Toward Reconceptualization and Research: 
Intersections of Visual Culture Pedagogies and Narrative Epistemology

Thesis

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Master of Arts
in the Graduate School of The Ohio State University

By

Cody J. Henderhan, B.A.

Graduate Program in Art Education

The Ohio State University
2010

Thesis Committee:

Dr. Candace Stout, Advisor

Dr. Patricia Stuhr
Abstract

Two primary questions guide this research. The first is as follows: “What intersections exist between pedagogies of visual culture in art education and narrative epistemology?” The second is as follows: “What might the significance of locating and analyzing these intersections be to art education?” Dual literature reviews on pedagogies of visual culture in art education and narrative epistemology are first presented. In the first, broad patterns throughout research on pedagogies of visual culture in art education are analyzed. In the second on narrative epistemology, patterns in literature describing the constitution of knowledge through narrative thought and text are analyzed. Through conducting these dual literature reviews, two distinct intersections are located and described, thus answering the first research question. The first intersection described is the theoretical contexts of postmodernism, poststructuralism and constructivism. The second intersection described is representation, understood as socially constructed depiction of perceptions of reality. By locating these intersections, the interrelatedness of these two fields is proven. Being so compatible, significance for art education resides in the possible ways each field might impact the other. Possibilities of reconceptualization for present and future forms of art education and research are considered. The significance for art education is demonstrated in possibilities that are specific and wide-reaching.
Dedication

Dedicated to my grandmothers,
Lucille Bartmess and Gail Henderhan
You bought me books, kept me well fed, and continually demonstrated an ethic of care.
Acknowledgments

This research—throughout its inspiration, conception, various re-conceptions, drafting and finality—would not have been possible without the continual encouragement, wise guidance and keen insight of Dr. Candace Jesse Stout. I could not ask for a more caring mentor, inspirational pedagogical role model, insightful fellow writer, or trusting, encouraging supervisor. I will forever remember the moment she reminded me, who had somehow forgotten after writing countless, often unmemorable, undergraduate essays, that I was, indeed, “a writer.” Thank you, thank you, thank you.

Similarly, several others in the art education department receive my gratitude. Dr. Kevin Tavin’s synthesis of visual culture and critical pedagogy has undoubtedly informed and inspired this research. Classes with Dr. Sydney Walker and Dr. Terry Barrett strengthened this research. Finally, I thank Dr. Patricia Stuhr, first for her willingness to serve as a reader. Second, I more gratefully thank her for research, because models of research, like hers, are the stories that inspire future researchers.

Dear friends, near and far away, have provided support as this project came to fruition. Your constant humor, thoughtful support, and insightful opinions reminded me of what truly matters. Additionally, I extend gratitude to seven quarters of my own undergraduate students. Your enthusiasm, challenges, support and curiosity were continuous inspiration.
Finally, I must thank family members. I especially recognize my brother Zachary, grandfather Gale, and my parents, Michael and Judith Henderhan. Thank you to my parents, who have instilled in me a strong sense of social responsibility and an urge to leave the world a better place than when I entered it. These ideals drove me through research and teaching. They drive me still.
Vita

June, 1999................................. Marietta Senior High School

2006........................................ B.A. Art History, The Ohio State University

2006........................................ B.A. English, The Ohio State University

February 2007- May 2007...............Curatorial Assistant/ Education Associate,

Columbus Museum of Art

2006-Present......................... Graduate Teaching Associate, The Ohio State University

Fields of Study

Major Field: Art Education

Visual Culture

Narrative Studies

Qualitative Inquiry
# Table of Contents

Abstract...........................................................................................................................................ii

Dedication.......................................................................................................................................iii

Acknowledgments.........................................................................................................................iv

Vita..................................................................................................................................................vi

**Chapter 1: Introduction**.............................................................................................................1
  Research Question and Organization..........................................................................................3
  Methodology..................................................................................................................................5
  Statement of Purpose....................................................................................................................12
  Where to Begin? Understanding the Context of Art Education Discourse...............................14
  Researching as an Educator and Literary Writer........................................................................16
  Theoretical Frameworks of Discourse........................................................................................20
  Research as Political Agency.........................................................................................................24
  Possible Contributions to Art Education......................................................................................29
  Scope and Limitations of Research...............................................................................................33
  References......................................................................................................................................35

**Chapter 2: Pedagogies of Visual Culture in Art Education**.......................................................43
  Why Visual Culture?: Background of the Issue.........................................................................47
  Technology, Everywhere..............................................................................................................49
  The Postmodern Condition..........................................................................................................50
Images and Agency...........................................................................................................51

Critical Citizenship, Critical Consumerism.................................................................54

Democratic Classrooms and Curriculum......................................................................55

What is “Art,” Really?..................................................................................................56

Questioning Intents......................................................................................................59

Visual Culture Art Education: A Family Tree.............................................................61

Crossed Branches in the Family Tree..........................................................................62

Ancestors.......................................................................................................................64

Family Resemblances...................................................................................................66

Fraternal Twins............................................................................................................68

What to Study in VCAE: The Substantial Question....................................................71

Acts of Looking, Viewing, Gazing................................................................................73

What to do? How to teach VCAE?..............................................................................75

The Ghosts of Art Education Past...............................................................................76

The Great Aesthetics Debate.......................................................................................76

Creativity and Critique Reconceptualized: Artistic Production in VCAE...............78

Art History, Once More with Feeling.........................................................................80

Art Criticism: A Possible Tool of Visual Culture Inquiry.........................................81

Semiotics......................................................................................................................82

Of What Use Now the Museum?................................................................................82
Constructivism.................................................................153

Chapter 5: Representation.........................................................158

Acts of Locating, Synthesizing and Defining.................................158

Explication..............................................................................163

Conclusion..............................................................................167

References..............................................................................168

Chapter 6: Conclusion.................................................................170

Where have we been? ...............................................................170

Toward What Purpose? .............................................................172

Future Qualitative Research.......................................................178

References..............................................................................182

Bibliography............................................................................183
Chapter 1: Introduction

*Perceiving, it is often said, is the beginning, the ground.*

--Maxine Greene, *Variations on a Blue Guitar*

*We need to look in our own hands for the key we’ve been looking for.*

-Wynton Marsalis, 2009 Nancy Hanks Lecture

The introduction of this research describes the numerous practical and metaphorical issues, ideas and requirements by which I conceived this research. As a researcher focused on my first large-scale project, I remember the daunting terrain these concerns present. I imagine these concerns as lines of thought coming together, signifying the birthplace of my research. In my optimistic moments, I imagined these intersections as confluences of strong rivers, smoothly flowing into one another, carrying me forward. In my more cynical moments, I imagined them as a hastily constructed tower of building-blocks, stacked unevenly and lacking stability. While envisioning the ends of this research, I have begun to articulate a number of concerns based around these intersecting lines of thought.

I have a number of goals. First, I hope to build upon my undergraduate studies in English and art history. I envision my research contributing something of significance in scholarly discussions in art education. Additionally, since my experiences in education--triumphs and failures as a fledgling teacher, as well as constructive and destructive
experiences as a student—seemingly infiltrate my thoughts on all levels, I want to critically and meaningfully reflect on these experiences. As I noted the evolution of writings done by my mentors, I realize that this project might well inform all my future projects; if properly done, it can be a fertile seedbed to sow future ideas for meaningful research. Intertwined with scholarly concerns, I felt a responsibility, as an artist-writer, to craft a quality and meaningful text.

Towards the goal of successfully traversing this landscape, guided by careful and considerate counsel, I crafted a specific course. I have chosen to perform and then draw upon a literature review of two arenas of discourse largely informed by my two fields of undergraduate study, and extending into art education and qualitative inquiry. I also made a decision to avoid writing in a traditional academic manner that would deny the reader knowledge of my subjective stance; I would purposely intertwine this literature review with personal narrative reflection. Given that the field of art education has significantly been affected by a reconceptualization of its purpose and scope as visual culture art education, and that narrative epistemology is pivotal in the theory and basis of several topics pertaining to qualitative research, an attempt to locate intersections of the two fields is of premium importance. My overall purpose, I have decided, is to locate and then examine intersections existing between pedagogies of visual culture in art education and narrative epistemology and, subsequently, to critically consider the placement, or significance of these intersections in the context of art education.
Delineating boundaries focuses scope. Despite concise limits, the territory of research can seem daunting. Therefore, before entering these dual literature reviews covering pedagogies of visual culture in art education and narrative epistemology, and to foreground this thesis, I initially describe the number of contexts I perceive framing and impacting this research. In structuring the thesis, I articulate the governing research question and organization of this thesis. Next, I reflect on how the intertwined methodologies of literature review and narrative reflection shape this research. Following this, I articulate a statement of purpose. For the navigating reader, I then sketch a brief map of the entirety of this research. Next, I describe the series of contexts in which I understand this research. These contexts are as follows: art education; my aspirations as a literary writer and educator; frameworks of theoretical thought; and political agency. Finally, I connect this research to current strands of art education research, and articulate key limitations.

Research Questions and Organization

Freedman (2004a) states “Research questions carry with them an assumption of closeness between that which will be studied and the story eventually told about it” (p. 99). Therefore, Freedman (2004a) advises, the question must be “clear,” “relevant,” and “answerable” (p.99). Two fundamental questions guide this research. To restrain this introductory chapter within reasonable bounds of clarity, relevancy and answerability, I
concisely articulate this question. There are two fundamental questions. The first is as follows: “What are the intersections exist between pedagogies of visual culture in art education and narrative epistemology?” The second is as follows: “What might the significance of locating and analyzing these intersections be to the discipline of art education?”

Initially, I present parallel and separate literature reviews in both fields. To accomplish this I first present a literature review of research on pedagogies of visual culture in art education. Second, I present a literature review covering narrative epistemology. I pointedly examine the significance of each field in the discipline of art education. Although my first task was to conduct these literature reviews, I knew that throughout this process I would be locating multiple intersections through my bases of constructed knowledge. This act of location was comparison of explicit theoretical concepts as well as guidance by my scholarly instincts aiding me to recognize implicit concepts.

Though I might possibly study a number of embedded intersections important to the discipline of art education, for the purposes of this thesis I focus on two that manifested in dissimilar fashions. The first intersection is theoretical; both pedagogies of visual culture and narrative epistemology subscribe to principles of postmodernism, poststructuralism and constructivism. Thus, both fields exist in the same theoretical contexts. The second intersection I describe, representation, presents a dissimilar
intersection. *Representation*, as I conceive it, denotes a socially constructed depiction of perceptions of reality. I came to understand the term in this way via the synthesis of its varied uses throughout literature from both fields. To conclude this research, I consider the possible benefits that might come from locating the intersections between pedagogies of visual culture in art education and narrative epistemology.

The significance of locating intersections between pedagogies of visual culture in art education and narrative epistemology is that it demonstrates they are in fact theoretically connected and intimately related. Since they are so related, I demonstrate that the main significance for the discipline of art education is that each field might impact the other, and often already does. Given this intimate interrelatedness, I the note wide-reaching and specific possibilities based around this compatibility. I suggest that art education might be accordingly reconceptualized, and research on art education, similarly, might be accordingly reconceptualized. Herein lies the essential significance of this research.

Methodology

“Triangulation” denotes the use of multiple methods to complement and balance one another in qualitative research, in the hopes of yielding richer description, varied perspective, balanced insight and more critical reflection (Denzin, 1989; Mason, 2002). This research is formed by the use of dual methodological strategies. Essentially, I have
conducted two analytic literature reviews then intertwined these reviews with personal reflection on my lived experiences within the contexts of research, education, and art education.

Given that this strategy is, on the surface, so simple, the inclusion of a section on methodology might seem unnecessary to some readers. The literature review, after all, is commonplace in research. The author of nearly every scholarly text I cite in this research conducted a review of literature. Furthermore, many of the authors I cite in this research recount lived experiences and tell stories to illustrate, scaffold and problematize their research. However, since I especially hope this thesis serves as a meta-cognitive reflection on the research writing process, I must explicate and defend these two strategies. I echo Stout (2007), who says, “As qualitative researchers in art education, we should spend more time thinking, talking and writing about writing” (p.227).

The literature review, as a methodological process, bears analysis. Although literature reviews serve as a foundation for many of the thesis examples I examined to understand the production of a thesis (Barrett, 1974; Bontempo, 2006; Bowen, 2008; Buda, 2005), none provide heavy, in-depth reflection on the nature, necessity, needs and strategies of a literature review. Certainly, the fact that a literature review is understood as an unquestionable necessity in scholarly research accounts for the lack of reflection on just why literature reviews are conducted. However, I argue that in response to what I perceive to be absences of reflection by researchers, especially in art education, my own
purposeful reflection on the nature, necessity, need and strategy of literature review is necessary. In an effort to both lend this research a greater transparency, and to highlight and begin to remedy those absences I perceive, I explicate the purpose and process of a literature review. And, after further investigating these absences, I found I am not alone in this concern. Boote and Beile (2005) note that there is little written on the literature review process in dissertation research, and that many literature reviews become a series of summaries with little synthesis.

A cogently accumulated and appropriately bound literature review is necessary in both quantitative and qualitative published research. Through the accumulation, reading and comprehension of related texts, supported by consistent citations, a literature review serves as a fundamental basis for further inquiry; additionally, via the literature review, an author acknowledges that he or she enters and responds to a conversation among other scholars (Race, 2008). Freedman (2004b) echoes this, “literature reviews conducted at the beginning of research are done in large part to provide a theoretical framework for research, to place a particular study in the context of the broader range of similar types of research done in the past and to critically reflect on that past” (pp. 283-284).

But how does a literature review constitute a methodology? The literature review is a method of data collection. One guide suggests a literature review “summarizes and synthesizes” a field of literature relevant to a topic (The Writing Center, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1998-2007). The literature reviews I present here are
efforts to both analyze and synthesize data. The use of a literature review to collect and construct data necessitates pragmatic choices. Race (2008), suggests choosing a plurality of texts to find balance. Oliver (2004) advises an organization based on categories, among possible ones are “chronological,” “by publication” or “thematic,” for instance. The literature review composing this thesis is thematic in both fields; I have made this choice so that a wide spectrum of literature in and outside art education might be integrated. Furthermore, reviewing literature thematically renders patterns of implicit and explicit concepts in texts from various disciplines and from different points in history evident. This is a significant factor, since part of this research’s purpose is to locate intersections between my two fields of study. Meyer (1994) suggests the researcher place him or herself in a reader’s place, ultimately wondering, “What information do they need?” (p. 76). I present the reader with a portrait of pedagogies of visual culture in art education and narrative epistemology.

Meyer (1994) notes critical thinking is necessary when conducting a literature review. Noting the importance of metacognition in the literature review, Meyer (1994) underscores how an author’s familiarity with the topic, awareness of his or her personal biases, necessary limits of the research, and the answerability of the main research question should be underscored by the review. Explication of critical thinking can illuminate the literature review as a methodological process. The Foundation for Critical Thinking website suggests traits of mind that a critical thinker should display include the
ability to problematize and question ideas with clarity, the logical reference to and employ of cogent sources, the rational hypothesis and consideration of ideas against sound criterion, open-mindedness, humility, empathy and effective ways of communication. Citing Paul’s research, Stout (1995) underscores the importance of these and other traits in describing, interpreting and evaluating artworks; I would argue the same strategies are important when understanding research. Critical thinking, applied in the interpretation of sources, should be evident in the literature review. The sources composing the literature reviews in this thesis have been contextually understood, rationally interrogated, compared and contrasted to one another and responded to in a curious and self-conscious manner.

