional art classroom environment that values production and linear thinking over

choice and freedom. Battram (2008) argues that, "an ordered organization, in this sense, is one that is not adapting, not responding to change, just 'going through the motions' – repeating a narrow set of patterns of response over and over again, complacent and unresponsive" (p. 92). In this sense, when children simply engage in artmaking activities as directed by their teachers or as materials suggest (as described in Chapter Four), they are really just "going through the motions" as noted above. There is no change that occurs in them or their artmaking, no innovation, no new ideas. In these moments their art becomes separate from play, materials are used in conventional ways, and art becomes hierarchical rather than flexible and cooperative (Szekely, 2015).

Çambel (1993) uses the term "determinism" to explore ideas about order in chaos theory. He argues, "by determinism, we mean that an event is cased by certain conditions that cannot possibly lead to any other outcome" (p. 5). Many classic school art projects serve as examples of this kind of ordered system. There is a singular image that students are asked to make with certain materials; the outcome is predetermined. The conditions are so structured that if one follows directions there are no alternative final products. Often this can extend beyond the outcome to the students' experiences as well: they are told where to sit, when they can get up, which materials they can use, how to use those materials, and sometimes even how they can engage with each other during artmaking itself.

While a traditional classroom can be viewed as an ordered state, I would argue that in essence, schools (and classrooms) are, truly at their core, complex adaptive systems. The problem is that, at the same time, they are spaces that are controlled.

> Because control of a complex system (or more precisely, a complex adaptive system) is not possible, attempting to control it will have negative consequences….the attempt to control is a failure of perception, the result of thinking with the simplistic tool of either/or logic. We fail to see the complexity that exists at the boundary between order and chaos. Thus, we leap to simple solutions. (Battram, 2015, p. 287)

The step-by-step art projects that are often found in art classrooms are an example of a kind of simple solution that just creates further problems. It is the hidden curriculum in the art room at play, encouraging children to simply listen to adults, obey directions, and tow the line through the guise of seemingly fun art projects.

In thinking about play, an ordered state is a play space that is highly controlled. Wilson (2010) notes, "it is rule bound, highly organized, and prescriptive…there is no room in this play setting for the creative spontaneity of playing children" (p. 12). This kind of space, similar to a structured and traditional art classroom, would embrace linearity and singular ways of utilizing materials. Thus, it is not really a space where the kind of spontaneous and creative play embraced by playwork can flourish. Battram (2008) argues that this kind of play can only exist at the edge of chaos, "which means that *play exists only in the zone of complexity* – a weird mixture, in *uncertainty* between order and chaos" (p. 89, original emphasis). Wilson argues that there is a great deal of power in this space because of the merging between order and chaos. She explains, "An underlying order can support freedom and unpredictable play. It is a framework for creativity" (p. 13).

The WCA classroom functioned at the edge of chaos; it was a complex, adaptive, and liminal space. Each aspect of the system of the class affected one another: the adult educators, the children, the physical space, the atmosphere, and the materials. Each of these elements played a part in the creation of the space itself. And it was the existence of this kind of complex space that fostered the children's play and artmaking experiences. Çambel (1993) describes that a complex system is "neither completely deterministic nor completely random, and exhibits both characteristics" (p. 4). The WCA classroom was a balance between order and chaos. There was a broad sense of order that existed. The classroom was organized in a similar fashion every week with materials located in consistent locations, the children were invited to draw in their sketchbooks first thing every morning, there was a brief class meeting that took place every Saturday, and they were always invited to make choices about their artmaking experiences. However, there were also elements of chaos or randomness. There were spaces and materials that could be different things at different times; they were open and undefined. There was no singular way to use materials or approach provocations. Moments such as Alex's table painting or lava running wild in the classroom speak to these seemingly chaotic instants.

The ludocentric approach to play that was presented earlier in this chapter speaks to the value of finding a space in between, in this zone of complexity and possibility. Russell (2008) argues that, "the ludocentric approach sits between the two extremes of didactic (directing and teaching) and chaotic (negligent or egocentric). At the extreme, chaotic playwork is unpredictable…in contrast, didactic playwork tries to impose order and predictability onto play settings by controlling children's use of time, space, and resources" (pp. 86-87). This describes a space in between a more traditional classroom

environment and a free for all space. The WCA classroom was neither of these but sat in the middle. There were moments where I did impose order over the space, materials, and activities (such as not allowing the children to paint rocks in the classroom to avoid a hazardous situation of water on the floor), and the nature of the classroom itself was grounded in elements of control. Though the children had choice and various ways to engage, I was still the dispenser of materials and artistic content. I shared certain artists and artworks with them. I gave them certain materials to use. Yes, they could ask for other, different materials (and they did), and yes, they could use the materials in ways that I did not intend (which they also did), but these stemmed from my initial offering. Yet there were also moments where I embraced the chaotic nature of their play and artmaking. As Szekely (2015) notes, "adults can also learn to embrace the creative chaos" (p. 19).

It is at the edge of chaos where children's play is embraced rather than rejected or controlled. This space supports children's creative play rather than one that serves adult agendas (Russell, 2008). As such, the kind of artmaking that is produced may be unexpected. In the case of WCA, the children's play art was often temporary and lacking in what one may call "formal" artistic considerations. This is due to a lack of adult control over their experiences. When children are not given step-by-step instructions for a project or limits on how they can use materials, they are able to invent their own ideas about what and how to create. This was their play art, and it was liberating for me and I hope for the children as well.

CHAPTER SEVEN
LET'S ALL RESIST: NEW IMAGES OF ARTISTIC TEACHING AND LEARNING WITH YOUNG CHILDREN

During our eighth session, Seth came to class very excited. He was clutching a bag full of toilet paper rolls and step-by-step instructions for a "toilet paper roll car" that had been cut from a children's magazine. "Can I tell you something? We have toilet paper rolls in this bag and we brought instructions for how to make them [the cars]." He was very attentive to the fact that he wanted all the children in the class to be able to make a car, and counted 11 rolls in his bag. I assured him that I could find another three to make sure we had one for everyone. His mother mentioned to me that she "thought they would be fun for the kids to make" and that "it's really easy." I told Seth that after we came back from the art museum, if he reminded me, I would put the materials and instructions out as a choice for the kids.

During the course of this Saturday, Seth's project enticed a number of other children who all wanted to make cars too. This experience brought me a great deal of stress, not because the children embraced something that I did not plan, but because it was a project that was invented and designed by adults for children to create with adult assistance. In the case of the children in Wildcat Art, it was not a project they could complete on their own. The project required holes punched in spots that were almost impossible to reach (even for me), and materials that we did not have (such as brads to keep the wheels attached). Furthermore, the children were not able to read the instructions for the project; they had to ask Amanda or me to tell them what to do next. My frustration with this project also stemmed from its limiting nature. This was not an idea that Seth came up with himself, but he simply desired to reproduce something he had

already seen. This kind of activity positions children not as creators of their own ideas, but reproducers of a culture created for them (Tarr, 2003).