As I have done with the literature review, I must similarly defend my choice to purposely use narrative reflection as a tool to construct data. Narrative reflection, or as Stuhr (2003) terms it, “telling a tale,” (p. 301) serves as a useful vehicle to present research (Richardson, 1997). This strategy subsumes and relates to a number of research strategies and writing methods. Though many instances of overlap exist, I will highlight some concepts drawn upon in narrative research especially evident in this work. These are: narrative inquiry: autoethnography and its relatives; lived experience and reflexivity. These are all interrelated concepts, but explication of each is necessary to provide a clear portrait of how I understand narrative reflection as a methodological tool I employ in my research.
Clandinin and Connelly (2000) explain that in narrative inquiry a participant’s understandings are relayed to a researcher through, and then described by the researcher as stories. Although this research lacks the contribution of real-life participants, I do understand myself as a participant. By applying narrative inquiry, therefore, I choose to elaborate pertinent points with reflections on my experiences as a learner and educator, just as a researcher collecting interviews would use their data.

Autoethnography is a theoretically related, but dissimilar methodological device. Goodall (2008) explains that autoethnographers “use the construction of personal experiences as more than a framing device,” since “the whole of the story is most often drawn entirely from personal experiences” (p. 153). Autobiography and memoir overlap autoethnography, but nonetheless must be differentiated. Goodall (2008) asserts “autobiography” necessitates attention to detail and facts (“history”), while “memoir” denotes the description of memory (p. 154). Obviously, as a research strategy, narrative reflection can assume and subsume these three concepts. Throughout this research, my narrative reflection on my experiences might arguably be said to demonstrate all three.

The narrative reflection in this research must also be understood as a form of reflexivity. Macbeth (2001) outlines two conceptions of researcher reflexivity; “textual,” denoting the process by which the researcher examines his own process of describing reality (methodology) and “positional,” in which the researcher considers how those factors influencing his or her subjective stance inevitably shape the research. I understand
reflexivity as metalogue, lending translucency and trustworthiness to research by anchoring it to an honest portrayal and consideration of researcher subjectivity and the entire research process.

The choice to use narrative reflection as a methodological tool and as a stylistic technique holds potential shortcomings and uncovers fears. Goodall (2008) explains there is “greater risk associated with autoethnography than with traditional scholarly writing,” and lists the misuse of technique as “navel-gazing,” “pointless self-analysis” and “narcissism” (p. 38-39). Roskelly (1993) illustrates the intimidation a narrative researcher can face; she quotes a response from a reviewer of one of her articles—“Must we always have these ‘a funny thing happened-to-me-on-the-way-to-the-cocktail-party’ openings?” (p. 299). To receive a response like this must vivify the worries of a writer—the answer to “Who cares?” is “No one.” Or worse, that the writer’s artistic skill in crafting clear and meaningful text is in question. Or perhaps worst, that attempts at reflexivity are of little value in some fields.

Opposing Roskelly’s experience, I acutely remember the encouragement I received the first time I made a conscious decision to write a research paper in a narrative manner. Before this experience, I had assumed the academically traditional and removed manner that seemed most appropriate for formal and historical investigations of art history and literature. This essay, dissimilarly, written in my last year before graduating with an English degree, detailed the effect of my experiences on interpretations of
contemporary poetry. Admittedly, I assumed the strategy because the assignment presented me with a seemingly immobile writer’s block; as the due date approached I had to write something. It was an experience that permanently changed my writing process. With surprise, I noted the comments of the professor; I had both constructed solid arguments and crafted an enjoyable text.

In conclusion, though my research and writing strategies may in fact be commonplace, both the literature review and narrative reflection must be understood explicitly as methodological choices. I hope to evidence that narrative reflection is a beneficial tool to reflexively elaborate and question the knowledge gained from a literature review. Intertwining two such techniques, I imbue this research with balanced insight, as well as a reflective conscious.

Statement of Purpose

Though I answer the main question guiding this research, I must stress that the purpose of this research is not to problem-solve or supply the final and only answer. I concede that no definitive unproblematic answers are, in fact, attainable. Later in this chapter I defend an understanding of art education that justifies this purpose.

With this in mind, I envision this research as a conversation. Martin (1985) suggests, “A good conversation is neither a fight nor a contest… it is an interchange of ideas by those who see themselves not as adversaries but as human beings come together
to talk and listen and learn from one another” (p. 10). “Conversation,” as a guiding purpose and understanding of research illustrates a number of goals.

First, given that the two fields of literature I investigate are transdisciplinary (Duncum, 2002; Polkinghorne, 1988), this conversation promotes further dialogue between various disciplines. Secondly, in the arena of art education, this research enters conversations already begun; it offers points that problematize and support previous research. Similarly, I hope this research, as an invitation, incepts a conversation about the relationship between narrative epistemology and pedagogies of visual culture that others will join.

I understand a final purpose of this research, illustrated by the metaphor of conversation, through reflection on the research and writing processes. I have been both fascinated by and concerned with representations of researcher subjectivity and the writing process. Therefore, I also understand this research as the textual manifestation of my own inner meta-cognitive conversation—among educator, researcher and artist-writer. Understanding research through metologue serves to further explicate the research process, as well as strengthen researcher reflexivity. Bateson (1972) uses metalogues in the form of conversations with his daughter to illuminate his research; his daughter notes stories act as “parallel parables” (p. 31). Certainly the same might be said of research. To reach a similar goal, Staller (2007) uses metologue as a device to expose the workings of the editing and publishing process. This research should be read as a metologue on
research as I include reflection on this research’s construction. An important dimension of this research is a contribution to research on the writing of qualitative inquiry.

To conclude, I must stress that nowhere in this research do I make determinations that narrative epistemology and pedagogies of visual culture serve as better lenses to understand art education than others. Instead, I hold an interest in understanding the ways that these lenses, when seen as complementary, might expose significant concepts and then be further examined toward the purpose of finding significance for the discipline of art education. I am conversing with a multitude of voices.

Understanding the Context of Art Education Discourse

As a thesis research project this work resides in a specific field of discourse, that of art education. Therefore, one of the framing ideas guiding this research has been an understanding of how this research fits into the context of art education. What is art education as a context? Or, how is art education a context? To understand how this research resides in the wider discourse of art education, I offer an understanding of art education. On the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization website, Perez and Ruiz (n.d) identify art education as “art as a learning tool or method” and “art as a study subject”. These definitions are seemingly concrete, however they are problematic. Lackey (2003) illustrates that art education takes place within multiple contexts and is used towards a number of purposes. Wilson (2003) explains that art
education, in fact, cannot be articulated; impossible to diagram as a concept, it instead exists rhizomatically, unmappable. Moreover, Efland (1990) explains that art education has assumed various forms throughout history, as it was framed and affected by changing perceptions of knowledge, and changing social structures. Eisner (2002) states, “Visions of the aims and content of arts education are neither uniform nor discovered simply by inspection” (p. 25). Taking this into account, Eisner (2002) outlines various “visions” art education currently assumes. These include: discipline-based art education; visual culture; creative problem solving; creative self-expression; arts education as preparation for the world of work; cognitive development; using the arts to promote academic performance; and integrated arts programs (pp. 26-39). To briefly take into account a subject of this research (pedagogies of visual culture), the definition of “art education” is being further problematized as perceptions and the limits of appropriate curriculum content are currently being challenged and revised (Duncum, 2001a; Duncum 2001b; Freedman & Stuhr, 2004; Tavin, 2003). Art education, therefore, as a pedagogical project and arena of scholarly discourse, offers a variable, amorphous context.

Furthermore, “education” is itself a problematic concept. Smith (2005) states, “‘Education’ is a word people adopt to describe their own preferred ideas of what should take place in school, universities and elsewhere” (p.1). In other words, “education,” when it appears in research, as language and subject, should be critiqued. Understanding these points made by other art educators about art education, I accept a conception of art
education suggesting a dynamic, socially created project, influenced by continually
changing contexts. This research, of course, is inserted into this framework.

Researching as an Educator and Literary Writer

I asked myself many questions during this research. These were questions,
however, that initially confronted me as an educator and artist-writer. As an educator,
these questions manifested, for example as: “How could a writing course in art education
connect to the real-life experiences of students?” “What would be the appropriate
pedagogy for such a course?” And as a writer throughout research projects, I questioned
my abilities as a literary writer and qualitative researcher. I especially considered how
these two roles existed in tandem—sometimes symbiotically, and sometimes awkwardly.
From my perspective they were inextricably intertwined.

As I was forced to articulate answers to these questions, my desires for this
research crystallized, and I ultimately chose to study pedagogies of visual culture and
narrative epistemology, asking a two-part question—“What intersections exist between
pedagogies of visual culture in art education and narrative epistemology—and what
might the significance be to art education in locating and analyzing these intersections?”
Lesser questions generated by my concerns as an educator and literary writer often
influenced these main research questions.
As an educator, I often imagined one immense question at the root of this study—
“what is pedagogy?” More precisely, I asked, “What forms should pedagogy assume?”
Oxford English Dictionary defines “pedagogy” as both “a place of instruction…” and
“instruction:” their third definition, however, can especially resonate in the thoughts of an
art educator—“the art, occupation or practice of teaching” (http://dictionary.oed.com).
These are simple definitions, and, I realized when I began teaching, and talking about
teaching, that I must further understand the use of the term. Beethan and Sharpe (2007)
explain many definitions of pedagogy place an overemphasis on the act of teaching,
ignoring learning, and that “pedagogy,” in fact, “embraces a dialogue between teaching
and learning” (p. 1-2). Giroux and McLaren (1989) offer a different definition of
pedagogy that suggests essential questions in this “dialogue:” the introduction to,
preparation for, and legitimation of particular forms of social life” (p.xxi). I wondered
what social lives I invited my learners to enter and legitimized. Through definitions like
these, I began to understand my pedagogy through the choices defining my actions as an
educator.

Armed with my past learning experiences as an art history and English major, I
felt equipped with knowledge to facilitate my teaching. In professional experience,
however, I felt under-prepared, because I had no classroom teaching experience. I
imagined the possible outcomes of my pedagogical choices looming on the horizon—
icebergs in a night sea. In an effort to crystallize my pedagogical desires and strategies, I
noted the practices of those teachers that yielded productive development inside and outside the classroom. I also noted the practices of professors who did otherwise. I read various texts on teaching. Some, like a manual, regarded teaching as a checklist of best practices (e.g. Stronge, 2002). Some, though undoubtedly inspiring, left me with little to actually do in the classroom (e.g. Greene, 1995). Above all else, I realized that all concepts linked to pedagogy are amorphous and context-specific. Therefore, I realized I must reconsider my teaching context—of place, of institutional requirements, of students’ lives, and of personal desire—to crystallize my own pedagogy. This journey especially led me to research pedagogies of visual culture. I found my own practices—what I taught and how I taught—correlated with the ideas linked to the study and teaching of visual culture in art education. Thus, especially because of this vested interest in my own pedagogical evolution, I researched pedagogies of visual culture.

Then, there were my concerns as a writer. Stout (2007b) suggests the best-case scenario: “When the scholarship, artistry, and reflexivity of the experimental writer are adept and in tune, their texts, in their work through mind and body, create verisimilitude to life: this verisimilitude intertwines with life, re-inscribing, opening possibilities for change” (p. 133). So, pragmatically, I considered my responsibilities as a qualitative researcher. As a literary writer I considered the actual aesthetics and joys of artistic writing.
As a researcher, I understood my responsibility as truthful representation on at least two levels. Qualitative research necessitates an honest representation of the data collected from participants (Mason, 2002). Since I present literature reviews, my “participants” are textual sources—previous conversations set forth by authors. The goal of truthful representation overlaps with a second concern—“transparency.” More than a safety net to preemptively apologize for uncomplimentary representation, Mason (2002) suggests transparency denotes the necessary and reflective description of a researcher’s own subjectivity. It is a necessary facet of every qualitative research project, because the subjective stance of a researcher informs his or her interpretive lenses. Offering that necessary transparency suggests what Denzin (1999) describes as stripping “away the veneer of self-protection” (p. 568). As a researcher engaging textual participants, I understood I must truthfully represent my subjectivity to justify, validate and rationalize my interpretations.

The concept of “transparency” infiltrated into the concerns I held as a literary writer. As a creative writer I also bear responsibilities. How can I represent my research transparently in an artistic manner? How can I craft text that is meaningful in both production and reception? In this case, fears and joys trample each other, like awkward waltzing partners. Writing about poetry, Durham (2004) explains the fear of the experimental research writer endeavoring to represent herself, “I want to be/ A poet, but I am/ Afraid—I can’t—stomach putting/ Me out there/ On paper” (p. 493). Equally
existent is the joy—I imagine myself in a long line of storytellers. The ghosts of American-literature-past read over my shoulders, scolding and encouraging me as I construct the architecture of words and sentences. On my left, Ernest Hemingway and Emily Dickinson urge me to be short and confrontational with monolithic phrases. On my right, Walt Whitman and Thomas Wolfe encourage me to revel in the fertile intimacy of intricate language. How can the art of writing intersect with research? These recurring concerns about qualitative research and storytelling drew me into my second field of study, narrative epistemology. As a writer and researcher I began to wonder, “How do learners, and researchers, construct knowledge and realities artistically and responsibly through narration?”

Though articulating these two researcher-identities, the writer and the educator, as separate parts, might portray a halved subjective stance, like a bivalve shellfish, I must stress that these two identities are, in fact, inextricably intertwined. Nevertheless, separate routes of research have been presented by the concerns manifested through each. As I will demonstrate, however, these are routes that intersect.

Theoretical Frameworks of Discourse

Reflecting on my time in an introductory course on theory, I remarked to my advisor that it was much like a loss of innocence. Learning the terminology of discourses, a student becomes adequate in explaining his or her understandings according to a set
framework. A researcher aligns with various camps of thought that characterize his or her work-- the understandings of reality he or she presents. Once I became used to thinking, metacognitively, through these frameworks of philosophy and theory, it seemed impossible to separate my own understandings from these discourses. Therefore, to properly introduce this research, I must briefly demonstrate an understanding of wider framing discourses.

The interpretations and synthesis of texts that I express here are situated within a postmodern understanding of reality. As opposed to the modernist goal of understanding what reality is, postmodern thought focuses on how reality is created (Noddings, 1995). No absolute truths are discoverable in postmodern thought; ultimately truth is a human construction and any reality outside human knowing is undiscoverable (Rifkin, 2000). In other words, thought is always subjective and cannot ever be objective. Following this idea, Giroux (2000) lists a number of basic tenets of postmodern discourse: “canonicity and the notion of the sacred have become suspect;” “epistemic certainty” and “fixed boundaries of academic knowledge have been challenged;” “distinctions between high and low culture have been rejected;” “faith in rationality, science and freedom have incurred a deep-rooted skepticism;” and the idea of a stable self-identity has been replaced by the idea of “pluralized and fluid” identity (p. 174).

With these ideas in mind, artists choose effective strategies to critique representations of reality and form playful and insightful artworks. Barrett (2006-2007)
lists techniques such as “appropriation,” “working collaboratively,” “simulating,” “layering,” “mixing codes,” “recontextualizing” and “mixing media” (pp. 3-7). These strategies similarly have utility for the postmodern writer. Therefore, I make purposeful choices reflecting postmodern thought—for example, by analyzing facets of identity, as opposed to relying on singular definitive portraits. And, I purposely repeat that this thesis seeks no definitive, unproblematic final answers on my topic rooted in conceptions of overall ultimate truths.

Additionally, Lemke (1994) states, postmodernism is used to “pose a challenging critique of the most basic assumptions of the modern educational enterprise” (http://academic.brooklyn.cuny.edu/education/jlemke/papers/jsalt.htm). As a device to expose the legacy of modernism, Giroux (2000) demonstrates postmodernism can be used to problematize education research, because ideas of education have been historically shaped by modernist goals and understanding. A framework of postmodernism is especially of use, these scholars argue, when researching education. I agree.