While the car project frustrated me to no end during this Saturday, at its core it was exactly the kind of experience I was hoping to foster: the children being in control of what they wanted to make. The structure of the class set up over the previous seven Saturdays had encouraged Seth to bring his own artistic agenda to class, which in itself is amazing. But the work was exactly the kind of making that I was aiming to reject: cookie cutter projects with a singular outcome. This experience created an internal struggle for me. I could see the children's desire to create these cars, and wanted them to feel successful and joyful during this process. At the same time I did not want to encourage this project nor did I have the time and means to help them in the ways they needed. In order to make these cars I would have needed to have all the materials ready (which was impossible given that it occurred for me without prior notice) and walk the children through each step (which was not logistically possible, nor was it something I desired to do). I helped them when they asked for help and offered them all the materials we had for them to use, but without very direct and hands on assistance they were simply not able to make this project work.

During this time, my exercise of power and control was clear. I resisted this project at its core. While I helped in some degree, I could have done more. I could have scrounged up alternative materials and walked them through the necessary steps, but I didn't want to. I didn't stop them from engaging in this project, but I quietly resisted this work. I can only assume that this kind of creative work is something that the children were accustomed to in pre-school or kindergarten, and they were used to their teachers

helping them to make these kinds of projects. During these moments, I visibly resisted the traditional role of teacher the children may have been expecting. But the children, particularly Seth, also resisted their normal role as student: they persisted and engaged in activities that were not offered or approved by their teacher. The nature of the WCA classroom allowed us all to resist.

Within the remaining pages of this chapter, I further explore the ways in which we, as a community of learners in the WCA classroom, resisted and rejected traditional ways of being and making. I re-introduce the research questions that grounded this study and offer some reflections on the ways in which they might be answered. At the same time, I also explore the limitations of this inquiry, which serve as catalysts for further research.

Welcoming Resistance in a Complex Space

With the narratives, images, and stories I share within the previous chapters, I aim to conceptualize the WCA class as a complex space grounded in freedom, movement, change, play, collaboration, and interdependency. As complexity theory suggests, complex spaces exist in between the ordered and the disordered. The WCA classroom embodied this complexity: it was a space in between control and freedom, between order and chaos. Furthermore, it allowed me to embody a space in between teacher and researcher, between director and observer. As a result, the children's roles shifted as well. They were no longer positioned in either-or dichotomies: good or bad, obedient or rebellious. Rather, the complexity of the classroom space offered us the opportunity to embody positionalites that were multidimensional.

I ask, with the question that grounds this inquiry, what teaching and learning could look like in early childhood art education when dominant constructions of power, knowledge, and authority are challenged. The WCA classroom serves as an example of this vision. It is, at its core, a space that resists singularity. Teaching involves introducing new materials but offering time and space for the children to envision what these materials can do; it means collaborating with students in artmaking in ways that we may have normally rejected; it requires welcoming behaviors that challenge the control that adults traditionally have in classrooms. Learning involves making art based not on the ideas of the teacher, but the learner his/herself; it means challenging the limits of materials; it looks like play.

Challenging traditional understandings of power, knowledge, and authority demands resistance. As Giroux (1983) notes, power is not one-dimensional and can be exercised as domination, resistance, or even creative expression. He continues that it is "in creative acts of resistance that the fleeting images of freedom are to be found" (p. 108). When we resist singular ways of being in the classroom (as teacher or student) we are, in essence, challenging power enacted upon us and embracing more democratic positionalities that also allow us to exercise power over others. Within WCA, the children and I both resisted, and it was this resistance that allowed us to confront more typical interpretations of power and knowledge.

Tactical Resistance

Many of the examples already introduced serve to illustrate the children's "acts of resistance" (Schultz, 1989/2005, p. 7). They resisted traditional ways to use materials, they resisted the idea of art production in favor of impermanence, and they resisted

normal behavioral classroom expectations. What is interesting is that the children found ways to resist even within a space that aimed to reject control. The curriculum and pedagogical strategies that I embraced in WCA were positioned to challenge traditional adult authority. It was my original thinking that the children would not have to resist, because the kinds of things they would normally reject (control of their art, control of their movement, control of their ideas) were already rejected. However, over the course of this class it became clear that "empowerment cannot be *given* to them [children] by those in positions of authority. Oppressed groups, clearly, must take that power for themselves" (Schultz, 1989/2005, p. 14).

Though it was not my hope to "give" the children power, it was my hope to create a space where they could make, play, and learn based on their own wants and needs. The children embraced this space, but also found ways to resist the little control that I did exercise. They took initiative, and assumed control over their own behavior, even when it conflicted with my expectations (Schultz, 1989/2005). In this way, their actions can be viewed as a kind of tactical resistance (de Certeau, 1984), actions engaged in by the weak to resist the powerful. De Certeau's (1984) theories of resistance position tactics in "the space of the other" (p. 37). Tactics "must play on and with a terrain imposed on it and organized by the law of a foreign power….in short, a tactic is an art of the weak" (p. 37). While I am reluctant to position the children with whom I work (or any child for that matter) as "weak," the inherent differences (physical, mental, emotional) amongst adults and children cannot be ignored. As Tobin (2005) notes, "as teachers, especially of young children, it would be disingenuous for us to deny our power" (p. 37). We (as adults) are

simply "physically more powerful than young children" (Schultz, 1989/2005, p. 11). It is through this lens that I understand that children may be "weak" as compared to adults.

Key to the notion of tactics is the way in which they operate in defiance of the strategies employed by the powerful. De Certeau (1984) explains,

> A tactic depends on time—it is always on the watch for opportunities that must be seized "on the wing." Whatever it wins, it does not keep. It must constantly manipulate events in order to turn them into "opportunities." The weak must continually turn to their own ends forces alien to them. (p. xix)

He continues that these kinds of tactics of the weak over the strong are often visible as smaller acts, "clever tricks, knowing how to get away with things" (p. xix). The children in WCA embraced these tactical resistance strategies to exert their own power and control over their experiences in the classroom, often in small actions, "ordinary, mundane, subtle acts of resistance" (Tobin, 2005, p. 34). When Seth asked me to draw and color in Jupiter, when Michael asked us to cut out his drawings, when Saul continued to film during our class meeting, they were exerting their own control over us (as teachers/adults) and the situation at hand through behaviors that *just* push the boundaries of acceptability. They are "everyday" (de Certeau, 1984) acts of resistance. They "accept the chance offerings of the moment, and seize on the wing the possibilities that offer themselves at any given moment….[they] make use of the cracks that particular conjunctions open in the surveillance of the proprietary powers" (p. 37).

De Certeau (1984) argues that while tactics are employed by the weak to resist the strong, strategies are used by the powerful against the weak. He notes,

> I call a *strategy* the calculation (or manipulation) of power relationships that becomes possible as soon as a subject with will and power (a business, an army, a city, a scientific institution) can be isolated….But it would be more correct to recognize in these "strategies" a specific type of knowledge, one sustained and determined by the power to provide oneself with one's own place. (p. 35-36)

Through this lens, strategies are used by powerful people or institutions to control and legitimize singular forms of knowledge. Traditional forms of teaching and education utilize strategies to control students and classrooms. In WCA, I resisted engaging in these kinds of strategies. Perhaps, like the children, I also engaged in tactical resistance – a resistance of the normal teacher role. I did not tell the children what to create, what materials to use, nor how to use the materials that were available. I collaborated with them when invited, and rarely controlled their movements within the classroom itself.

However, my experience with Seth and the toilet paper roll cars serve as a reminder that, when positioned next to the children, I am the powerful. I have the power to engage in both strategies and tactics, and the power to choose when to do so. However, I argue here that it was my ability to engage in both that really fostered resistance in the WCA classroom. The control and power that I did exercise provided a space for the children to find ways to resist, and they should have that opportunity. Young children "can and should have moments in the day when they resist and subvert order and authority" (Tobin, 2005, p. 36). Tobin continues that when adults are too eager to accept children's defiance, these actions and the power they have for the children are lost.