Critical pedagogy, while not a theoretical framework, subsumes several framing ideas relevant to and aligning with this research, and therefore serves as a cogent categorical heading. Moreover, my introduction, as a student and teacher, to these various ideas has been through a lens of critical pedagogy. Leistyna and Woodrum (1999) explain that critical pedagogy is amorphous, but that practitioners generally critically examine
and seek to affect the structures of power that define society, especially education. Giroux (1994) suggests critical pedagogy “illuminates the relations between knowledge, authority and power” (p. 30). A number of thought-frameworks inform conceptions of critical pedagogy. Postmodernism, which I have already explicated, is one of these. Critical theory is another, constituted by the writings of a number of authors, displayed in a number of different disciplines and employing many concepts in inquiry (Bohman, 2005).

A number of theoretical frameworks are often subsumed by and inform critical theory and critical pedagogy. Among those especially informing this research are feminism, multiculturalism and queer theory. Feminism, as Maher (2007) explains, suggests an especial concern for the ways concepts of gender have promoted unequal distributions of power, and seeks to critique and challenge the structures that distribute power. Feminism, as an overarching and evolving strain of thought and action, however, is not unproblematic; Maher (2007) explains that “dynamics of difference,” the particularities of race, sexuality and class, for instance, necessarily affect conceptions of feminism (p. 129). Therefore, a consciously applied lens of feminism does not simply take into account women’s experiences and advocate equal justice between the sexes, but it also critiques and seeks to understand how multiple and varied conceptions of gender and sex shape ideas and actions.

Two strains of thought that influence feminism further influence this research. Queer theory, which as signifier seems to be primarily concerned with sexuality, in reality exists as a framework of discourse seeking to understand and problematize how ways of acting and forms of knowledge are normalized (Sullivan, 2003). In other words, it asks “Why are some things deemed “queer” (or normal) when others are not? Finally,
multiculturalism also influences this research. Dhillon (2007) explains that multiculturalism, as a way of thinking, accepts that all “practices and traditions” across spectrums of communities must be understood as contextually constructed (p. 109). Grant and Sleeter (1988) apply this framework to education; as a tool multiculturalism can lead students of both majority and minority groups to critically reflect on both beneficial and harmful conditions. Multiculturalism suggests an attitude—an open-minded spirit, not just of “tolerance,” but also of flexibility, as well as an urge to reflect more deeply on one’s own “practices and traditions” in light of another’s (Dhillon, 2007, p. 110).

The patterns of thought these discourses advocate have politically affected this research—a fact I will explicate in the subsequent section. More explicitly, however, I must stress that I construct data and interpret texts with the overriding concepts—knowledge linked to power and history, contextual understandings, open-mindedness, the urge to remedy the marginalization of certain communities—that these three discourses offer. And, I acknowledge that other frameworks could arguably be just as evident in this research. These frameworks are left unacknowledged, and they are also points that others might use to contribute to and critique this research.

Research as Political Agency

Although it might run against modernist views that education in the United States is unbiased, several points suggest that a description of the political intent of this research is necessary. To begin with, I echo Freedman (2000), who insists, “art education is a sociopolitical act” (p. 315). By extension then, this research as art education, and about
art education, must be understood as a sociopolitical act. Moreover, towards the aim of greater transparency, I must make plain the political intent that drives and shapes this research. I will first rationalize the inclusion of a section that explicates the effect of a researcher’s sociopolitical context. Second, I will introduce my understandings of my own sociopolitical stance as an educator and an education researcher. I then tie the purpose of this research to my sociopolitical stance. Finally, I illustrate the root of this purpose with a brief narrative reflection.

Concerning a researcher’s representations of the experiences of others, Martin-Alcoff (1991-92) states, “Speaking should always carry with it an accountability and responsibility for what one says” (http://www.alcoff.com/content/speaothers.html). And, Denzin (1999) asserts, “writing is not an innocent practice” (p.568). Thus the researcher must consider his sociopolitical intent, and responsibly represent the inevitably political goals of his research.

This idea in mind, I understand education as the confrontation of inequalities and the endeavoring towards remedies that seek to neutralize inequalities. A number of interrelated and overlapping concepts align with and articulate this understanding. The first of these is the goal of “democratic education.” Glass (2007) explains democratic education: “the development of critical engaged citizens committed both to creating a robust participatory and pluralistic democracy and to pursuing justice” (p. 105). Apple (1986) affirms that educational institutions affect society because they exist within
society; therefore repercussions to actions undertaken by educators have social repercussions beyond the classroom. Logical application of this approach suggests that this goal, affecting change towards a more democratic society, is a rational motive of some educators. Though this may seem like a radical conception of education that assumes, with hubris, that educational institutions and educators hold an overly significant position of power in their societies, as Apple (1995) states, social reconstruction is “a way of envisioning the relationship between schooling and social justice, between schooling, “the people,” and a set of norms and values based in equality” (p. 1).

Benne and Stanley (1995) explain this motive, focusing on real-world concerns:

We hold that global participative planning of the use or nonuse of technologies in the future (if there is to be a future for human life on earth) and the reorganization of human collectivities, private and public, into nonbureaucratic forms are both possible and desirable. Deep cutting and continuing education and reeducation of both persons and collectivities are, we believe, necessary in converting the unstable and violence-prone oligarchies in which we now live into democratic planning societies. (p. 140)

Essentially, education can affect the future existence society, and the choices of its members.

Further articulating the social reconstruction approach, Ballengee-Morris and Stuhr (2001) explain, “teachers, students, staff members and communities are all enabled
and expected to practice democratic action for the benefit of disenfranchised social and cultural groups identified and investigated as a result of enlightened curriculum” (p. 9).

First, “education researchers” can be added to their list of empowered entities. Second, I highlight the necessity of “enlightened curriculum.” Apple (1995) explains education aimed at social transformation might also oppose itself to goals of democracy and instead maintain hegemony. I understand this research, because it seeks to critically reflect on present manifestations of art education, and provide possible ways to conceive new forms of art education, as a possibly generative approach to potentially destabilize hegemonic relations and promote the construction of a participatory democracy.

Political and personal desires are intertwined, and describing the roots of these desires can further engage an audience and lend transparency to an argument.

Articulating this goal, Denzin (1999) calls for a “new ethic of writing,” in which qualitative researchers are “free to excavate the personal in the name of the political” (p. 568). Agreeing with this goal, I seek to understand and often articulate how my background and experiences have informed my sociopolitical conceptions of my research. Undoubtedly personal experiences of disenfranchisement, marginalization and subjugation—since I am in many ways beyond the perceived norms of identity-- while passing through educational institutions, do significantly inform and drive this research.

Coming from an economically depressed area of Appalachian Ohio, and one experiencing a decline in financial development as corporations that once sustained jobs
closed down or left, I especially remember instances of working-class prejudice I experienced in high school. One memory is especially relevant. At the beginning of my Junior year I took an algebra course, which I later dropped. One morning, the teacher, overly frustrated that many students did not turn in the previous evening’s homework,-- I, of course, had not completed it-- berated the class. “Do you all want to grow up to have crappy jobs at a chemical plant?” she asked. With this statement she insulted the students whose parents worked at a local plant (My father was employed by one), justified the perceived social privilege of those students whose parents had better-paying non-labor jobs, and further subjugated and marginalized those students who had unemployed parents. In ways like this, through cycles of apathy and anger, maintained by teachers and students, education often maintains society’s inequalities. This example is extreme, but it illustrates one memory I hold, pushing me to instill this research with the goal of social reconstruction towards a participatory democracy.

Utopianism is a modernist concept, and working within a theoretical framework of postmodernism I recognize that no perfect level of participatory democracy will be met. However, as a goal, I affirm that education aimed towards socially reconstructing a participatory democracy is, nonetheless, a productive way to envision the ends of my research.
Possible Contributions to Art Education

On a fundamental level this research holds significance for art education because it contributes to a body of research on pedagogies of visual culture and narrative epistemology. To suggest specific ways this research contributes to the field, I will articulate responses to specific issues in the field of art education. Voiced by previous art educators, these include changing conceptions of art, technological change, and finally a concerted effort and perceived need for ongoing social engagement.

Duncum (1997) uses the signifier “new times” to denote this present historical context; to articulate two facets of “new times,” the author suggests art educators understand “new technology” and “crossover between high and popular culture forms” (p. 69). Postman (1992) asserts that new forms of technology actually change how learners think; therefore art educators must consider how technology affects the construction of knowledge. This research, through its dual fields, considers the ramifications of technological change. To further articulate this, pedagogies of visual culture investigate how educators and learners can and do examine, critique and construct media images. Secondly, narrative epistemology, as a way learners construct knowledge and understand their worlds, subsumes the construction of knowledge about a technological world, a world (and worlds) that is often narratively represented and explored through the use of technological media (as in video games).
Changing conceptions of “art” likewise suggests a present context art education research must consider. Traditionally held values about “high” and “low” culture, and therefore art, have often been interrogated and deconstructed (Tavin, 2005a). Tavin (2005b) explains all arguments valuing “high” culture over popular, or “low” culture are founded in ideologies that essentially suggest certain ways of life, and therefore certain sets of people, are more valuable than others. Similarly, the definition of “art,” (and therefore art education) has actually always been amorphous, since many artists throughout history, such as Henri Toulouse-Latrec, Marcel Duchamp, Andy Warhol, Barbara Kruger, Robert Rauschenberg, and Jeff Koons, and in fact the entire Pop Art movement, have employed the subjects, styles, production methods and reception venues of popular culture (Kleiner, Mamiya, & Tansey, 2001). Generally considered, since pedagogies of visual culture subsume the study, critique and creation of all forms of visual culture—what is considered art, what might not be, and art that responds to popular visual culture—this research responds to a context of ever-changing conceptions of what constitutes “art” and “culture.” A fundamental basis and deeper consideration of narrative epistemology also contributes to understanding this context, since perceptions of value are often linked to culture through narrative (i.e. the sacred museum object).

As a third point, Duncum (2002) asserts that, “more than at any time in history, we are living our everyday lives through visual imagery” (p. 15). This is an outcome of a rapidly changing media technology that both imposes images and text upon learners,
makes images and text almost limitlessly available, and offers learners ways to produce images and text (Duncum, 2002). Both narrative epistemology and pedagogies of visual culture can address and embrace this concept. And, by locating and examining the intersections between these ways of knowing, the abilities, devices and contexts of learners in “new times” might be more explicitly articulated and understood. Forms of art education, and research on art education, in turn, might then be adapted and created responding to these understandings.

This research additionally responds to assertions from a number of authors who argue that art education, when socially engaged, can positively affect the development of its communities. Several art educators recognize that forms of art education must be understood and designed with the goal of positive social engagement (Bailey & Desai, 2005; Barrett, 1990; Bastos, 2009; Darts, 2006; Freedman, 2000; Gude, 2009; Hausman & Tavin, 2004; Hicks, 1994; King McFee, 1968; Lanier, 1969; Stout, 1999; Stuhr, 2003). Art educators have answered this call in a variety of ways. For example, Stout (1999) suggests educators can promote empathetic learning and responses, undergirded by imaginative arts-experiences and caring pedagogical approaches. Darts (2006) chronicles the development of a dynamic high school curriculum aimed at empowering participants to beneficially affect their communities. Hausman and Tavin (2004) consider globalization’s impact, describing a graduate level class aimed at critical citizenship. Bailey and Desai (2005) suggest community art forms can promote socially engaged
histories aimed at justice. Though I do not propose or advocate in this study any specific curriculums or curriculum reform, the fundamental investigation of pedagogies of visual culture and narrative epistemology, followed by an examination of their intersections, might provide concepts to reinforce practices of and research about curriculums aimed at creating, or adapting socially engaged art educations.

Interrelated to the idea of productive social engagement, art education as a form of resistance is another context this research might inform. Visual culture is inherently linked to social struggles (Darts, 2004; Duncum, 2001a; Freedman, 2003; Tavin, 2003). Therefore, visual culture art education must address these struggles. To expand upon this idea, jagodzinski (2008) explains, “art and its education in whatever forms they are practiced within capitalist economies today are embedded within a society of control;” this “society of control” is defined as “designer capitalism,” (p. 147). However, jagodzinski (2008) suggests forms of art education hold a potential to challenge this paradigm. Darts (2004) offers the example of “culture jamming,” or employing the methods and media of advertisements and other media formats to critique and challenge messages and values portrayed through media. Though this thesis research does not explicitly challenge the “paradigm of designer capitalism,” it might provide foundational knowledge and concepts. And with these concepts, art educations that align with such an approach might be constructed or reinforced. This is because narrative knowing and pedagogies of visual culture are vehicles through which learners can construct, negotiate,
and critically respond to ideologies, representations of truth and consumer-identity-choice. Moreover, the intersections between the two provide significant concepts upon which to base challenges to representations.

In conclusion, this research presents both specific and wide-reaching contributions to art education. As separate fields--pedagogies of visual culture and narrative epistemology--these ways of knowing can critique and add to the field on multiple levels; through locating intersections between the two, I reconsider concepts in new contexts that might provide researchers ways to further understand and critique forms of art education.

Scope and Limitations of Research

I limit the reaches of this research, because, as a study of transdisciplinary topics, this project could be boundless. Research, being a representation and critique of reality, is much like a landscape painting; in reality a horizon-line is an illusion formed by the curve of the earth. To paint a formal landscape, however, representing a line of horizon is necessary. Like a horizon limits the view of landscape, so a tightened scope and articulated limitations bound research into an attainable breadth. With this idea in mind, I must, however address those topics I found ultimately did not fit within the research, because to leave them unrepresented might cause the reader to assume I ignored them, or was unaware of further possibilities this research might offer, or was unaware of
conversations with which it overlaps. Though many exist, I highlight the connection between visual culture and narrative communication, as well as the scope of my narrative experience.

A field of study I do not investigate is the comparative qualities between visual culture and narrative as devices of interpretation and communication. This route of study would necessitate, for example, in-depth literature reviews in communication theory, narratology and semiotics. Though this research, at certain points, overlaps with this concern, adequate research on this topic would widen this research beyond manageability.

Similarly, since I frequently use narrative as a methodological tool to balance my literature review, I must articulate the scope of my subjectivity. Though I conduct no participant research, my reflections are necessarily bound to a specific context of times and places. Instances of narrative reflection on personal educational experiences are framed by my perspectives as a white, male, working class student in southeastern Appalachian Ohio and at a large, Midwestern university. Reflections on professional experiences as an educator are drawn from three distinct teaching experiences. As a graduate teaching associate I have had the benefit of diverse experiences; I led an online art appreciation course, led recitations for a large lecture-type art appreciation course, instructed a course on writing art criticism as well as another on television criticism.
In conclusion, though this research is ultimately a bound literature review undergirded by my own narrative reflection, as a transdisciplinary analysis and synthesis of dual literature reviews it provides a foundation that might contribute to further research on art education across a broad spectrum of learning contexts. Similarly, I stress that this research cannot be understood as a complete portrait of the concepts I explore, or a final interpretation and reflection on those concepts. Reiterating one conception of this research, it begins, and enters, conversations.

References


36


Chapter 2: Pedagogies of Visual Culture in Art Education

The study of visual culture asks that we accept the status of seeing and being seen... it suggests that “merely” seeing is not the same as seeing and understanding.

K. D. Vinson and E. W. Ross, Image and Education: Teaching in the Face of the New Disciplinarity

In the previous chapter I explained the conception of this research as the intersection of ideas and concerns. In this chapter, I describe, analyze and critique how authors understand pedagogies of visual culture in art education. From the beginning, it is important to note that visual culture is not a phenomenon or word specific only to contexts of art education—instead it is a field of study informed by and found in various disciplines (Duncum, 2001a, 2002; Freedman, 2003; Freedman and Stuhr, 2008; Mirzoeff, 1999; Tavin, 2003; Vinson and Ross, 2003; Chaplin and Walker, 1997).

Nevertheless, this research primarily focuses upon the arena of art education and how visual culture might manifest in or as art education. It is also important to note that visual culture in the context of art education manifests as an amorphous concept, often referring to the study of seeing (visuality) and of seen cultural phenomena-- outside and inside of the realm of institutionally validated artworks—a study which is guided by socially concerned pedagogical aims and often including the production of visual culture by students themselves (Boughton et. al, 2002; Duncum, 2001a, 2002, 2009; Freedman, 2003; Freedman and Stuhr, 2004; Tavin, 2003). Duncum (2002) specifies that “visual
“culture” is significant for art education because of three main concerns—“a greatly expanded but not all inclusive range of imagery; visuality; and the social contexts of imagery” (p. 19).

As in the chapter before, the “intersection,” is a useful metaphor, because as I will demonstrate, pedagogies of visual culture in art education are arguably results of conceptual intersections. Some of these intersections are, for example, the synthesis of thought from various disciplinary arenas, the collision and reiteration of older ideas with current thought, the hybridization of art education’s various perceived identities with educational/societal roles and responsibilities, among many others. In this review I locate significant concepts that undergird and frame pedagogies of visual culture within art education and synthesize these ideas to concretize one foundation of this entire research project. These numerous intersections are hard to pinpoint, for they occur at different points across the theoretical map of art education.

Consideration of language provides a significant starting point. How does “visual culture” manifest in research as an art education phenomenon? Efland (2005) describes it as a “new movement,” Duncum (2002) understands it as a “development,” while Freedman and Stuhr name it a “transformation” (2008). Tavin (2005) recognizes it to be a “recent shift.” Their use of various similar, but semantically different, signifiers highlights a strain of voice in art education research that recognizes, describes and sometimes advocates dramatic ongoing changes within the discipline.
This change in theory and practice, however, was not delivered via an outlined mandate, and is currently amorphous. Duncum (2006) suggests “Visual culture means quite different things to different art educators” (p. ix), and Carpenter (2005), underscores this fact, explaining, “visual culture may in fact not have a distinct definition” (p.4). Duncum (2009) states, “visual culture has become just about anything educators want it to mean” (p. 64).

Understandably, many art educators feel an urgent need to understand this change even as they practice, and sometimes advocate, it. What does “visual culture” designate? Tavin (2003) analyzes use of the term “visual culture” throughout literature and provides a rational categorization. Tavin (2003) recognizes three distinct currents throughout interrelated understandings of “visual culture:” “phenomological,” or referential to the present-day state in which humans significantly understand their lives through images; “substantial,” which refers to the countless phenomena a heading of visual culture might subsume; and “pedagogical,” which signifies the diverse research and practices across disciplines emphasizing the study of visual phenomena and their effects on human lives (pp. 201-202). These three categories usefully categorize how researchers understand visual culture.

Tavin (2003) explains “visual culture… is defined at any given moment through its construction and context within specific discursive spaces” (p. 201). To more sharply focus this review, then, there is the need to specify what “visual culture” means in art.
education research. Currently, there is a discordant and uneven consensus on how to even signify visual culture in art education research. The numerous ways art educators refer to the concept of visual culture in art education research reflects how frustrating attempts to designate a specific entity can be. Ballengee-Morris and Stuhr (2001) use “visual cultural art education.” Duncum (2009) and Freedman and Stuhr (2004) use “visual culture in art education.” Duncum also uses “visual culture art education” or “VCAE,” purposely designing it through semantics as a dissimilar entity from one of its preceding projects, “DBAE” (2002a, 2002b). An NAEA advisory delineates between the two, recognizing “art education and visual culture” (Boughton et. al, 2002). These descriptors all embody different connotations, symbolically and realistically reflecting the fact that visual culture in art education is a work in progress.

Obviously, in a literature review on “visual culture,” it is necessary to reflect on the term’s “construction,” and those “specific discursive spaces” it inhabits. This reflection is necessary for both the reviewed literature, as well as the research itself. The signifier “visual culture,” as I use it, refers to what Tavin (2003) names the “substantial,” and that Freedman and Stuhr (2004) specify as “the totality of humanly designed images and artifacts that shape our existence” (p.816). In other words, the boundless plethora of objects seen (visual) by humans (culture). For the purposes of this distinct research, I use the term visual culture art education (VCAE, after Duncum, 2002) as a blanket term to refer to education about visual culture, and pedagogies concerned with visual culture,
occurring within the context of art education. When I refer to what Tavin names “phenomological,” it will be obvious through use.

The continuance of this chapter seeks to reflect significant patterns of thought concerning VCAE, critique previous VCAE research and commentary, and build upon this knowledge. Being especially concerned with pedagogy, this chapter asks four main questions—Why teach VCAE? What is VCAE? What to teach and study in VCAE? How to teach VCAE?

Therefore, first the rationale behind VCAE is explored, linking VCAE to the wider social existence of learners and the perceived pedagogical responsibilities this creates (Why). Secondly, attempts by art educators to understand VCAE are described; these include historical and cross-disciplinary comparisons, as well as contrasts and hybridizations. Next, a primary issue within VCAE is explored; with the endless amount of phenomena constituting visual culture what should or could be studied? To conclude this chapter, the fourth section briefly explores various learning and teaching projects subsumed under a heading of VCAE (How). As in the chapter before, I hope to illuminate this research with narrative reflection on my experience in specific contexts of art education.

Why Visual Culture?: Background of the Issue

Stankiewicz (2004) suggests four possible reactions to VCAE: it “threatens the essence of true art education;” it is something many art educators have been doing for a
very long time; it’s just not going to affect the discipline; or it will bear significant repercussions (p.7). Proponents take the second and fourth stances, and this literature review does suggest that VCAE offers the chance to recreate and/or reconsider art education in beneficial ways. Nevertheless, there are, of course, important and justifiable points to arguments against VCAE. A number of interrelated and overlapping concerns scaffold the conception(s) and drive the rationale behind VCAE. At the root of these concerns is what Duncum (2002) terms as “the recognition that today, more than any other time in history, we are living our lives through visual imagery” (p. 15). Pedagogical goals stem from this recognition; the identity of art education is reconsidered and reconceived as art educators decide what sort of pedagogy this “time in history” demands.

Due to major recent developments in media of technology and availability (i.e. the Internet), learners-- at least those in “postindustrial democratic societies” (Freedman, 2003, p. 4)-- exist in a world of endlessly available and prolific images (Freedman and Stuhr, 2004). This proliferation offers a seemingly endless array of texts that learners utilize to understand, navigate, mediate and define their worlds and identities (Boughton et. al, 2002; Duncum, 2001, 2002, 2009; Freedman, 2003; Freedman and Stuhr, 2004; Tavin, 2003). This point signals the “phenomological” definition of visual culture which Tavin (2003) describes as “a description of the present-day condition in which experience, subjectivities, and consciousness are profoundly affected by images and the
practices of seeing, showing, and imagining” (p. 201). Present-day learners live in a visual culture. Therefore, the ways this learning occurs must be explicated and analyzed.

Technology, Everywhere

The pervasiveness of technology and how people use technology is a concern of VCAE. First of all, the experience of technology is intertwined with cultural experience (Freedman, 2003). Moreover, Postman (1992) asserts that new forms of technology actually change how learners think; therefore art educators must consider how technology affects the construction of knowledge. Freedman (2003) states, “The scope of student artistic production at all ages reveals broad interest in and increasing knowledge of technological media” (p. 138). Freedman and Stuhr (2004) similarly explain, “visual technologies allow people to create, copy, project, manipulate, erase and duplicate images with an ease and speed that challenges distinctions of talent, technique and the conceptual location of form” (p. 818). Thus VCAE, while concerned with “visual culture” in a “substantial” and “phenomological” sense, also aligns with media literacy education (Ross and Vinson, 2003). The relation of VCAE to media literacy education will be explored further in this research.
The Postmodern Condition

Authors consider how images affect viewers, and how images are, in turn, affected by viewers. Some authors (e.g. Duncum, 2001a, 2002; Freedman 2003) cite Jameson to describe the postmodern condition of “a way of life lived through image” (Duncum, 2002, p. 19). Jameson (1988) suggests that images are so widely available and consumed, that they are fundamental as understandings, for instance of politics, culture and identity, are constructed by viewers. Further explicating this “postmodern condition,” authors (e.g. Duncum, 2002; Freedman, 2003) cite Baudrillard to further understand current culture. Baudrillard (1981) put forth the idea of “simulacra,” to describe how the depthless character of images, such as in advertising, bears no connection to reality at all through its continual dispersal of meaning. This phrase especially suggests visual cultural phenomena such as themed restaurants or theme parks.

The construction of identity in a postmodern culture is also a paramount concern. Macey (2000) explains Baudrillard recognized that images are paramount in constructing identity through their signification of the owner’s social status. Consider, for example, the especially visual prevalence of cell-phones. Social status is presented through cell phone use; through the visible use of a technologically up-to-date phone one represents his or her self as holding various forms of power or cultural capital. Cultural capital, for instance, might include the ability to financially secure expensive products, proof that one has technological literacy, a near-continual tie to social networks, and a visible effort to
stay connected to current events. Related to this idea, authors (Freedman, 2003; jagodzinski, 2004) also cite Lacan who asserted learners create conceptions of self through the act of symbolically representing themselves; the act of “symbolically representing” is intertwined with visual representation. “Individuals appropriate characteristics of visual representations… as a description of himself/herself” (Freedman, 2003, p.2). For example, I understand myself as masculine because certain characteristics—I sometimes have a beard, I do not wear dresses-- correspond to culturally constructed representations of “masculinity.” For these reasons-- that learners are continually exposed to and utilize images in certain ways-- the study of visual culture in art education necessitates specific theoretical frameworks.

Images and Agency

Similarly, because images are devices learners use to understand reality and identity, art educators are concerned with the sort of reactions images produce. Because, as Boughton et. al. (2002) suggest, visual culture “contributes to the construction of knowledge, identity, beliefs, imagination, sense of time and place, feelings of agency, and the quality of life at all ages,” visual culture can lead viewer/learners to action or inaction. Indeed, images may lead viewers to act in certain ways that are “antithetical to their natures” (Freedman, 2003, p. 3). The repercussions of this may be considered on multiple levels.
First, authors recognize that visual culture is a primary way that social relationships are understood and maintained. Issues of power are significant. Vinson and Ross (2003) use two theories to explicate the visual nature of social control-- first, “surveillance,” as theorized by Foucault, describes a condition in which the learner understands himself or herself as continually viewed and therefore disciplined through sight, and second, through the idea of “spectacle,” as theorized by Debord, which describes a condition in which images maintain hegemony through “isolating and fragmenting, denying history, distorting reality, alienating, and monopolizing communication” (p. 49). Thus, because the reception of images, creation of images and the ways we see ourselves through images constitute and represent relations of power in our culture, VCAE is concerned with these issues of power.

VCAE accepts that visual culture educates viewers to construct understandings of reality (Boughton et. al, 2002; Duncum, 2001a, 2002, 2009; Freedman, 2003; Freedman and Stuhr, 2004). For this reason, VCAE becomes a vehicle for art educators to understand a variety of concerns about representation. The ways visual culture influence thoughts about place, history, ethnicity, and identity are especially significant. Focused and notable examples using a lens of visual culture and/or VCAE include, but are not limited to environment (Hicks and King, 2007), tourism and native cultures (Ballengee-Morris, 2002a, 2002b), American Indian representation (Delacruz, 2003; Stuhr, 2004), tattoos (Blair, 2007), cosmetic surgery (Blair and Shalmon, 2005), kitsch (Blandy and
Congdon, 2005), slide projection (Eisenhauer, 2006b), gender (Freedman, 1994; Sweeny, 2008), representations of institutionally valued art through popular culture (Freedman, 1997, 2003), home decor (Grauer, 2002; Lackey, 2005), racism (Parks, 2004), natural history (Marshall, 2004) and children’s drawings (Wilson, 1974, 2005). These examples represent a brief list; by accepting art research as visual culture research the possible examples increase exponentially. Accepting research in media literacy or cultural studies as possible sites of VCAE, the number exponentially increases once more. VCAE accepts that representation influences understandings of self and reality, thus it functions as a lens for research on many possible forms of art education.

VCAE proponents maintain that images are sites of struggle. Tavin (2000) explains that images are sites of “differentiated politics and multiple ideological positions” (p. 198). I especially remember an example found by one of my students that illustrates this concept; it was an Abercrombie and Fitch clothing advertisement. The minimalist advertisement featured two nude athletic men. On one hand the image presented a stereotypical representation of an ideal white male body type, and symbolically stood for a signifier of social status (brand-name clothing, though the clothing was paradoxically absent from the image). On the other hand, it presented a chance for multiple, fluid, readings of sexuality.

Finally, educators recognize that the consumption of visual culture, especially popular culture, offers joy or a therapeutic value (Freedman, 2003). Buckingham (2003)
describes the consumption and production of popular culture in terms of play—the “nonrational, the bodily and the erotic” (p. 311). This sense of play—with fluidic identities, representations with multiple meanings, shifting understandings of reality—once more bring visual culture, and thus VCAE into alignment with the “postmodern condition.”

Critical Citizenship, Critical Consumerism

Given that visual culture offers endless choices to represent one’s self and reality, VCAE advocates consider responsible decision making, or critical thought, as a pedagogical aim (Boughton et. al, 2002). Freedman’s (2003) states “What is important from the perspective of teaching visual culture is that students develop enough knowledge to make intelligent decisions about the visual culture they make and see and the ways in which visual culture will influence them” (p. 99).

A foundation of visual culture studies, and therefore VCAE, is the effort to build critical decision making skills in students. Tavin (2001) explicates the relationship between student decisions, pedagogy and visual culture in terms of critical citizenship, or the ability to critically examine visual culture in terms of its effect on society. Rhoads and Carducci (2005) explicate critical citizenship—“a form of citizenship that empowers each individual’s identity and advances democracy and the pursuit of social justice” as a goal of media literacy (p. 3). Informed understandings and critical examinations of visual
culture can promote a deeper political and social consciousness. Hausman and Tavin (2004) apply this argument to globalization, arguing that students exist in a global community that demands a level of critical consciousness.

Art educators assert that visual culture plays a strong role in identity formation (Boughton et al., 2002; Freedman, 2003; Freedman and Stuhr, 2004; Tavin, 2001). Buckingham (2003) problematizes the idea of “critical consumerism” with the practice of media education under a postmodern paradigm. The author explains that learner/viewers ultimately make choices to represent themselves through their consumption of popular, and often visual, culture—however the fact that these choices align with postmodern conceptions of parody and play must be taken into account. I wonder, what does it say about my students and myself, when we watch a popular television show that presents very problematic representations of gender, sexuality, disabilities and ethnicity, but does so in a self-referential manner? If we laugh at these representations does a level of self-awareness justify our actions? These are difficult questions. VCAE, because of its interest in representation, power, and identity is inherently concerned with implementations of critical consciousness, in consumption and citizenship.