> The question for us as teachers is how to respond to this resistance. If we feel threatened, we may overreact, taking the resistance personally, and attempting to

> shut it down. This is a mistake. But so, too, are the counter-impulses to approve too readily of the children's acts of resistance…or worse, to attempt to orchestrate these moments. If they are initiated or controlled by the teacher, they lose their meaning, their significance, and their pleasure. (p. 37)

When the children and I both challenged each other's attempts to control our actions and behaviors, we were quietly constructing a space where we could resist in meaningful ways.

Art Teaching, Learning, and Making in a Complex Space

While resistance played a large part of what teaching and learning came to look like within the WCA classroom, there were other elements at play that helped to challenge the traditional ideas I had hoped to deconstruct and reject in this inquiry. As the supporting questions I posed in Chapter One help to focus these ideas in a more structured manner, I use them to guide my writing in this section. First I address how the actions of art educators can help to challenge traditional teacher/student relationships. Then I explore what this might look like in early childhood art education specifically. Finally I discuss how the children's artistic work and behavior was affected by these new spaces and relationships.

Challenging the Traditional Power/Knowledge Relationship

In previous chapters, I have argued that traditional relationships between teachers and students (or adults and children) tend to be grounded in a hierarchy with singular forms of knowledge coming down from above. Adult educators teach what they think children should know, and it is the job of the children to listen, learn, and absorb this knowledge. As I hope I have demonstrated through this inquiry, my aim was quite

different. In one of my research questions I asked how art educators can challenge these traditional relationships – that is, what can we do to create more equalized or ethical interactions with our young students? I believe that the narratives already shared help to demonstrate some of the ways I attempted to forge new relationships with the children I worked alongside. However, I think my actions can perhaps be viewed through three larger philosophical lenses: the act of listening deeply, engaging in a living curriculum model that embraces the unknown, and fostering spaces for children to share their work on terms they help to create.

The pedagogy of listening. In all the time I spent with the children, I aimed to listen to them closely and deeply. This was not simply listening to their words, but trying to listen to their thoughts and wonderings, listening to their movements, listening to their art; it was a listening with my whole being (Dahlberg & Moss, 2006). In Reggio Emilia, this is understood as a pedagogy of listening. It means to listen "to the ideas and theories, questions and answers of children and adults; it means treating thought seriously and with respect; it means struggling to make meaning from what is said, without preconceived ideas of what is correct or appropriate" (p. 15). In this way, listening to children transforms into trying to make meaning from what they are saying in language, in image, and in being. This kind of listening is not simply hearing. Rinaldi (2006) defines the term listening (as conceptualized in Reggio Emilia practices) as,

> **Listening** as sensitivity to the patterns that connect, to that which connects us to others….**Listening**, then, as a metaphor for having the openness and sensitivity to listen and to be listened to – listening not just with our ears, but with all our senses (sight, touch, smell, taste, orientation). **Listening** to the hundred, the

thousand languages, symbols and codes we use to express ourselves and communicate….Listening as welcoming and being open to differences, recognising the value of other's points of view and interpretation. (p. 65, original emphasis)

Through this kind of deep listening I was eager to understand the children: what were they telling me when they asked for materials that were within their reach? What were they silently communicating when they chose to continue their work when I asked them to pause? What were they trying to say when they asked me to help them with something they could do themselves? It was through this listening that I was able to trust the children and build a more ethical relationship with them. Rather than reject their wants and needs, which may have appeared on the surface to be simple, I challenged myself to listen to what they were communicating in a larger way. I believe that it was this act of listening that strengthened our relationship; it allowed me to come to know them in more significant ways. I was not only able to recognize the children's needs and wants in terms of artistic inquiry and bring them back into the classroom, but also work with them to explore these interests in ways that were important and meaningful for them.

A living curriculum. The idea of a living curriculum was introduced in Chapter Four as a way to explore what a new kind of early childhood art educational space could look like, and it was exactly this kind of curricular model that was enacted in WCA. A core element of this approach is the way in which "curricula must be understood as a constantly changing process" (Fredriksen, 2012, p. 338). Curriculum is, as Jones (1977) notes, what happens. Through this lens, curriculum cannot be conceptualized as something static; it is not a series of actions or activities that are followed step by step

(like Seth's toilet paper roll cars). Rather, it is the experience of being in the classroom and allowing oneself to be comfortable with the unknown.

The WCA space was never static, and neither were our collective actions. What the children chose to make, what materials they chose to use, and how they chose to behave was constantly changing. Because of this continuous movement, I never really knew what to expect, and as such, needed to be open and accepting of how the curriculum moved forward. In order to find pleasure and value in this ever-changing space, teachers need to reject the known, the familiar, the comfortable. In WCA I presented materials, but did not know how the children would use them or what they would create. I didn't know if they would work together or alone or with me. I did my best to listen deeply and bring their interests back into the classroom, but it was up to them to embrace those ideas or not.

These unknowns have the potential to breathe a wonderful sense of life into the classroom, and the ways in which children and adults interact with each other. They foster a sense of excitement that motivates everyone. Being open to the unexpected invites children to bring their ideas and theories to the classroom. They have control over what they learn and how they learn it because it stems from them. As such, the relationships between teachers and children become less hierarchical and more rhizomatic.

In order to strengthen these kinds of rhizomatic relationships, the role of the art educator must be open and fluid, just as the curriculum is. Depending on the needs, wants, and interests of the children, my role was altered. I became many kinds of art teacher over the course of any given Saturday. At some moments I was a dispenser and acquirer

of materials, sharing both familiar and unfamiliar media. Occasionally I was a sharer of stories, of artists, of new ways of thinking. At other times I was a guide, asking questions to help move the children's thinking forward. Sometimes I was a leader, helping to practically and physically move the children from one transition to the next, while sometimes I was a collaborator, working alongside the children and taking my direction from them. And most often I was a documenter, carefully recording children's work and processes, and helping them to see what they have created through new eyes. This multiplicity of roles allowed me to challenge the more traditional positionality of teacher as knowledge holder. Rather, my interactions with the children were built on exchanges and circulation of ideas and roles.

Sharing artwork. The culmination of the WCA classes, as previously explored in Chapter Three, was an exhibition of their artwork. This exhibition was conceptualized as a co-curatorial process. The children participated in the selection of the artwork to show, they voted on the title of the exhibition, and they made curatorial choices about how their work should be shown physically. Additionally, some of the children recorded audio statements about their work that were displayed next to the appropriate pieces through QR codes. The nature of collaborating with the children to make decisions about the exhibition created a show that was controlled, in part, by the children themselves. They shared the artwork they liked the most (or were the most proud of) on terms that they helped to create.

In traditional school art exhibitions, most often teachers select the work and display it themselves. However, Lackey (2008) challenges us to reconsider how and why youth art is displayed. In WCA, the artwork was selected in collaboration between the

children and me. I met with each child individually and to ask which works he or she wished to show in their exhibit. I noted these choices and told the children we might not able to share all of them, but I would do my best. There were some cases where there were works that I thought were special and wanted to show but the children didn't select. When this happened I would talk to the children about my desire to show that particular piece and why I thought it should be exhibited. Thus, the "why" was a collaboration between the children and me, though it is hard to say if they agreed simply to please me or because I had managed to convince them of the worthiness of their work.