Democratic Classrooms and Curriculum

When I accepted my first graduate teaching assistant position I decided I wanted my classroom and my curriculum to be aimed at democratic relations. Of course, an
ultimately democratic curriculum or classroom is impossible to attain-- because power relations are continually contested and redefined as contexts (of assignments or learner identities, for instance) are endlessly variable. Nevertheless, understanding my practice as VCAE cemented my pedagogical desire on at least two levels. Tavin (2003) explains, “by focusing upon certain ‘art’ objects and authorizing what counts as legitimate culture, art educators help subjugate students’ experiences with everyday life” (p. 197). Therefore, I would give students a chance to challenge the power I was assumed to hold as instructor. I made an effort to often let my students bring in visual culture objects for study that were more relevant to their lives than those examples I might have brought.

By expanding the rubric of visual culture beyond a historical canon of masterpieces or and institutionalized contemporary art, I also made an effort to unsettle the distinction between “fine art” and “popular culture,” or “high” and “low” culture. Tavin (2003) explains, “by inculcating students to existing cultural hierarchies, the canon of high art is maintained as unproblematic” (p. 197). Hidden assumptions about value based on social status and economic and/or cultural collateral are replicated through the continued re-presentation of “great works of art.” Since it accepts traditional views of art are problematic (Tavin, 2003), VCAE is one way art educators can conceive a more democratic pedagogy.
What is “Art,” Really?

Critics of VCAE often argue that its practice “threatens the essence of art education” (Stankiewicz, 2004, p. 7). VCAE unsettles judgments about artistic value or quality. Judgments about artistic quality are normally founded in values ultimately related to the maintenance or signification socio-economic status—in other words, specific cultural forms are designated as holding higher worth by social classes who associate their higher socioeconomic status with the consumption or ownership of those specific cultural forms (Freedman, 2003; Tavin, 2003). The institutions that construct the art world—critical publications, educational training, museums, galleries, scholarly publication (even in art education)—construct perceived values in opposition to other arenas of cultural consumptions. VCAE does not eliminate this, but it can provide a greater reflexivity and more prevalent criticism of the ways that art educators present values of art, art-knowledge, and even the practices of VCAE.

As a side note, this is one notable lack I find throughout my literature review, but one that I feel VCAE research, because of its inherent concerns of representation and power, might easily (reflexively) acknowledge and critique. As a graduate student, and a product of certain strains of scholarly influences-- writers engaging issues of representation, democracy, multiculturalism, postmodernism, etc.-- I self-consciously value the approaches that align with VCAE.. I wonder therefore, if research that advocates VCAE without deep self-reflexive critique continues to problematically edify
conceptual oppositions (i.e. theory-based college-level inquiry versus K-12 requirements, or art-historical and studio training versus significant background in critical theory). Of course, there would be no simple answer to this question, but this is an issue I hope to see thoroughly examined in future research.

Slippage between visual culture and the visual arts is one more reason to adopt a practice VCAE. To begin with, visual culture, especially popular culture, is often the product of people trained in the visual arts and design, therefore art educators might have a significant role in understanding and teaching visual culture (Boughton et. al, 2002; Freedman and Stuhr, 2004). Secondly, though a problematic view, any canonical art history reveals a cycle of fine art reconceptualized by avant-garde artists through appropriations drawn from popular culture or mass media—the examples are readily available, for instance the silkscreen prints of Andy Warhol, the comic strip appropriations of Lichtenstein, the interest of Van Gogh in widespread Japanese prints. (Mamiya et. al. 2001). It must be noted that any argument advocating VCAE in this way is problematic. Tavin (2003) suggests to relate the study of visual popular culture in these terms only emphasizes the value implied to the canon, because popular culture is used as a conceptual doorway to understanding great works of art.

In conclusion, because of the conditions in which learners exist, art educators realize they have deep questions to answer about their pedagogical desires to conceive appropriate and meaningful forms of VCAE. Contexts they must respond to include:
leaners’ undeniable immersion in technology; postmodern conditions in contemporary life; teaching in and for a democracy; forms of critical consciousness; and the problematic nature of art and its institutions.

Stankiewicz (2004) presents an important point to conclude this consideration of VCAE as an answer to contemporary learner/viewers’ contexts—VCAE must be adapted to a set of national and state education standards. VCAE can be conceived as an answer to any number of needs that contemporary learners have, but as a field of practice it is one more form of art education that must be legitimized by practitioners to those outside institutions and decision-makers that will determine its survival beyond scholarly publications and college-level practice.

Questioning Intents

Of course, these reasons advocates of VCAE put forth are rooted in deep pedagogical concerns that question the nature of not only art education, but also of art and education. Thus, some art educators discourage the adoption of VCAE with sometimes arguably valid, sometimes reactionary, points. Smith (2003) asserts first, that VCAE is highly dependent on theory and while appropriate for college professors dependent on publishing for tenure, is nevertheless unsuitable for the majority of classroom practitioners (p. 26). A significant amount of research written about K-12 VCAE practice is existent (e.g. Duncum, 2006; Smith-Shank, 2004).
A number of arguments are reliant on assumptions of artistic value. Stinespring (2001) is concerned that a focus on postmodernism and politics discourages a focus on quality in artwork, and that studio time will suffer in the name of greater discussion time. Moore (2004) asserts consideration of everyday phenomena is worthy, however expresses concern over disregarding great works of art. Richardson (2004) repeats all these concerns.

As a response, it is necessary to remind critics that VCAE does not negate the study of “great works of art;” in no literature reviewed did I see an outright call to eliminate all talk about artworks. Instead, the approaches to social and cultural understandings can apply to art, just as the heading “visual culture” subsumes all example of visual art. Moreover, as many authors (Boughton et. al, 2002; Duncum, 2001a, 2002; Freedman, 2003; Freedman and Stuhr, 2004) demonstrate, VCAE does not negate a focus on artistic production.

Duncum (2002) suggests that visual culture might attract different types of educators than art practice does, because those educators in the arts might defensively conceive their identities as marginal or opposed to the widespread representations and interest in popular culture. Though this research does not produce any judgments about the identity of art educators, some concern on the part of art educators not aligned with VCAE is understandable. First, less attention to proficient technique in students’ artwork might in turn cause audiences to question an instructor’s artistic skill, or teaching
methods. Secondly, it is important to remember that any acquisition of art-knowledge may be understood as an assertion of power. Art-knowledge is just as much a signifier of social status and economic power as is art ownership. I remind my students to be reflective about this; the fact that they made the choice to be in an art education class is a choice to signify they have the power to engage in a conversation available to a limited audience. They can understand, then relay, information with a perceived cultural capital.

Some art educators illustrate VCAE as a self-reflective project. Eisenhauer (2006a) explains that literature about VCAE often draws upon a “language of bombardment,” that suggests, for example, that students live in a barrage of images and “media messages” (p. 156). This suggests a representation, purposefully or not, that represents viewers as “passive subjects” (p. 157). This presents a problematic view of students, or watchers, as learners and active agents (Eisenhauer, 2006a). This reiterates that art educators must assert a level of metacognition; we should think about how our teaching methods might represent unbalanced perceptions or values.

Visual Culture Art Education: A Family Tree

As I have demonstrated, “visual culture” is an amorphous field. Given the difficulty of portraiture, authors have analytically explicated research from a variety of angles, through a variety of lenses, to understand and theorize the field in the context of art education. Doing so, a number of contextually based conceptions of VCAE have been
argued. Patterns—chronological and comparative, for instance—render VCAE a more solid foundation for future research and practice. Therefore, to understand these “portraits,” I specify how art educators locate visual culture, or VCAE, within their research and wider discourse. In other words, this process locates within previous acts of locating. Each location, to me as a researcher, has born the metaphorical qualities of relationships, thus the references that serve as headings also serve as major categories of discernable patterns.

Crossed Branches in the Family Tree

Visual culture is a trans, cross, inter and multidisciplinary pedagogical project. So, to explicate VCAE as a field, educators often outline some of the many influences contributing to visual culture as a pedagogical project. Tavin (2003) writes, “Visual culture, as a transdisciplinary practice, does not negate or discount all disciplinary areas of inquiry—it merely refuses to remain confined to restricted parameters defined by experts in a given field” (p. 208). Therefore, research or practice within VCAE might subsume, be influenced by, or even silently (or not so silently) resemble a number of disciplinary fields. Walker and Chaplin (1997) offer a list of fields undercutting, crossing over, and/or influencing visual culture (visual culture studies):

Aesthetics, Anthropology, Archaeology, Architectural History/Theory, Art Criticism, Art History, Black Studies, Critical Theory, Cultural Studies, Deconstruction, Design History, Feminism, Film Studies/Theory, Heritage
Stankiewicz (2004) suggests there are preferred “stepping-stones:” “art-history, cultural studies, literary theory, critical theory and sometimes sociology and anthropology” (p. 6). Authors (Freedman, 2003; Tavin, 2003) recognize art history to be a primary site of visual culture’s inception. In fact, Castaneda (2009) refers to visual culture studies as “a bastard child of art history” (p. 42). Like the stereotypical image of the “bastard child,” Castaneda (2009) argues art history created visual culture, yet failed to properly theorize and practice the field, leaving it available to the humanities.

At least one art educator questions the value of prolific borrowing between disciplines. Bauerlein (2004) warns that VCAE might be an inherently weak movement, since it liberally borrows from countless disciplines, without, the author suggests, enough reflection. This is a possibility, but it is also important to note scholarly inquiry demands experimentation, and possible failures will likely be found in any argument through critical analysis.

A specific field intersecting with visual culture studies is semiotics. Semiotics, is essentially the “study of signs and symbols in culture” (Smith-Shank, 2004). Therefore, it is unsurprising that it functions both alongside visual culture studies as a disciplinary
field, and as a complementary tool of inquiry within visual culture studies. Specific ways this occurs are explored later in this chapter.

Ancestors

Art educators who advocate VCAE often situate the current conversation historically by aligning their position with the arguments of earlier art educators. In this sense, several art educators may be thought of as predecessors contributing, in the past, to the current development of VCAE. Despite the fact that all art education of the past might be said to deal with visual culture in the “substantial” sense, there is, nevertheless, a particular social concern inherent in VCAE that aligns with specific earlier arguments.

Chalmers (2005) focuses on the 1960s, affirming the contributions of Vincent Lanier, Corita Kent and June King McFee. Chalmers (2005) suggests their contributions may have been disregarded during the time because the majority of those educating were products of ‘40s and ‘50s; since the majority of those presently teaching were trained in later decades (1960s) our current period (2010) may offer the chance to more greatly change the future of our profession (p. 6). Chalmers (2005) also cites earlier twentieth century antecedents, a significant one being John Cotton Dana and members of the Fine and Industrial Arts Department at Teachers College (p.7). While they are not unproblematic, the contributions of John Cotton Dana especially connect to art education
via the field of museum education; he argued that exemplars of common useful objects, like pottery, should be exhibited in the museum (Grove, 1978).

Tavin (2005) examines the work of Lanier, McFee, Laura Chapman, and Brent and Marjory Wilson, four art educators who advocated the study of popular culture images in art education. The contributions of these educators in terms of VCAE are: Lanier, specifically for aligning the study of popular culture with progressive social change; McFee for a utilizing similar social impetus but with a markedly different approach to aesthetic value; Chapman for underlining the link between critical citizenship and popular culture; and Brent and Marjory Wilson for challenging then-current understandings of children’s drawings and drawing (Tavin, 2005).

And, contributions of other art educators must undoubtedly be seen within the context of VCAE. Stout (2002) describes the social engagement and the compelling desire for social change that characterized the careers of a number of art educators during the ‘60s. Adopting a similar stance, Barrett (1977) argued art educators must understand their roles in terms of popular culture, specifically that of television images and narratives. Additionally, Barrett’s research on photography in art education (1974), must similarly be understood (and, I argue, reconsidered in terms of new media), as contributing to the development of VCAE.

More recently in the past, advocates of a similar movement designated “visual literacy,” sought to conceive art education in similar ways (Boughton, 1986). Though
similar to VCAE for adopting an inclusive and boundless range of imagery for study, there was little emphasis on contextual cultural or social critique (Boughton, 1986). Duncum (2003) recognizes this project as a stepping-stone towards the wider discourse of VCAE.

Of course, all art education is a social enterprise occurring in cultural contexts, often examining phenomena beyond the institutionalized art world, and in that sense an author could cite any number of “predecessors” to VCAE. However, it is important to remember that a certain strain of social critique accompanies VCAE that differentiates it from many preceding conceptions of art education.

Family Resemblances

Conceptions of pedagogy outside the field of art education exhibit similar characteristics of VCAE. Among these are projects of media education and popular cultural studies. Both these fields (and pedagogical projects that could arguably be understood as such) bear concepts that intersect and overlap with VCAE. In fact, these conceptions of education might arguably be said to constitute VCAE, save for their labels. Like advocates of VCAE, educators across various fields argue a pedagogical response to current life-conditions is necessary.

Media education is a pedagogical project resembling VCAE. Boler (2007) offers a definition of media education in terms of literacy that illustrates the overlapping space of
pedagogical intent in which “media education” and “VCAE” might reside. Boler (2007) defines “media literacy,” the ability to analyze production, language, audience, and representation within the economic, social and historical context in which images are produced and read,” as the goal of media education. Just as literacy is not merely about reading but also about writing, so ideally media literacy involves the active production of media texts.” (p. 89). Echoing Tavin’s (2005) recognition of how educators perceive popular culture within VCAE, Boler (2007) describes advocates adopting “protectionist” and “critical engagement” stances; educators might see media texts as harmful to students, or they might also recognize these texts as sites for producing meaningful discussions of significant social issues (p. 91).

Similarly, pedagogical projects rooted in the study of popular culture overlap and align with VCAE. A wide spectrum of literature exists under this amorphous heading. As one example, Giroux (1994) asserts the need for popular culture study to intersect with critical pedagogy. As another, Dolby (2003) aligns the study of popular culture with democratic practice. Predating the debates about visual culture, Duncum (1987) argued for a “sympathetic view of popular culture” within art education coupled with a “critical consciousness” (p. 6). Overall, VCAE operates in debt to these amorphous movements as well as in alignment with their intent and rationale.
Fraternal Twins

Though historical precedents--- have been recognized, a number of more recent calls in the field of art education overlap and echo VCAE’s urge to rethink, and perhaps redefine, art education in terms of contemporary contexts. As in VCAE, no strict prescription is recommended. And, of course, the ideas in these articles often cite articles directly aligned with VCAE or are, in turn, cited in VCAE research.

As one example, Duncum (1997) calls for an “art education for new times” (p. 69). Arguing for a transformation of art education, Duncum (1997) cites multiple reasons echoed in VCAE advocacy—“crossover between high and popular cultural forms,” “new technologies,” and “a proliferation of mass media images” (p. 69).

Once more articulating a perceived need for revitalizing art education, Duncum (1999) calls for art educators to more often, and more critically, utilize “everyday aesthetic experiences” as phenomena to study. Citing examples such as “shopping malls,” “advertising,” and the “internet,” Duncum (1999) explains that everyday experiences with images have a more profound affect on learner’s understandings of self and life than do fine arts, and this affect will increase.

Arguing against a language of visual culture, Blandy and Bolin (2002) suggest art education instead adopt a language of “material culture.” Blandy and Bolin (2002) argue that material culture studies is more deeply committed to the study of the everyday, avoids the categorical problems VCAE creates by signifying its domain as “visual,” and
allows equal focus on other modes of sensory experience. Other reasons Blandy and Bolin (2002) cite are likewise found in VCAE research; recognition of earlier socially-minded art educators, multi/trans/interdisciplinary thought and the boundless domain of phenomena.

On one hand, the argument is compelling. VCAE highly resembles popular culture studies and media education in much of its research and practice (Boughton et. al, 2002). Given what might seem like a focus on current media and popular culture, what might be missed? Blandy and Bolin (2002) suggest that a language of material culture more adequately allows art educators to investigate and critique other cultural forms not prevalent as popular visual culture-- folk art, for instance.

Nevertheless, Blandy and Bolin (2002) articulate problems that have either not gone unnoticed or are redundant. Duncum (2004) highlights the inherent problem of VCAE, titling his research article “Visual Culture Isn’t Just Visual,” and calls for a greater focus on multimodality—other sensory understandings, in other words. And though the language of material culture might offer one more language to understand cultural forms that might be overlooked, the implementation of such a curriculum would just as similarly require a decision on value; the art educator would still have to choose what material culture is relevant to the lives of his or her students, and relevant to his or her teaching contexts. Furthermore, as Duncum (2003) explains, VCAE is a paradigm
overlapping and influenced by material culture studies; it already bears those concerns which Blandy and Bolin articulate.

As a fourth example of research that articulates the need for art education transformation and possible shortcomings of VCAE, Chapman (2003) articulates other possibilities and concerns. Chapman (2003) articulates a conception of art education termed “study of the mass arts,” defining the “mass arts” as those forms of culture that pervade current living. Chapman (2003) also cites the inherent problem of labeling the domain exclusively “visual.” Chapman’s (2003) argument is especially persuasive because the author recognizes that the mass arts are highly reliant on skill and training in artistic production—a field that many art educators might be better-trained to navigate, than a field like critical theory, for instance.

Analyzing these “fraternal twins” to VCAE, a number of facts become strikingly clear. Art educators are dynamically striving to meet the challenges of contemporary life, but still recognize that VCAE is not perfect. Therefore, other conceptions must be created, worked and re-worked. Given that art education is a response to ever-changing times and situations, no conception will ever be perfect. Nevertheless, rigorous critique of the phenomena deemed worthy of study, as well as the influences of other disciplines, prove to be significant factors shaping conceptions of art education.
What to Study in VCAE? The Substantial Question

Authors answer this question in two ways. First, by accounting for the boundless register of phenomena that might be studied in VCAE. Secondly, authors are concerned with the ways of seeing that lead learners to construct knowledge about and through visual culture.

The boundless register of images is both problematic and inspiring. The question is a matter of what to include, and what to ignore—a choice of the educator. To answer this question, art educators either cite a long list of possible items for study—drawing attention to the indefinable quality of VCAE, or they relate instances of study focused on the study of specific items. In the former case, art educators explicate the possible objects of study in grocery-list mode. Duncum (2002) for example, states, “television, the Internet, video games, theme park rides, and so on” (p. 15). Barrett (2006) adds to the list, “parks and gardens, shopping malls, Disneyland, professional wrestling, maps, kitsch, music videos, fashion, computer-mediated imagery” as examples (p. 23). In my own experience, students have found worthwhile examples from a variety of visual culture sources, that might not have been previously possible under a scope of exclusively “fine arts.” I remember, for example, one student-athlete examining his National College Athletic Association ring, the ubiquitous cover art of numerous Harry Potter editions, formally intricate and socially provocative local graffiti, and website images of fan-art relying on the appropriation of images and narratives from popular films.
Conversely, art educators tighten the focus of study on specific visual cultural forms. Examples abound, and some have previously been exampled. As further examples, art educators illustrate how specific forms, media and sites of visual culture are significant to art education. Delacruz (2003) urges art educators to explore and examine the problematic nature of sports-team mascots depicting American Indians. Ballengee-Morris (2002) discusses images drawn from the tourist industry. Tavin and Anderson (2003) examine the problematic nature of Disney films. A number of art educators (Williams, 2008) are interested in the storytelling capabilities graphic novels and comic books, using their study and format to approach a range of social issues. To analyze gender, for example, Freedman (1994) utilizes advertisements.

I have considered the benefits and drawbacks of adopting a paradigm of visual culture in my own classroom, especially when it comes to the “substantial” question (What to study?). These concerns especially crystallized during presentations of a final project, in which students crafted, via research paper and Powerpoint, a pretend museum exhibition exploring a social issue. Examples were, of course, bound by the contexts of assignment and time, and I simultaneously lauded and questioned the outcomes. Some insights seemed pronounced. The broad register allowed students to seek out and construct thematic unities throughout a variety of cultural texts. Similarly, intertextuality became conceptually tangible as various cultural texts were compared, contrasted and simply brought into contact with one another. I questioned the value of these insights,
however, and wondered if the register of visual culture seemed no more than a ploy to engage my students. Similarly, though they all tackled social issues, I felt in many cases that demonstrating the ability to link together objects from a widened register of possibilities only offered a chance for students to “gloss” over their chosen topics with less research and critical insight. I wondered if the grab-bag quality of the assignment was flip, and prohibited real, in-depth social inquiries. Removing my thoughts from the haunting extremes of ego and self-doubt, I realize that it was neither complete failure or success.

Acts of Looking, Viewing, Gazing

The ways that visuality informs the construction of knowledge represents another conception of “what to study” in VCAE. How we look and why we look are pertinent issues in a reality arguably understood and represented through images. Beyond the biological constraints, acts of looking are understood to be socially formed—thus the meanings that are created are cultural constructs and must be investigated as such. Thus, a number of authors discuss ways of looking. Examples are both inside and outside the realm of art education research. Mulvey (1999) defines a “male gaze” in cinema—the assumed preference of a male audience is evidenced in choices that suggest a male subjectivity, and therefore conceive of power (the power of looking) as culturally constructed as masculine. The idea of “the gaze,” has been reconceptualized to
investigate power in a number of different contexts. There are for example, the “colonial gaze” (Pratt, 1992), the “tourist gaze” (Urry, 1990), the “gay gaze” (Pranger, 1990), in which the gay viewer is sensitive to codes that act as clues to an object’s sexual preference, and the “oppositional gaze” (hooks, 1992), in which active looking is a subversive project of political agency. Interested in investigating the connection between looking and power in art education, a number of art educators utilize “the gaze” as a fruitful project. Darts et. al. (2008) utilize the “actuarial gaze” to explore the context in which viewers actively gaze to search for danger in a post-9/11 context. Eisenhauer (2006b) illustrates the “scientific gaze.” Nadaner (1981) describes a “filmic gaze” and suggests it influences the way students create representations. Arguably VCAE, as a socially concerned pedagogical project, must account for the ways of seeing that viewers consciously and unconsciously rely upon to make social meanings.

As a sidebar, the way knowledge is constructed through information as it is visually gathered has been significant to some art educators researching VCAE. Kindler (2003) links the study of visual culture to current research on brain activity, noting that the study of visual culture must be reconsidered with understandings of cognitive processes. Freedman (2003) explicates the matrix of emotions, experience and psychobiological contexts during the construction of knowledge in and of visual culture. Freedman (2003) further underscores this matrix by explicating the multiple
developmental levels that inform cognitive processes—social, experiential and psychological, for instance.

In summary, VCAE necessitates two distinct concerns. First, the educator must make a choice about what specific phenomena to study. Though this might seem an easy choice, in reality it is unlikely that any choice will be perfect. Additionally, the educator must realize that VCAE also demands an awareness of how visual culture is understood through culturally shaped ways of seeing. Therefore, what to study in VCAE are examples of visual culture, and how they are seen. The next section of this chapter briefly reviews examples of how VCAE has manifested in classroom practice and research about practice.

What to do? How to teach VCAE?

Authors offer a wide variety of examples of what has been done in sites of the art education. These practices are widely variable and offer varying focuses on artistic production and cultural study. As earlier stated, VCAE differentiates from previous conceptions of art education in that social critique is viewed as a necessary part of study. In a struggle to define a currently amorphous pedagogical project, art educators consider the various manifestations art education could assume as VCAE.
The Ghosts of Art Education Past

Van Camp (2004) worries that the benefits of previous research in art education might be lost under a shift to VCAE. A number of art educators reflect on the past curriculum construct of Discipline-based Art Education (DBAE) to conceive new practices within VCAE. Very simply put, DBAE, especially advocated by the Getty Center for the Arts, proposed a systematic art education during the ‘80s and ‘90s understood and practiced through four veins of art study—making art, criticizing art, art history and aesthetics (Dobbs, 2008). This systematic division of art study proved a helpful paradigm for many art educators to conceptualize their practice/curriculum as well as explain the field to outside audiences, such as policy-makers (Dobbs, 2008).

Whether directly attributed to the legacy of DBAE or not, a number of authors apply or align these four categories of art study with and within VCAE. In either case, they provide cogent headings to further categorize and understand VCAE.

The Great Aesthetics Debate

Aesthetics is a contested field of study in art education. Given that VCAE adopts a tightened focus on social issues, art educators both argue for and against the inclusion of “aesthetics.” Tavin (2007a) argues that “aesthetics” is a useless signifier, because the term is never fully defined in its context and art educators use the term to signify a variety of dissimilar concepts—stylistic formal characteristics, sensory experiences, or
undefinable viewing experiences linked to dialectical concepts of “high” and “low” culture. Efland (2004) argues that “aesthetics” is just as necessary because it is through the use of (defined) “aesthetics” that some key concepts of art education are explicated, such as sensory experiences. Tavin (2007b) labels “aesthetics” as an “objet a,” which is a Lacanian term used to signify a thing that is desired but never actually obtainable or definable, around which conceptions of identity are formed.

Ignoring the battle-zone, authors continue to align a study of aesthetics with VCAE. Carter (2008), for instance, adopts the term “volitional aesthetics” to describe an aesthetic that is actively constructed within the bounds of individual and society experience, while maintaining the connection to the art-world through the maintenance of DBAE’s conceptual delineations of practice. Duncum (2008) recognizes that aesthetics, when properly defined, is inseparable from discussions of ideology because the two work in tandem to educate viewers. Selig (2008) approaches aesthetics in terms of stylistic choice, prompting students to create works of art based on preferences of design, entertainment and personal identity.

In my own experience I have found what Tavin describes to be true—“aesthetic” is an amorphous term, and specific words, like formal style, sensory experience or jouissance, more clearly explicate art education research. Whether or not an educator chooses to include aesthetics in his or her curriculum is ultimately his or her own choice. However, the existence of this debate draws attention to one fact that I hope this research
underscores—a greater reflexivity concerning, discussion about, and metacognitive awareness of our discourse, right down to the specific words we use—is absolutely necessary.

Creativity and Critique Reconceptualized: Artistic Production within VCAE

Studio practice and artistic production are re-envisioned within VCAE. This occurs in two discernable ways. First, the approach to training is reconceptualized, often in opposition to formalist traditions. Elniski, Kushins and Tavin (2007) explain that college-level training in the visual arts normally relies upon foundational courses systematically based around the goal of mastering stylistic elements (two-dimensional design, for instance), an approach rooted in modernist (Bauhaus) approaches to artmaking. The authors (2007) note that such an approach is problematic, because it does not foster the critical insight that contemporary art-making necessitates. Finally, the authors (2007) describe a core course reconceptualized under headings of themes, rather than training in technique, noting that the approach is similar to Walker’s (2001) conception of “big ideas.”

Obviously, the legacy of formalist traditions is problematic. Nevertheless, I wonder how a reconceptualization of formalism might be fruitfully applied to VCAE. As my students have shown me, the formal elements, beyond their use to explicate the structure or operation of a visual artwork, also provide a framework for beginning to
unpack deep signifying practices that are culturally shaped. Consider, for instance, how color and medium embody cultural connotations. A deeper reflection on formalism might offer the chance to further reconceptualize practices within VCAE.

Freedman (2003) asserts that artistic production is a core practice in VCAE. Classroom lessons, often within K-12 curriculum, are reconceptualized in VCAE. There are many examples, enough to warrant two books with case examples of classroom practice, some of which include artistic production (Duncum, 2006; Smith-Shank, 2004) but notable research links the creation of student artwork to the investigation of social issues. This is reflected in much research. As one example, Anderson and Tavin (2003) link the deconstruction of the stereotypical representations in Disney films with student production of video covers and film posters that more accurately represented social issues. Briggs (2009) uses film as a lens to prompt student production of models based on characters, narratives and messages within the films. Significantly, it should be noted that two of the authors repeatedly cited in this research both assert studio work has a significant role in VCAE (Duncum, 2003; Freedman, 2003).

A significant facet of all classroom practice in VCAE is discussion. In an article dealing with visual culture representations of mental illness, Eisenhauer (2008) offers five recommendations for art educators—“critically engaging preconceptions, identifying missed opportunities, challenging language, contextualizing issues of representation, and understanding stigma” (p. 17). Though the author analyzes mental illness, these five
points can correspond to any discussion of representations. Similar to this approach, Anderson and Tavin (2003) prompt students to question the problematic nature of visual culture representations. Barrett (2003) bases classroom discussion on semiotic interpretation, explicating the denotations and connotations at play in examples of visual culture. Similarly, however, this approach leads to conversations about social issues (Barrett, 2003).

Art History, Once More With Feeling

The field of art history, as has been shown, is linked to visual culture studies, and therefore VCAE. As demonstrated, visual culture, as a field of study has been influenced by art history (Duncum, 2002; Tavin, 2003). Given that visual culture studies has been highly influenced by art history, and that art history has been recognized as an essential part of study in some conceptions of art education (like DBAE), it is unsurprising that art educators question and reconceive VCAE by reconsidering the role of art history.

This approach yields various outcomes. As one example, Ballengee-Morris and Taylor (2003) reflect on the historical conditions that led artists to create works of art as cultural critique (Pop Art), and draw corollaries between these artworks and contemporary examples of visual culture. Eisenhauer (2006b) notes that art history is in fact an academic practice based on visual culture reproductions—projector slides, Powerpoint slides, photographic reproductions-- thus visual culture yields critical insight
into art history. Heise (2004) wonders if visual culture has become canonized, and asserts that art education and visual culture study are complementary and similarly necessary. Finally, Trafi-Prats (2009) notes that many of the concepts or strategies utilized in critical art histories—autobiographical research, archival work, and narrative histories with global scope—overlap into visual culture and therefore might provide VCAE with a new critical depth.

Art Criticism: A Possible Tool of Visual Culture Inquiry

Finally, art criticism is a field that I have thus far found no consideration in any VCAE research. This is research I hope to write in the future. Art criticism, as a field of inquiry in art education is especially suited, I argue, in VCAE. This is because art criticism functions as a tool of critical inquiry. Various strands of criticism posit and direct questions about the nature of art (Barrett, 1994). Criticism often directly corresponds to issues of representation, questioning how reality, or truth might be depicted. For example, a critical heading of expressionism questions the emotional verisimilitude of an artwork, while a heading of realism questions sensorial verisimilitude and of course various strands of criticism, like queer theory or feminism, provide specific points of inquiry dealing with representation (Barrett, 1994). Because art criticism deals with representation, questions verisimilitude and offers specific points of inquiry, it is suited for the investigation of visual culture examples. Therefore, I especially believe,
and hope to pursue in further research, a framework of visual culture inquiry rooted in art criticism.

Semiotics

As previously demonstrated, semiotics is the study of signs and symbols—and how meaning is made from those codes and functions as a similar field of study and as a complementary critical tool in VCAE (Smith-Shank, 2004). Therefore, a number of art educators utilize semiotics as an approach to VCAE. Cosier (2004) utilizes a “social semiotic” stance, arguing that students can connect art education with real-life issues when signs and symbols are understood and interrogated as socially constructed codes. Haywood-Rolling (2004), links the study of visual culture and semiotics to the construction of African-American identity. And Barrett’s (2003) method of visual culture interpretation strategy relying on denotations and connotations similarly rests upon a foundation of semiotic practice.

Of What Use Now the Museum?