The exhibition itself was hosted in the UA Graduate Gallery on campus. This space was selected for its professional nature and its accessibility on a Saturday morning. This was important for me because of my desire to have the children involved in the curatorial process as much as possible. On our final Saturday, we walked to the gallery together. All the selected work was there, framed and laying on the ground. The children moved around slowly, weaving in and out of the artworks that lay framed on the floor (see Figure 27). Carefully, they searched for their own artwork, calling out to me or friends as they found pieces that they had both created and chosen for display. Together we looked at the space and talked about how their work would be on the walls. Then, I worked with them in small groups to make decisions on where their art should be. I asked them to think about how their work should hang in the gallery:

> *Shana:* Do you see how I put up the artwork? Do you think there's a different way we could organize the art show? All your work is kind of spread out. Would you want all your work in one pile, or do you want to move anything around to a different spot?

I invited the children to pick up pieces they wished to move, move them around, and share with me why they wanted to move the pieces they did (see Figure 27). The children relished in this power, sometimes spontaneously and sometimes more thoughtfully.

Figure 27. The children making curatorial choices about their own artwork in the gallery during installation.

In general, exhibitions of children's art are meaningful in many ways; "bringing children into the public sphere celebrates their potential to contribute and lets them feel the pulse of their future lives" (Nimmo, 1998, p. 306). Public exhibitions communicate to both the children involved and the community at large that the children's art and ideas are important and valued. It shows that they have a point of view to share and that we (as adults and educators) care about their perspectives. Additionally, sharing children's work also helps to challenge long held ideas about what children are capable of, helping to create a strong image of children. Vecchi (2010) describes the power that displaying children's work had in Reggio Emilia:

> Exhibitions and publications for families and the public…effectively contributed to forming a new, diffused awareness, a new image for childhood and preschool-aged children…. this new awareness and a new relationship with the city contributed to at least reducing, if not eliminating, widespread, excessive and irritating *childishness*: a certain way of understanding childhood, an attitude tending to position children inside the adult's stereotyped models. (pp. 74-75)

Offering children the opportunity to be involved in the creation of these kinds of exhibitions pushes these ideas even further, encouraging them to make choices about how people see their artwork and positioning them as young artists. By offering the children the opportunity to make choices about an exhibition of *their* artwork, I was able to foster an experience that was collaborative and showed the children that their own thoughts and opinions about their work matter.

Elements of an Early Childhood Art Education Space that Challenges

While all teachers have the potential to challenge and resist traditional ideas and relationships, what this actually looks like will most certainly depend on many factors (for example: where you teach, what you teach, who your students are, how old they are). In one of the questions I posed to guide this inquiry, I asked specifically about the context of early childhood art education: what would challenging traditional power/knowledge relationships look like in this space? Through this question, I suggested thinking beyond what teaching and learning could look like and beyond the actions of educators, and rather focusing specifically on art experiences created for young children. Through this inquiry, I have found that in order to create this kind of space, art should be embedded

into learning broadly and both product and process based experiences should be embraced.

Art as embedded. In 2006, the National Art Education Association's Early Childhood Art Educators Issues Group published their position paper entitled "Art: Essential for Early Learning," written over the course of a few years (Tarr, 2008). This paper begins with a vision statement that notes that all children should have meaningful and rich art experiences that are embedded. Tarr explores what this idea of embedded means.

> Note the word ***embedded***—not art as a separate subject, a center or activity to be completed, but embedded in the program. To me, "embedded" suggests "rooted deeply"—fixed firmly into the earth of the lived curriculum and children's and teachers' lives together…I think that "embedded" implies something much deeper than an integrated curriculum. (p. 20, original emphasis)

As I have stated previously, one of the ideas that grounded this research was helping young children to understand that art is a way for them to communicate their ideas and theories, their "thinking and understanding" (Tarr, pp. 20-21). Art becomes something more than just exploring materials or learning about artists and copying their stylistic approaches. It becomes another kind of language used to communicate.

While I think that in this research I began to address elements of what art as embedded looks like (specifically in regards to exploring the language of materials, which I address shortly), I believe that it fell short in really exploring art as deeply rooted into children's thinking. Some of this is due to what it was and what it was not: WCA was an art class for young children, not a traditional early childhood classroom. It took

place in 2.5 hour sessions once a week over just ten weeks, not on a regular and consistent year long schedule. As such, we focused primarily on art experiences for a short amount of time. This inherently creates a challenge to the idea of embeddedness. However, I also accept responsibility for this disconnect. There were ways I could have stretched the children's thinking that I failed to do.

Volcanoes, and castles, and oceans, oh my! As previously stated, over the course of our time together I tried to listen and pay attention to the children's interests in order to integrate them into our classes. In a class of fourteen children, there were many things that sparked curiosity, however I targeted some big ideas right away: volcanoes, castles, and oceans. These interests became the subject of children's artwork that I've introduced already: Lisa's cardboard castle, Yasmine's fascination with ocean related loose parts, and the children's interest in red yarn lava. In order to further their inquiry in these topics, I primarily introduced art materials that could be explored in connection with these ideas: images of castles and volcanoes that hung around the room, transparencies that could be used on the projector, recycled materials that I thought might spur castle building (like the bottoms of plastic soda bottles), other materials to use for lava (like paper streamers), and video projections of the ocean. But I failed to specifically engage the children more deeply in these interests. Were there questions I could have asked? Provocations I could have offered? Should we have explored the way in which baking powder and vinegar might create "lava?" Should we have discussed who lives in castles and why? Should I have shared books and stories to expand the children's thinking about these ideas?

It was not that I did not consider these questions and issues during the research, because I did. However, I debated these kinds of extensions in the context of the kinds of

power relationships I wanted to challenge. This is where it became tricky. Would I pose these questions to the whole class, or just the children who were interested in castles? How would I gather the children together to facilitate this discussion? In order for art to be embedded deeply, children need to have the opportunity to explore their big and small interests artistically, and have a responsive educator who can help guide them. In my fear of power and control, I lost sense of the immense responsibility that comes with being an educator. In this way, I did not truly embrace my multifaceted position as teacher.

What I have come to realize (and what this research suggests in a round about way) is that an important part of helping children to explore their own ideas is giving them the tools to do so. Pushing children's thinking does not mean that I am exerting control; they still have the opportunity to accept or reject my invitations or ideas. Challenging dominant constructions of power and authority does not mean that I must always exist on the sidelines, but rather embrace the various identities that come with resistance. My thinking aligns closely with that of Sunday (2011) as she ponders similar questions.

> The balance between teacher direction and child agency is a difficult one. I find myself struggling with the controversial nature of directing children's artmaking, of knowing when to step in and knowing when to step out. At the same time, children have the capacity to lead the nature of teacher direction if only teachers take the time to listen, observe, and reflect on what is happening in the artistic spaces of their classrooms. (p. 218)

She continues to argue that,

> Remapping the field of art education and specifically early childhood art education is not merely a matter of determining what the focus of our content should be, but also our approaches toward how we enact the teaching of that content in the classroom. (p. 219)

The children in WCA determined the content of their artwork; it was all voluntary. However, it then should have been my job to determine ways for their ideas (the content) to be taught. This is more than simply offering new and unique materials, but pushing the children's thinking in new directions.