Museum education and museum studies are two more fields subsumed by and related to VCAE. Two pertinent points begin to address the role of the museum in VCAE. To begin, VCAE, as it purposely unsettles distinctions between high and low culture (Tavin, 2003) unsettles the historical idea that museums were purveyors and
preservers of objects that educated (Hooper-Greenhill, 1992). However, what museums educated—good taste, ethics, and specific stylistic choices—was problematic because it reflected the concerns of an elite class (those people who founded and funded early museums (Hooper-Greenhill, 1992). Contemporary art museums, though they often display contemporary artworks dealing with social issues, present a similarly problematic set of social issues (Duncan, 1995). Though the museum might seemingly present a role at odds with some tenets of VCAE, museum education might, in fact, assume more critical role in VCAE, and might also serve as a tool and object of critical inquiry in VCAE.

Secondly, VCAE can focus a lens on the museum visitor’s experience. The present-day learner does not innocently enter the art museum. The museum is an arena in which learners actively interpret and re-interpret prior experiences. These experiences, and the identities they constitute, are understood through and in relation to visual culture—television, films, websites, etc. Therefore, the museum and its works must be understood as visual culture and in relation to understandings of popular visual culture. When the individual enters the museum, he or she has an experience informed by prior experiences with visual culture, of which the museum is only a very small part and popular culture a very large part.

Recently, a number of writers have attempted to contextualize museums and their collections as visual culture. Hooper-Greenhill (2000) explains that the construction of
meaning in the museum is a complex negotiation between visitor and staff—“Collections as a whole, and also individual exhibitions, are the result of purposeful activities which are informed by ideas about what is significant and what is not,” and yet objects, “being themselves mute” offer their “significance to interpretation” (p. 3). Significance, of course will differ on various levels—visitor experience in museums and the wider world of visual culture, being one.

Vallance (2008) takes a different approach—museum artworks and outside visual culture are viewed as interrelated, mutually informative texts, and this interrelation, the author argues, offers possibilities for new understanding (pp. 40-52). Garoian (2001), suggests that the museum is “a performative site” where the museum's dominant narrative “engages in a critical dialogue” with the visitor's entrance narrative; by describing the viewers as critical participants, Garoian emphasizes that they are active producers of understanding (p. 235). Of all the strategies he describes, I found one he names “performing autobiography” most interesting. As the author describes it, the performance of autobiography in the museum relies on “memories and cultural histories which viewers bring to museum culture” and “the personal, anecdotal knowledge by which they create narratives to represent their experiences of art” (p. 241). Museums, and their collections, are part of visual culture, and VCAE, though it might reconceptualize or re-portray the role of items in a collection, can serve as a tool to further investigate the museums role in society, as well as how it represents phenomena.
Conclusion

As shown, visual culture art education, in its many guises, may be understood in a variety of ways. This review endeavors to present major strands of thought regarding VCAE. To briefly recount these: VCAE is a pedagogical project that seeks to conceive of a pedagogy of art education responding to issues affecting the lives of learners. These issues are postmodern conditions, prolific technology, as well as participation and choice in democratic society. Secondly, VCAE, as a pedagogical project is understood as related to pedagogical intents that have historically preceded VCAE, through the intersection of various disciplines, and pedagogical projects that have been conceived or practiced inside and outside the field of art education. The question of what to study in VCAE is a primary concern that manifests in a boundless register of phenomena available for study, as well as the ways that seeing leads learners to construct knowledge. Finally, the ways teaching practices might and do manifest in VCAE were examined. The next chapter represents the mate to this literature review; narrative epistemology is examined.

References


Boughton et. al. (2002) Art education and visual culture. *Advisory NAEA.*


Pranger, Brian (1990): The arena of masculinity. London: GMP


This literature review is built upon two key ideas. First, narrative texts (memories, television shows, novels, films, cartoons, conversations, etc.) are pervasive in human culture, and therefore a significant source we draw upon to understand real and imagined experience, (Barthes, 1975; Fisher, 1987; Polkinghorne, 1988). Second, narrative thinking plays a significant role creating the worlds in which we live; we think through stories and create stories (Bruner, 1986; Fisher, 1987; Polkinghorne, 1988). Herman (2003a) terms these dual concepts as “stories as sense-making” and “making sense of stories” (p. 12-13). These are two distinct, but intertwined concepts. These ideas are pivotal in research across disciplines, throughout history (Polkinghorne, 1988).

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) explain that by representing and explaining the realities of our lives through storytelling, we understand how we live our lives in a reality that is, in turn, structured by social and cultural stories. To illustrate, I exist in a series of ever-widening social spheres. These spheres are structured through stories. There is my sense of a whole self, which is, of course, composed of multiple facets of identity (student, educator, male, son, brother, etc.). These are stories of self that are intertwined to compose a more complex story. To explicate a single thread of this story, I understand
myself as a “brother,” through various experiences; these are memories I narrate to myself and other people. Extending outward, I am also a member of a family, which is another level of intertwined stories-- multiple intertwined histories and life-stories. Outward from that, narrative texts define my membership in bureaucracies, organizations and societies; I am a student among other students at the Ohio State University, for example. I am a global citizen. Stories connect to other stories in rhizomatic ways, stories intertwine with other stories and stories are subsumed by other stories. Human experience is undeniably framed through narrative knowing.

Polkinghorne (1988) explains the significance of narrative thought:

Experience is meaningful and human behavior is generated from and informed by this meaningfulness. Thus, the study of human behavior needs to include an exploration of the meaning systems that form human experience. (p.1)

The pertinent meaning system is, of course, narrative thought-- “the primary form by which human experience is made meaningful” (Polkinghorne, 1988, p. 1). Thus, the purpose of this chapter and literature review is to investigate how humans narratively construct knowledge and why they narratively understand experience. The field examined is narrative epistemology.

This chapter subsumes a number of concepts under narrative epistemology. The signifier “narrative epistemology,” however, actually appears in only a few instances in my literature review (Goodall, 2008; Worth, 2008). So to explain my use of an infrequent
term and to rationalize the accumulation of seemingly divergent concerns, I explicate the term. First, the word “narrative” must be defined. The term seems uncomplicated. What does it mean to label a text or thought as narrative, or as a narrative? Throughout this research, I noted that “narrative” emerges from as murky a swamp of literature as that in which the signifier “visual culture” swims. The word “narrative” (and therefore what the author examines) must be understood situated within discursive contexts.

Authors note the complications of examining this loosely-defined phenomena. Coste (1989) reminds, “narrative has no substance,” and “narrative is an adjective, not a substantive” (p. 4). Polkinghorne (1988) states, “Narrative is not an ‘object’ available to direct observation,” it is a “cognitive process” or a “behavior” (p. 1). Abbot (2008) states “narrative” is the “representation of a story” (p.237). Nevertheless, As to what constitutes a narrative text there is also debate. For greater clarity, in this research I will use narrative to describe actions or texts. There are narrative texts, and there is a narrative mode of thought, for instance.

But what is a narrative text? This question is pivotal, because, as Bruner (1986) and Polkinghorne (1988) explain, narrative thought cannot be examined; we can, however, examine narrative texts as the evidence and representation of narrative thought. Coste (1989) establishes that all acts of communication, including narrative texts, will be based in language. Therefore, towards a preliminary understanding, authors acknowledge a meta-cognitive awareness of language is necessary (Bruner 1986; Polkinghorne 1988).
This point is important because narrative texts are based in language; they are representations of events in symbolic codes.

We are stuck, after all, in “a prison-house of language” (Polkinghorne 1988, p.25). Extending this basic idea, narrative thought orders the representation of phenomena into logical order through the human experience of time (represented through words) (Polkinghorne, 1988; Bruner, 1986). Thus Coste (1989), via narratologist Gerald Prince, suggests that a text may be defined as narrative in that it is “the representation of real or fictive events and situations in a time sequence” (p. 13). Polkinghorne (1988) labels “narrative” as “organizational scheme expressed in story form” (p. 13). A narrative text represents events through the human experience of passing time.

A narrative text can, in fact, be any sort of text—thought, comment, daydream, sentence, novel, film, painting (Polkinghorne, 1988). Some narrative texts offer more to the audience. Thus even a simple sentence like, “The rabbit ran from the dog” is a narrative text. It does tell a story, but “The rabbit, who raided the carrot patch, was almost caught by the dog, that was awoken by the angry farmer…” is significantly richer. The second text provides much more to understand. Thus there are many narrative texts but some narratives are richer than others. Note that this does not apply value to any form of narrative text over another form. Different narrative texts invite different levels of possible interpretation.
“Epistemology” is a similarly vague term. Macey (2000) explains epistemology is “that branch of philosophy that deals with the theory, nature, basis and scope of knowledge” (p. 114). Some of the topics I include in this chapter could arguably be labeled otherwise; nevertheless, the amorphous nature of “narrative,” I argue, permits seeming trespasses. By synthesizing this latter definition with the former, I conceived a roster of overlapping and interrelated concerns as narrative epistemology. Assuming this perspective, I illustrate that narrative epistemology is the theory, basis and scope of knowledge formed through narrative thought and narrative texts.

Drawing together divergent concerns throughout different fields has necessitated that I focus on what I argue is “theory, nature, basis and scope of knowledge.” Of course, “narrative epistemology” subsumes an idea with which this chapter begins; narrative thinking is pervasive in human experience. However, some of what I draw under this heading can arguably be inserted elsewhere in other conversations. For example, this research notes theoretical ideas derived from literary theory, history, psychology and qualitative inquiry. Narratology,” as Coste (1989) asserts, is the scientific study of narrative discourse. Though at certain points this research covers narratology, I must make plain that the focus is epistemology. This research seeks to answer, “What constitutes the theory, basis and scope of knowledge formed through narrative thought and text?” The answer to this question is my illustration of narrative epistemology.
The focus of this inquiry begins with an explication of the narrative mode of thought; this idea is the most significant part of this study. I reemphasize an idea that scholars across disciplines maintain—that storytelling, or narrative thinking and constructing narrative texts—is an inherently human trait. This section reemphasizes that narrative thought is pervasive across human cultures and is a significant step in both human evolution and human cognitive development. I next explicate how and why narrative thinking occurs. Then I briefly consider and explicate various ways of thinking that literary theory has developed to understand narrative thinking. I then investigate another field; how narrative thinking is used to represent the experiences of selfhood, passing time, and place. Going along with the idea that narrative texts invest events with meaning through histories and identity construction, I consider the meta-narrative as both a viable and problematic framework of understanding. Finally, the uses of narrative representation--texts and thinking—in qualitative research are briefly illustrated.

I end this introduction with two possible arguments against the significance of narrative epistemology. Polkinghorne (1988) writes, “narrative is a meaning structure that organizes events and human actions into a whole, thereby attributing significance to individual actions and events according to their effect on the whole” (p18). Since narrative texts are and narrative knowing is pervasive, “narrative” might possibly be misunderstood as overly significant. Might “narrative” be an interpretive lens to ultimately understand or represent anything? Geertz (1973) describes narrative as a
**grand idée;** an extremely popular idea scholars utilize, faddishly, to build conceptual frameworks and methodologies (p. 3). The vast oceans of text signifying some or all aspects of their concern as “narrative” illustrate the wide-reaching appeal and utility of “narrative.”

Then, perhaps the pervasiveness of narrative could also lead some to assume it has an *insignificant* status. It is *everywhere* after all, like dust and air. Is it simply something that humans *just* do? Neither position is productive. In this section I do not propose that “narrative” is a concept for scholars in art education or qualitative research to utilize in any and every situation. Neither should it be discounted, though. In this research I do not make the claim that “narrative” is a solution to any problem within education, art education or qualitative inquiry. Rather, it is my intent to analyze major readings in the subject and present focused critical thought on those major patterns that I uncover, all the while imbuing this research, as in the chapters before, with relevant narrative reflections.

**Humans-- Inherently Storytellers**

Throughout a literature review, discernable patterns of thought emerge across research texts, like an off-color thread in the weft of a rug. Some are more overtly obvious than others. In this review one point is prominent throughout literature; several authors suggest that storytelling is an inherent human trait. It is, perhaps, what makes us human (Polkinghorne, 1988). Three points concerning the “humanness” of narrative acts
can be argued. First, I reiterate the argument of many scholars that “narrative” texts are culturally universal. Second, I briefly discuss research that argues that the development of narrative thought was a significant evolutionary step. Finally, I briefly analyze research that designates narrative thought as a specific step in individual cognitive development.

Scholars across disciplines maintain the significance of storytelling in human lives across time and cultures (Bruner, 1986; Fisher, 1987; Polkinghorne, 1988; Worth, 2008). Fisher (1987) labels the human “homo narrans” (p. ix). Barthes (1975a) states,

   it is present at all times, in all places, in all societies; indeed narrative starts with the very history of mankind; there is not, there has never been anywhere, any people without narrative; all classes, all human groups, have their stories… Like life itself, it is there, international, transhistorical, transcultural. (p.237)

No explication beyond Barthes’ assertion is really necessary, but Herman (2003a) reemphasizes this, stating, “stories are found in every culture and subculture and can be viewed as a basic human strategy for coming to terms with time, process and change” (p. 2). Though it is an obviously problematic example because it cannot represent pervasiveness across eras of human production, the literary and art-historical canons do illustrate the presence of narrative thought across eras of human production, and across the world.

   Human evolution places narrative thought in another context, framing it as an inherently human trait. Speech—the physical ability to vocally articulate and the cognitive ability to construct and navigate a system of speech was a milestone in human
evolution; following this, Boyd (2009) suggests that narrative thought was also an evolutionary milestone. Arguing that art and literature is cognitive play, Boyd (2009) suggests the crafting of stories became a device to imagine possible outcomes, and to practice imagining outcomes—this obviously aids survival. Aside from imagining possible outcomes, Boyd (2009) explains narrative thinking is also an attempt to simulate another human’s perspective; by promoting empathy it encourages cooperation, which has obvious benefits for social animals. Similarly, Dautenhahn (2003) argues that narrative thinking is linked to adaptation; narrative thought and speech allows humans to talk about other individuals and communities, which has pronounced survival benefits when in competition species and social groups for resources. Narrative thinking is a human trait, perhaps for specific survival-related reasons.

Research on cognitive development also frames narrative thought as an intrinsically “human” trait. Hoogstra, et al. (1990) argue storytelling begins quite early in childhood. At around 2 and a half years the authors (Hoogstra et. al, 1990) illustrate that the child can contribute to narrative discourse, especially when conversations intersect with the child’s construction of a social identity. Children develop the capability to express narrative thought as a specific development towards becoming mentally mature humans.

Authors assume narrative thought is an inherently human trait. As a characteristic across eras of human production throughout the world, as an evolutionary development or cognitive adaptation, and as a point in human cognitive development, it is arguably so.
The Narrative Mode of Thought

The premise for this review, *narrative epistemology*, relies primarily on one core idea, the “narrative mode of thought,” an idea theorized by Bruner (1986). All the other topics explored in this chapter stem from this key idea. Jerome Bruner (1986) explains narrative understanding is a process, or way of thinking. Arguing this, Bruner (1986) asserts that human thought occurs through two distinct processes. Both types arrange phenomena (facts, events, perceptions) into a logical order (p. 11). One way of thinking constructs arguments, based around constructed facts (Bruner, 1986). Bruner (1986) labels it the logico-scientific (or paradigmatic) mode (p.12). An example of such thought would be, “Plants require water. Plants must be watered if they are to live.” The other Bruner (1986) labels the “narrative mode” (p. 13). Not necessarily in opposition to the first mode, but certainly different, the “narrative mode” constructs reality according to human concerns-- agency, passing time, context, presupposed understandings of reality, for instance (Bruner, 1986). “I had the chance to water my plant, but I was sidetracked by my writing… consequently I forgot, and now my plant is dead,” I might say. This mode of thinking obviously characterizes the creation and understanding of stories, whether they are cultural histories, personal memories or the latest blockbuster film.