Embracing process and product (or exploring materials as languages). While I believe that there were elements missing from the WCA classroom that may have truly created an embedded artistic experience, the children did have ample time to develop an understanding of materials as languages – to explore different media and learn what each was capable of, stretching the potential of artistic materials. The opportunities to discover materials in this way (offering possibilities for process based artistic experiences and moments where the children's artistic products were just as important as their experience making) inherently challenges the long held dichotomy between process and product in early childhood art education.

As explored earlier, the process vs. product debate is inherently connected to ideas about teacher knowledge and power. Yet it is these kinds of experiences that are most prevalent in art education. Sunday (2011) argues that, "the current climate of schooling ignores processes of thinking in favor of products of thought" (p. 222). An experience that focuses on the product alone is often too close ended and guided carefully by teachers. In these cases it is their (teacher) knowledge that is being passed down to

students. In contrast, process based experiences may result in an artistic product that has little to no meaning for the children. Their focus and enjoyment exists in the act of making it rather than on the result. In these examples, knowledge is constructed by those involved through the process of engaging in the activity itself. However, some "classic" process based art activities are more close ended than they appear to be, challenging the idea that knowledge is actually constructed rather than handed down.

During the spring of 2014, before the WCA classes, I observed in a number of local pre-schools in Tucson, hoping to get a picture of what early childhood art education looked like locally. One of the schools observed was in a fairly affluent section of town, and prided itself on the ways in which they were able to foster children's individual creative potential. On the particular day I was there, I watched two well intentioned teachers invite children to engage in an art project that involved coating paint on bubble wrap and pressing paper on top of the bubble wrap to create a print. While one could argue that in this activity children do explore the materials at hand, it also fosters a singular way of thinking. The activity is demonstrated by the adults in charge who, in essence, define how the children should use the materials. This becomes more about following directions than exploring what these materials really are capable of.

In WCA, rather than focus on experiences that were process or product based, I wanted to help the children discover the ways in which materials act as a kind of language that helps us to share our ideas. In discovering the language of materials, children engage in both process and product artmaking experiences. They explore media in open-ended ways, engaging in process based encounters. However, they are also challenged to use artistic media to create artwork that communicates their thoughts, ideas,

and theories about the world. In this way, they are truly using a media (or many media!) as a language to communicate.

The idea of materials as languages is drawn from Reggio Emilia. Via Vecchi explains the notion of "languages" as multifaceted ways that people express themselves, visual languages being only one of many (including others like mathematical and scientific languages). She explains that, "*poetic languages* are forms of expression strongly characterized by expressive or aesthetic aspects such as music, song, dance or photography" (as cited in Dahlberg & Moss, 2010, p. xviii, original emphasis). Giovanni Piazza (1997) addresses the ways in which children come to learn these kinds of poetic languages, likening them to learning a new alphabet:

> A first encounter for children with materials to explore and act on them is a necessary step for the children's process of knowing. Through such encounters and explorations, children build an awareness of what can happen with materials….It is through interactions between a child and a material that an alphabet can develop….An alphabet is probably best described as the combination of the characteristics of a particular material along with the relationship that arises in the interaction between the child and the material….By transforming a material to communicate (paper, paint, clay, etc.) we structure a language. (as cited in Gandini, 2005b, p. 13)

Through this lens, poetic languages are not intuitive. Children do not inherently understand how to use artistic materials. They do not possess an inherent creativity that is simply waiting to be unleashed (Eisner, 1973; McClure, 2011). Rather, by exploring and

playing with various mediums, children are able to uncover the ways in which materials can speak and thus are able to communicate their own ideas (Gandini et al., 2005).

In WCA, the children played with materials and explored what they were capable of in ways that I hadn't imagined. Sometimes their work *was* about process. Saul's wire animals serve as one example. He spent significant time with Jessica creating them, but at the end was happy to ball them up into various wire mounds. While the video of the animal's interactions remains (and perhaps was the product he was most interested in), the wire sculptures themselves were simply destroyed. In contrast, Lisa's castle was more about product. She was so proud of what she created, rather than the experience of taping the cardboard together. She spoke of how proud her parents would be of her and her work, and how big the castle itself was. The opportunities to engage in both process and product orientated artmaking experiences communicated to the children that their experience playing with materials was just as important as what they are able to make. When they spent time learning the language of media, they seemed to feel more comfortable manipulating that media in order to communicate their ideas. This is powerful because it positions them as knowledge holders who have important things to say and are capable of communicating these things in interesting ways.

Affects on Children's Art and Behavior

The experiences that the children had and the art that they created within WCA reflected my large goal of resisting traditional ideas of what artmaking and learning looks like. In my final question guiding this inquiry I ask how these issues (the children's art and behavior) could be affected by the shift away from hierarchical learning. Throughout the previous chapters, I have slowly addressed this question. Their behavior was

grounded in play, and a slow acceptance of the fact that they could embody positionalites as students who did not simply follow directions. They could take initiative and reject teacher requests, essentially challenging what being a "student" looks like. They learned to embrace movement and even the more structured children found joy in mess and experimentation.

Their artwork was, first and foremost, grounded in their own ideas. They selected topics, materials, scale, and collaborators; every choice was theirs to make. Most of the time I supported rather than led their artistic inquiries. As a result of this (and my fear of exerting power over them as discussed above) their artwork tended to lack what one might call refined aesthetic sensibilities (see Figure 28).

Figure 28. Lisa's painting about teeth, and Yasmine's bird.

The work they created in WCA stands in contrast to more expected children's art we have come to see from pre-school or kindergarten aged children (see Figure 29). This is primarily because I did not suggest content or offer rules on how to use media, even when it may have been beneficial for the children. In essence, the children were engaged

in the type of artwork they might create on their own (i.e., play art) but within a classroom setting. And children's play art has a very different sensibility than school art would. Wilson (1974) describes that children's play art often has "little of the polished lushness of art classroom art" (p. 3).

Figure 29. Germs! created by Cynthia Brown's kindergarten students, from Artsonia.com.

Our aesthetic sensibilities about children's art are grounded in wider social contexts about what art is, what it should look like, and what constitutes good art. I am reminded of the well-known phrase spoken while some adults contemplate abstract art: my kid could paint that. Knight (2013) explains that from an adult perspective, good art is often understood as something pleasing to the eye in terms of visual elements such as composition, color, balance, or line. It "must incite a strong emotional response in the viewer due to its aesthetic powers. Aesthetics in this context relates to a form of pleasing beauty" (p. 25). She continues to explore the ways in which artworks created by young children do not necessarily live up to these high aesthetic standards and argues that educators should begin to value *why* children make art, not simply the art that is made:

> If educators can critically examine their personal definitions of artistic practice and competency, and their understandings of popular developmental paradigms, they can change their approaches to drawing in their classrooms. Such critical

examination can help educators realize that what children draw cannot be accounted for simply by imagining it to be primarily an expression of a particular developmental stage or that their drawings aren't always beautiful and aesthetic. (p. 25)

Houses that are nice, houses that are spooky, and a girl with long hair. Through this perspective, the art created by the children within WCA should be appreciated based on their ideas and the reasons for their creations. Ben and Elissa's recycled material sculptures (see Figure 30) may help us to realize this view. Elissa was working on a "whale catching house" that was "nice and peaceful." Her house collected both whales and "tortoises for food." Ben came along after Elissa had begun her work and created his house that was "very spooky with spooky stuff." Ben was eager to collaborate with Elissa. Despite her protests, Ben used a piece of tape to connect his house to Elissa's declaring that it was a bridge that connected his spooky house to a "good house" so people from his house "could sneak into the house and eat people!"

Figure 30. Elissa and Ben working on their houses.

Just as Duncum (1985) argues, there are deep levels of fantasy attached to these works. Yet what we see on the surface, a seeming mess of cardboard, tape, plastic, and netting, does not bring this fantasy to life. It is only visible through experiencing the artmaking event itself. Here, the artwork functions as both noun, "trace evidence that an aesthetic event has taken place," and as a verb, including the "contexts, conversations, and embodied engagement that occurs during the process" (Sunday, 2012, p. 11). While the sculptural work may not have the aesthetic sensibilities that we come to expect from children's carefully planned school art, the artworks (as both nouns and verbs) are valuable in other ways. They address big ideas of goodness, fear, escape, and capture. They project the children's own interests rather than my own.

My disinterest in controlling the children's artwork and ultimately artistic technique results in work that may appear messy or unpolished, however it is paired with rich story and fantasy. It is this meaning lying underneath the surface that I find more valuable. However, I cannot deny that there were moments where artistic technique may have elevated or even preserved the children's work. For example Yasmine worked for a long time on her clay piece, "Girl With Long Hair" (see Figure 31), but due to its construction, it was not sustainable for the long term. As may or may not be evident in the image, Yasmine attached the small pieces of clay to each other by simply pushing them together. Traditionally, clay pieces are attached through a process of slipping and scoring. One makes slip (a mixture of clay and water) that acts as a kind of glue to help the pieces stick together. Additionally, each piece is scored, creating small indentions in the clay that the slip can adhere to. This process helps to secure pieces of clay to each other. This was not something I showed the children at all during their time working with

the clay. As a result, Yasmine's work fell apart bit by bit – the arms, legs, and hands fell off, and the hair grew shorter each time the work had to be moved. The piece had to be glued many times over to retain its form for the final exhibition.

Figure 31. Yasmine's "Girl With Long Hair" clay sculpture.

Once more, my determined rejection of control resulted in the children's experiences not being as full as they could have been. It must be possible to teach and learn in spaces where power and knowledge are unfixed, yet children's broad needs are also met. As Sunday (2011) argues, "adult intervention is necessary for expanded fluency in artistic language (Kindler, 1995)" (p. 217). As art educators, we must find a balance between helping children learn the technical skills they need to bring their ideas to life yet also leaving them the time and space to both form those ideas on their own and to explore what materials have to offer. Sunday continues that scaffolding "experiences for young children is a critical component to supporting their ability to use media in more complex ways" (p. 218). My fear in teaching the children these skills was that I did not want to silently reject their way of knowing or manipulating media.

Moving Beyond Resistance

"I believe that a crucial part of our work as teachers must be to help children find their voices. We must listen to those voices" (King, 2005, p. 46). This big idea, the notion of both helping children to find their voices and truly listening to those voices, has guided this research. While an important part of this does involve acts of resistance on behalf of teachers and children, it requires being comfortable with elements of adult teacher knowledge and finding the space in between controlling and teaching. In resisting all forms of what might be considered traditional teacher practice, I ignored my ability to see when my students needed help and, as such, failed to adequately help them.

Yet this discovery only furthers my idea that as early childhood art educators we need to be comfortable in spaces that are both unknowable and permeable. It is this ability to shift between documenting, observing, guiding, teaching, instructing, and following where we are truly able to confront dominant notions of power, knowledge, and authority. This big idea is grounded truly in helping to acknowledge children's artistic ideas and theories, and helping them to feel confident in making choices and resisting when they feel too controlled. We cannot simply "resist." We need to listen deeply with all aspects of our being to truly know when children need us to help them, or to step away, or when we should wait to be invited in. When we can do this, we are showing the young children we work alongside that we trust their instincts and are there not to control, but learn alongside them in ways that work for them. This truly creates a space *for* children.

Powerful Positions

This inquiry was a huge undertaking. As a result there were many ideas that poked through in small and quiet moments that were left unexplored. It is not that these ideas are unimportant, but rather it became an issue of looking at too much. It was necessary to scale back and I made choices about what details to focus on. As previously stated, I focused on moments, artworks, and interactions where adult/child binaries were disrupted in connection to my larger research questions at hand. As such, I looked primarily at the way the children engaged with the classroom space, the artworks they created, the relationships fostered between the children and me, as well as my own curricular and pedagogical choices.

When Children Become Leaders

When adults and educators take steps away from formally "teaching" or controlling children's behaviors, ideas, or experiences, this leaves space for the children themselves to become leaders and embody powerful positions. Over the course of these tens weeks, I observed the children working together to teach each other skills or share ideas, engaging in self-initiated collaborative artmaking and play, as well as taking on leadership roles. One moment during our third class speaks to this idea particularly well.

After spending a large portion of our second class making art outside, the children requested that we bring some materials outside during our break/snack time on this day as well. As a result, we had blocks, yarn, cameras, paper, markers, and other various small materials. Ben and Seth spent time working on creating a volcano city out of blocks and red yarn right in the middle of the courtyard (see Figure 32). As they worked hard building and filming (with my assistance), some of the other children were running

around with scarves pretending to be flying dinosaurs. After Alex accidently kicked over some of their sculpture, Ben became anxious about his work getting destroyed during this carefree play, and called a whole class meeting:

> I want you guys…[to] watch out for what people are building. If you knock it down people will be sad and kids will too. So we don't like building them all again…it's hard to build it all over again. We don't know how to build it all over again. So that's why you have to watch out for people [working]…

Figure 32. Ben making his announcement that people need to be careful of others' work.

I find moments where the children embody these positions of power and leadership interesting, and I am curious about what draws them to these actions. Was it my reluctance to govern beyond issues of safety or children's emotional well-being? Or perhaps it was a natural inclination to be in charge, as young children often like to do. Do

these kinds of spaces (where adults don't overtly govern or control) encourage children to form leadership roles in ways they might not otherwise? Does it encourage them to seek answers from their friends more? Is it frustrating when adults don't give direction? Or do they enjoy the freedom and power it offers?

Children's Roles in Research

Although this inquiry was mainly focused on the experiences with the children in the classroom itself, throughout its progression I have remained interested in the idea of what it means to ethically engage in research practices with children. While I believe that this study meets some of these ideas (explored in more detail within Chapter Three), I feel that there is so much more to discover about how children themselves see the idea of "research." As teacher-researchers, we write about our students, children we presumably spend a large amount of time with. Children come to (hopefully) trust us as adults they can rely and depend on. As we engage in research projects aimed at improving both teaching and our students' experiences as learners, are we aware of their experiences throughout the process? These were considerations throughout the course of this inquiry, but they were unexplored with the children. I shared that I was "doing research" but did they really know what that meant? Did they understand how widely their words, images, and artworks would ultimately be shared?

I believe that this is a rich area for further research. How can we more ethically collaborate with children, not just in the process of engaging *in* research, but in sharing that research as well? Could we find ways to create new multilayered voices where children speak alongside us in writing? Can they play an active role in presenting their own ideas in public spaces? Is it important to them to be involved in how and where this

"research" is shared? Do they even care about this at all? Or would they rather simply play and create, trusting us to meaningfully and respectfully share their work with the world?

APPENDIX A
Information for parents about WCA class

Hello Wildcat Art Children, Parents, and Friends,

We are going to start our special fall offering of Wildcat Art on Saturday September 6th! The University of Arizona WCA teachers are excited about meeting you and your children. **We will have a mandatory orientation session from 9:00-9:30 on this first morning**, so please come, hear about our program, and meet with our teachers. There are important documents attached to this email for your consideration and approval. One attachment is documents that need to be filled out for the University. If you can, please print/sign these forms and bring them along on the first day. If you are unable to print them, please come a bit early (8:30am) on the first day to fill them out on site.

If you have any questions, please email us at wildcatartpreschool@cfa.arizona.edu.

Important Information

Orientation Day
Orientation will begin on **Saturday, September 6 at 9:00am**. On this day, we will meet in School of Art Building, room 103. Parking will be available in the lot behind Harvill and at the parking garage at Speedway and Park. Between 8:00 and 9:00am, parents will fill out paperwork regarding their children (if they haven't already). Please be prepared to provide information regarding emergency contacts and phone numbers, allergies, medical requirements, special needs, and doctor's phone numbers. In this time, you will be provided with further information regarding drop off/pick up procedures and times. At 9:00am, Shana Cinquemani (Wildcat Art Educator) will welcome you and your child and introduce our teachers. At 9:30am, students and staff will proceed to class.

Wildcat Art Early Childhood Educator
The teacher for this special early childhood offering of Wildcat Art is Shana Cinquemani, a PhD Candidate in the Division of Art and Visual Culture Education, with a minor in Early Childhood Education. Shana received her BFA in Photography from Bard College, and her MA in Art and Visual Culture Education (with a focus on community and museum education) from the University of Arizona. She has worked as a museum educator, a preschool teaching assistant, as well as an elementary and middle school art teacher. Currently, she teaches undergraduate courses at the University of Arizona, specifically in contemporary theories of children's art and foundations of art education. Additionally, Shana is also the Studio Collaborator at the Tucson IDEA School, where she works specifically engaging young children (3.5 – 8 years of age) in meaningful artistic practice.

****Research****
This special early childhood offering of Wildcat Art is a part of Shana's doctoral research on early childhood art education. This research project aims to explore how teachers and

children can work collaboratively to build curriculum in the early childhood art education classroom. In this kind of classroom space, the children are given some control over their own learning experiences.
We are inviting your child/children to participate in this research! There is additional information regarding this research project (what it is about, what it means for your child, etc.) enclosed in this packet. Please know that your child is not required to participate in the research project – they can attend the Wildcat Art classed without engaging in the research.

Curriculum/Calendar
This special offering of Wildcat Art will engage with a visual arts curriculum designed specifically for early childhood. Your child will have the opportunity to make art using a variety of media and approaches, look at and discuss art, and help to curate an art exhibition of their own work. **This class will engage in an emergent or negotiated curriculum – this means that the kinds of artmaking experiences offered to the children will be based on their own interests and desires.** Your child will have the chance to tell their teacher what they are interested in learning about or experiencing, and those interests will be brought back into the classroom in the following weeks.

Supervision
Our classroom will have approximately two teachers in it at all times, most often three teachers! One teacher will teach the lesson while other two teachers will be available to help and assist. If your child needs to leave the classroom at any time for any reason, a staff member will stay with him/her.

Health and Safety
The classroom will have a special area for "health and safety" if the need arises. We have minor medical supplies to treat cuts and scrapes and standard practices are in place for dealing with more serious situations. During Orientation, parents will be asked for health information for each child. Please make sure that on the Medical Information form (enclosed) you've indicated any allergies or special circumstances that might apply to your child. In the event of an illness or accident, we will call the people listed on that form to pick up your child for treatment.

Student Curated Art Exhibition
The students will work together with the Wildcat Art educators to curate an exhibition of their own work. This exhibition will open in the Graduate Gallery (located on the University Campus at 1231 N. Fremont Ave, on the southwest corner at East Mable Street) on Monday November 10th and close on November 19th. There will be an opening reception on Saturday November 15th celebrating the exhibition. We invite parents and friends to attend. More specific information will be provided as the event draws closer.

APPENDIX B
UA policy forms on interactions with non-enrolled minors

UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA - INTERACTIONS WITH NON-ENROLLED MINORS PROTOCAL

PROGRAM PARTICIPANT INFORMATION FORM
WILDCAT ART (DIVISION OF ART AND VISUAL CULTURE EDUCATION)

Name of Program Participant: ____

Date of Birth: ____

Address: ____

Parents/Legal Guardians

Name:____

Phone Number (home): __________________ Phone number (cell):__________________

E-mail Address: ____

Name:____

Phone Number (home): ____________________ Phone number (cell):________________

E-mail Address: ____

Emergency Contact Information:

Name:____

Phone Number (home): ___________________ Phone number (cell):________________

E-mail Address: ____

PROGRAM PARTICIPANT MEDICAL INFORMATION & RELEASE
WILDCAT ART (DIVISION OF ART AND VISUAL CULTURE EDUCATION)

Name of Program Participant: ____

Date of Birth: ____

Does the Program Participant have any medical condition(s) or limitation(s) affecting his/her ability to participate in Wildcat Art activities?

_____ Yes _____ No

If yes, please describe:

____

____

If yes, does the Program Participant require any accommodations in connection with such medical condition(s) or limitation(s)?

_____ Yes _____ No

If yes, please describe:

____

____

Does the Program Participant have any known medication, food, or other allergies?

_____ Yes _____ No

If yes, please describe:

____

____

Name of Program Participant's Health Insurance Company, Policy & Group Numbers:

____

Will the Program Participant be bringing any prescription or other medications to the Program?

_____ Yes _____ No

If yes, name each medication and provide dosage instructions *exactly as set forth on the prescription medication* (amount and time(s) of administration). **NOTE: PROGRAM STAFF MAY NOT AUTHORIZE DEVIATIONS FROM PRESCRIPTION INSTRUCTIONS.**

____

____

Are there any special handling instructions for the above=described medications (e.g., refrigeration)? If yes, please describe:

____

____

Name and phone number of the Program Participant's Primary Health Care Provider:

____

____

I authorize the Program (Wildcat Art) as follows:

1. To obtain emergency medical services as needed for my child; and
2. To store the above-listed prescription medication(s) according to original product label instructions and to provide such medication(s) to my child for purposes of permitting my child to self-administer such medications at the prescribed times according to prescription instructions.

I release and discharge the Arizona Board of Regents, on behalf of the University of Arizona, and all of their employees, volunteers, and other agents ("Releasees") from any liability in connection with obtaining emergency medical services for my child or providing medications to my child as I have directed and authorized above. I further agree to indemnify, defend, and hold the Releasees harmless from and against all claims, demands, and suits brought against them in connection with this Release.

____ ______

Printed Name of Program Participant's Parent/Legal Guardian Date

____

Signature of Program Participant's Parent/Legal Guardian

BEHAVIORAL EXPECTATIONS FOR MINORS/PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS

WILDCAT ART (DIVISION OF ART AND VISUAL CULTURE EDUCATION)

As a participant in the Wildcat Art Program, I agree to follow these Behavioral Expectations related to my conduct:

1. I will not consume alcohol if I am under the age of 21.
2. I will not bring firearms or other weapons to any Program activity.
3. I will not sell, use, possess, or distribute illegal drugs or related items that would violate the law.
4. I will not provide any legal drugs, including prescription medications or over-the-counter medications, to other Program Participants or Program Staff.
5. I will not engage in any threatening or intimidating behavior, including stalking, bullying or hazing of other Program Participants or Program Staff.
6. I will not engage in behavior that will or is intended to cause physical or emotional harm either to myself or others participating in the Program.
7. I will not engage in gambling or gaming activities.
8. I will not engage in any illegal sexual activity, sexual offenses or activities involving sexual favors.
9. I will not engage or solicit prostitution or use escort or related adult entertainment services.
10. I will not engage in any discriminatory activities, including harassment or retaliation.
11. I will abide by all state and federal laws.
12. I will not conceal an act of misconduct prohibited by these Behavioral Expectations.
13. I will only use audio or video recording devices if approved by Program Staff for purposes consistent with authorized Program activities.
14. I will report to Program Staff if I believe that any Program/Third=party Activity participant has been the subject of abuse, neglect, or physical or emotional harm.
15. I will follow directions of Program Staff.

I am aware and acknowledge that a violation of these Behavioral Expectations and regulations may subject me to removal from the Wildcat Art Program or other sanctions at the sole discretion of Program Staff and that any expenses related to such removal or sanctions will be my/our sole responsibility. I certify that I have read and will follow the Behavioral Expectations and regulations outlined above.

____ __________

Printed Name of Program Participant Date

____ __________

Printed Name of Program Participant's Parent/Legal Guardian Date

____ __________

Signature of Program Participant's Parent/Legal Guardian Date

APPENDIX C:
IRB parental permission form

The University of Arizona: Parental Permission Consent Form For Child's Participation in Research

This is a parental permission form for research participation. It contains important information about this study and what to expect if you permit your child to participate. Please consider the information carefully. Feel free to discuss the study with your friends and family and to ask questions before making your decision whether or not to permit your child to participate.

1. Why is this study being done?
This study is being done to explore how teachers and children can work collaboratively to build curriculum in the early childhood art education classroom. In this kind of classroom space, the children are given some control over their own learning experiences.

I am excited to learn about how a classroom runs that is guided primarily by the students own interests, and how the children feel about this kind of art classroom. I'm interested in how we can work together, what I can learn from them, and also how the children may work collaboratively to learn from each other. I am also especially interested in the kinds of artwork that the children will create in this kind of classroom.

As the art instructor, I will facilitate the art class (i.e.: provide art materials, suggest prompts and activities, make sure the children are safe and using materials correctly). However, the children will also be asked to contribute their own ideas to the class. They will be asked to think about and suggest ideas for materials they would like to work with, what they would like to make, and subjects they would be interested in learning about.

In my dissertation, I will write about the kinds of things that occurred during the art program. I may use your child's artwork, images of them, their writing, their words/ideas, and statements they have made to help describe the kinds of experiences we built together in the art classes.

2. How many people will take part in this study?
A maximum of 15 children will participate in this study.

3. What will happen if my child takes part in this study?
Your child will participate in the Wildcat Art program, which runs for 10 weeks, on Saturday mornings for 2.5 hours. They will help to plan our classroom activities and suggest ideas about content and materials. They will have the chance to make different kinds of artwork, and look at and talk about visual images.

They will also go on two visits to the University of Arizona Museum of Art (on the University campus) where they will view the artwork on display and participate in gallery activities.

Finally, your child's artwork will be on display in an exhibition at one of the gallery spaces on the University campus. Your child will work with myself and the other participating children to select which artwork should be on display, help write text for the gallery, and assist with some of the exhibit installation.

During the art program, I will document using digital photography and video recording, and field notes.

4. How long will my child be in the study?

The study will take 11 weeks (11 Saturdays). There will be 10 art class sessions, and 1 final session for the opening of the gallery exhibition.

5. Can my child stop being in the study?

Your child's participation is voluntary. You or your child may refuse participation in this study. If you or your child decide to not participate in this research study, your child can still participate in the art classes and activities. If your child takes part in the study, you or your child may decide to leave the study at any time. No matter what decision you make, there will be no penalty to your child and neither you nor your child will lose any of your usual benefits. Your decision will not affect your future relationship with The University of Arizona. If you are or your child is a student or employee at The University of Arizona, your decision will not affect your grades or employment status.

An Institutional Review Board responsible for human subjects research at The University of Arizona reviewed this research project and found it to be acceptable, according to applicable state and federal regulations and University policies designed to protect the rights and welfare of participants in research.

6. What risks, side effects or discomforts can my child expect from being in the study?

The activities that you child will be participating in have no more risk than is involved with normally being in an art education setting.

7. What benefits can my child expect from being in the study?

Benefits for the children involved in this research will include:

- The opportunity to participate in an art program where their own ideas and choices are a central part of their learning experience
- To have the chance to help curate an exhibition of their own artwork
- The opportunity to have their artwork exhibited in a gallery

8. Will my child's study-related information be kept confidential?

During the study, your child and their artwork may be photographed and/or video recorded. These forms of documentation may contain visual recognizable data (such as

your child's face). These images and/or videos may be used in publications and presentations associated with this study. Your child will be refereed to using a pseudonym – their real name will not be used in publications or presentations.

Beyond this, all other efforts will be made to keep your child's study-related information confidential. However, there may be circumstances where this information must be released. For example, personal information regarding your participation in this study may be disclosed if required by state law.

Also, your child's records may be reviewed by the following groups (as applicable to the research):

- Office for Human Research Protections or other federal, state, or international regulatory agencies
- The University of Arizona Institutional Review Board or Office of Responsible Research Practices

9. What are the costs of taking part in this study?
In order to participate in the Wildcat Art program, there is a small fee ($90) for each child. This is the standard fee for Wildcat Art, and is used for sustaining the program. The fee goes to purchase art supplies, offering partial scholarships for some children/families, and exhibition supplies. Families and children will have the opportunity to request a partial scholarship (based on financial need).

10. Will my child or I be paid for taking part in this study?
No.

11. What are my child's rights if he/she takes part in this study?
If you and your child choose to participate in the study, you may discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits. By signing this form, you do not give up any personal legal rights your child may have as a participant in this study.

12. Who can answer my questions about the study?
For questions, concerns, or complaints about the study you may contact me, Shana Cinquemani the principle investigator of the study. You can reach me at 973-768-0258 or by email at sc1983@email.arizona.edu.

For questions about your child's rights as a participant in this study or to discuss other study-related concerns or complaints with someone who is not part of the research team, you may contact the Human Subjects Protection Program at 520-626-6721 or orcr.arizona.edu/hspp.

Signing the consent form

I have read (or someone has read to me) this form, and I am aware that I am being asked to provide permission for my child to participate in a research study. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have had them answered to my satisfaction. I voluntarily agree to permit my child to participate in this study.

I am not giving up any legal rights by signing this form. I will be given a copy of this form.

____
Your child's name (please print)

Your name (please print)	**Your signature**
Relationship to child	**Date**

Investigator/Research Staff

I have explained the research to the participant or the participant's representative before requesting the signature(s) above. There are no blanks in this document. A copy of this form has been given to the participant or to the participant's representative.

Printed name of person obtaining consent	**Signature of person obtaining consent**
Date	

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