An important point of Bruner’s work is his explication of the purpose of narrative thought. Bruner (1986) explains narrative “deals in human or human-like intention and action and the vicissitudes and consequences that mark their course” (p. 13). Narrative
explains human action. Polkinghorne (1988) states narrative is “the scheme that displays purpose and direction in human affairs” (p. 18). Bruner (1986) goes on to explain that an argument constructed through narrative thought links together events to present a totally different sort of verifiability, than would a logico-scientific one. Thus narrative thought displays causality and intention (Bruner, 1986). Through returning to my two explanations of dead houseplants cause and fault are conceptualized in dramatically different ways. In the paradigmatic mode, my plants died because facts were ignored. In the example of narrative thought (“I had the chance to water my plant, but I was sidetracked by my writing… consequently I forgot, and now my plant is dead.”), note how fault, choice, agency, and circumstance become significant in the narrative mode. Bruner (1986) writes, “Narrative deals in the vicissitudes of human intention.”

Though there are these two distinct modes of thinking, the paradigmatic and the narrative are actually often used in tandem (Bruner, 1986). To illustrate this point, Bruner (1986) offers the example that when economic theories fail to accurately predict economic changes, theorists regularly fall back on stories of previous similar examples. As a further example, this blending of two modes of thought is especially significant to mixed-methods research (Creswell, 2003), because it corresponds to two different modes of representation. Returning to my explanation of dead houseplants, note how both modes of thought offer valid, realistic and compatible explanations of the outcome. The narrative mode and the paradigmatic mode both contribute to the construction of reality.
Bruner (1986) emphasizes the importance of intention and causality in narrative thinking. The ability to “see cause” in the actions of characters, Bruner (1986) suggests, may be “primitive” (p. 17). As humans, we look for patterns that offer explanations of past actions, and information to explain possible future actions. To explain this, Bruner tells the story of a research study that placed dots in a group on a television screen; when the dots moved, participants assumed the dots moved in relation to other dots— the dots acted with intention as they avoided or deflected other dots. Bruner (1986) writes, “time-space relations can be variously arranged so that one object can be seen as ‘dragging’ another, or ‘deflecting’ it and so on” (p. 17). We naturally see patterns of action and reaction; narrative knowing operates on this basic principle. To further illustrate this idea, consider the basic television show. Framing techniques, editing choices, reaction shots are visually arranged in specific sequence to depict events and transmit meaning to an audience in a narrative manner (O’Donnell, 2007). We understand reactions are based upon actions.

As we are in the narrative mode of thought, we navigate two distinct levels of understanding. Bruner (1986) explains that narrative thought, unlike logico-scientific thought, “must construct two landscapes of thought simultaneously. One is the landscape of action…The other landscape is the landscape of consciousness” (p. 14). The former is the structure of a story— character, events and setting, for example (Bruner, 1986). The
latter is the knowing, thinking, and feeling of those involved in the action, as well as the
knowing, thinking and feeling of the audience (Bruner, 1986).

To return to the example of a television show, the portrayal of ordered events with
character-agents inciting and reacting to these events, in a certain way (the “landscape of
action”) does not entirely explain how a television show can be understood. There is also
that “landscape of emotion.” For instance, through just one episode of the evening news
you can encounter representations that rely on crafting singular terrains of emotion. First,
perhaps, there is anger: “They are raising my taxes once more?” Then sorrow: “The oil
spill has reached the shoreline.” Then empathy: “The lost child has been returned to her
mother and father.” Then fear: “…what common household product you didn’t know
may be giving you cancer.” Obviously, some narrative texts rely more on one landscape
than the other.

Another point characterizes narrative thinking. Bruner (1986) suggests narrative
texts can create a “subjunctive reality” (p. 27). What this means is that acts of language
are normally purposely prohibited from stating the explicit truth; being thus arranged, the
reader/hearer must actively construct assumptions about the reality surrounding the
statement (Bruner, 1986). These are “presuppositions” that leave openings in the logic of
a narrative text; they “keep meaning open” to outside input and interpretation (Bruner,
1986). Note how this concept corresponds to Barthes’ (1975) idea of the “writerly text,”
in which a reader assumes a greater creative role in making meaning from a text; opposed
to this is the idea of the “readerly text,” in which meaning is more obvious to the reader. I might say, “I wasn’t the only student who received disparaging comments on the final essay.” One presupposition that arises for the hearer is that a body of students wrote assigned essays. Whether this was the case or not, is irrelevant, we accept the unstated, much as we also “see intention and causality.” Instances such as this are sites where Bruner (1986) states the “reader-hearer, if he is to stay on the narrative scene, must fill in” (p. 27). Narrative thinking requires reader-hearers to construct their own ideas to connect with the writer-speaker’s own so that logical renderings of events result. As a writer, how wide those connections are might be dictated by format.

Another point Bruner (1986) makes is that narrative thinking is grounded in prior experience. In this sense, narrative learning might also be labeled “constructivist” (Jaeger and Lauritzen, 1997). Bruner (1986) states, “first impressions of a new terrain are, of course, based on older journeys already taken” (p. 36). Not to explicate Bruner literally, but to illustrate this idea, I remember my various experiences while reading *The Lord of the Rings* (Tolkien, 1965). The plotline, a fantasy, follows the journeys of several adventurers while thwarting the domination of their land by evil forces (Tolkien, 1965). The environmental landscape (mountains, rivers, forests) plays a central role, because characters travel great distances; Tolkien even included a map for his readers to follow along with the text. As I read the book, I unsurprisingly imagined the events occurring in places much like those epic landscapes with which I was most familiar—the dense green
woods and steep hills of Appalachia, the ruins of Ireland, the processional ways and sacred monuments of Washington D.C. Though I wasn’t surprised when I viewed the first installment of Jackson’s film version (2001), it was a noticeably dissimilar from what I had imagined; the mountains of New Zealand and vast cities constructed through computer graphics. Both conceptions now shape my thoughts when I read or watch The Lord of the Rings.

Narrative thinking is bound to experience, past and present, imagined and real. Of course it is not only shaped by prior experiences. Narrative thinking in the mind, is also bound to the body; Bresler (2006) argues that narrative thinking is linked to embodiment. Bresler (2006) extends this to the idea of the musical narrative. Musicians experience a narrative through music (discernable patterns of rise and fall, dynamics of meter) as they play, but this experience is also linked to obvious sensual experiences. This idea, that narrative thinking and representation can, is, or should be linked to sensual and bodily experiences could arguably be demonstrated in diverse examples. Theatre and performance art are two obvious examples in which the bodily experience of learning is significant and intertwined with narrative thought.

A distinct memory illustrates the significant connection between embodiment, constructivism and narrative learning. When I was young, I walked with my grandfather along a gravel road atop a hill. The forest jutted against the road; further in the woods, down the hill, the overhang of the hill’s exposed backbone created a cave. Supposedly,
my grandfather offhandedly commented, in this cave, a frontiersman had hidden while he shot American Indians floating downriver in canoes. Even though it was just a comment, I fleshed out the violent story, imagining a horrific scene, pretending angry ghosts of countless people hung around like old cotton rags. I explored the cave. It was an overhang of damp, rough sandstone. Spider-webs hung from its eaves. The forest around was August-dry and the forest floor crackled as I stepped toward the cave. I could look down from my position in the cave right onto the creek. I thought I could, in fact, be standing right where the murderer was; someone had killed people right where I stood. Was this story even true? I have never checked, but the memory lingers with me. It was a pronounced experience where narrative thought especially intertwined with the embodied experience of telling and hearing.

Worth (2008) makes a final point about the narrative mode of thought. Given that reasoning skills are developed according to the “logico-scientific mode” (Bruner, 1986), it follows that a sort of “narrative reasoning” exists developed from the “narrative mode of thought.” The author argues that this is a significant reason for teaching and learning the arts and humanities; there are “epistemic benefits” to a “well-told story” (Worth, 2008, pg. 42). Not only does the practice of narrative knowing offer fundamental knowledge, but it also makes us “more empathetic and interesting” humans (Worth, 2008, p. 55). Herman (2003b) reconceptualizes this basic idea, arguing that narrative thinking supports “core problem solving abilities” (p. 172). These include categorizing,
finding cause, imagining outcomes, directing agency, communicating, modeling behavior, and socially constructing meaning (Herman, 2003b).

As demonstrated, the narrative mode of thought establishes a “theory” and delineates a “basis and scope of knowledge.” Learning in this mode is characterized by specific elements; it is grounded in prior experience, requires interpretation from the hearer, seeks patterns of intention and causality, and is intertwined with other ways of knowing. The narrative mode of thought is the construction of meaning through the creation of stories. Similarly, it is the reception and understanding of narrative texts.

Narrative Teaching and Learning

Since the narrative mode of thought is argued to be as significant as the logico-scientific mode, and that the humanities, arts and human sciences largely deal with the study of narrative texts, educators have conceptualized pedagogies and lesson plans around this pivotal idea. Clark and Rossiter (2003) suggest learning through stories—learning as a story and learning through storytelling—connects lived experience to meaning-making. Moreover, the authors argue that narrative learning offers a new way to construct transformational learning (Clark and Rossiter, 2003). Educators have conceived their pedagogies and curriculums in various ways through the narrative mode of thought. Much research focuses on storytelling and storytelling activities as part of classroom practice. Examples are numerous and resources exist across multiple
disciplines through diverse settings. Notable examples include: in higher education (Alterio and McDrury, 2002); K-8 (Lauritzen and Jaeger, 1997; Norfolk, Stenson and Williams, 2006); and elementary (Egan, 1986). An Internet search reveals many, many resources. The National Council of Teachers of English, for instance includes a “Position on Storytelling” (1992) on their website, establishing that they encourage the use of storytelling as a pedagogical tool.

The concept of “narrative inquiry,” or hearing and telling stories to investigate, suggests approaches to knowledge construction and data building in both qualitative research and curriculums. Research on teaching future teachers especially is characterized through narrative inquiry (Laboskey and Lyons, 2002). As a fledgling instructor, I agree that hearing stories of teaching experience from mentors and colleagues helped me to envision, prepare for, and respond to my own classroom experiences.

To further focus this idea, authors have conceptualized art education under a narrative mode in various ways. First, works of art and visual culture are often narrative texts, and this is reflected in curriculum or lesson plans. Secondly, research in art education utilizes narrative inquiry—this is evident in two pronounced ways. First, art educators use methods of narrative research in curriculum. Second, art educators represent their experiences in research through narrative inquiry.
Much artwork, made throughout the history of human production, is arguably narrative—it explicitly or implicitly lends itself to storied interpretation. Art educators expand upon this fundamental idea in curriculum. Examples abound; thought-provoking lesson plans or inquiry can arguably be based around the output of almost any artist. Despite consensus from some authors that the primary focus of art educator’s should be the spectrum of visual culture, many educators write about the value and possibility of studying institutionalized artists and artworks. Consider simply the 62nd volume of *Art Education*; each issue offers at least one example of classroom activities based around narrative artworks. Interest in narrative artwork is represented, for example, through research concerning artist Nicki S. Lee (Allison, 2009), Aminah Lynn Robinson (Genschaft, 2009), the graffiti artist Banksy (Chung, 2009), post office murals made during the Great Depression (Bae, 2009), contemporary Chinese art (Guey-Meei and Suchan, 2009), and ancient Egyptian depictions of Queen Hatsheput (Hilliard and Wurtzel, 2009). Educators also find narrative texts directly related to the study of artists relevant (Stout, 1999, 2000). Though it may be overly obvious, as a teacher I know that students engage artworks that are narrative in class-projects and papers. And sometimes these are even scholarly impressive and personally relevant to the students’ own lives.

Visual culture art education inherently holds relevance to narrative thinking. Visual culture phenomena built around plot-- like television shows, films, video games, comics, graphic novels, as well as traditional art forms like painting, prints and sculpture-
- are naturally objects of narrative inquiry. An interest in comics and graphic novels is notable (Graham, 2008; Wilson, 2005).

The practice of teaching through stories had been intersected through art education (Zander, 2007). Zander (2007) places the possible sites for telling stories on three levels in the art education classroom, the teacher’s stories, the student’s stories and the stories of cultural groups that affect the making of art—art histories, and artists’ lives, for example. Zander adds another important point—we often look for stories in artworks even if they were not originally part of the artists’ intent. Yenawine (1998) argues that it is a tendency within viewers to craft stories in art with narrative potential. Zander (2007) reminds that many sites of visual culture hold issues intimately linked to personal and societal stories. Then, there is research that hinges upon students visually portraying their own life experiences through visual art (Esser-Hall, Ndita, and Rankin, 2004). These examples demonstrate that the visual arts often operate though narration, and that learners produce artwork through narrative thought; forms of visual culture art education create curricula accordingly.

To engage an extremely focused field in art education, the field of museum education can be analyzed. Roberts (1997) explains that though museum staff have conceptualized their efforts to educate visitors in varying ways throughout history, ultimately arriving at the conclusion that learning must be understood through narrative thought. This characterizes the museum visit in various ways. Returning to Herman’s
(2003a) assertion that narrative thought is “sense-making through stories” and “making sense of stories,” the museum visit can be understood in dual forms. First, the museum presents narrative texts; this is an idea that manifests on various levels. Museum staff display narrative texts—artifacts, artworks, interactive exhibits, scientific models. Because display is linked to processes of selection (what stories to tell), the stories museum staff choose tell are problematic; they represent the interests of a limited audience (Roberts, 1997). Moreover, the overall collection of a museum often represents a history that is limited by nature of the selection presented. These are the stories of which a visitor “makes sense.” Roberts (1997) explains that the “sense-making” manifests in varying forms. She writes, “reminiscence,” “fantasies,” and “restoration” as varying types of narrative thoughts with which visitors respond to museum displays (Roberts, 1997, p. 138). This corresponds to research written by Barrett (2008) who recommends educators promote conversation by inviting visitors to share lived and imagined experiences, and Garoian (2001), who conceptualizes the museum visit as performance, and “autobiography” as one of many possible performances. Roberts (1997) suggests that conceptualizing the museum visit through the narrative mode, “requires that museums do what they have always done, which is present messages; but they must do it in a way that is respectful of the narratives constructed by visitors” (p. 146).
Finally, a number of educators, specifically art educators, use narrative text to represent experiences in research. Specific examples of this will be discussed later in this chapter. Narrative epistemology provides a lens to understand art education. The narrative mode of thought offer a way to engage learners through different ways.

Storied Humans

Individuals use narrative thought to construct identity and realities. These overlapping products of narrative thought frame intertwined processes. These processes reveal how individual identities, group identities, personal histories, community histories, and geographic meanings are created. Locating patterns of thought from various sources, that in many cases utilize the same fundamental concepts to explicate overlapping ideas, is difficult. Scholars rely on two key ideas to explicate ideas. First, narrative thought is used to explain how humans understand the course of experienced and imagined time. Similarly it used to explain how humans construct life histories, and therefore identities. By accepting these two assertions, I elucidate categories. I briefly sketch how narrative thinking conceptualizes the construction of self-identity. Next, I describe how narrative thought conceptualizes history. Finally, I explain how narrative thought imbues place with meaning. Finally, I briefly account for the meta-narrative as both a problematic and constructive concept of epistemological thought.
Storied Lives, Storied Selves

To return to the idea that narrative thought is, as Herman (2003a) puts it, “sense-making through stories” and “making sense of stories,” there are two levels to the narrative construction of identity. Analogous to the former, there is the “life-history” as a text (Polkinghorne, 1988, p. 106). Analogous to the latter is the role narrative thinking plays in “establishing personal identity” (Polkinghorne, 1988, pg. 105). Polkinghorne (1988) explains how narration of a life-story intertwines with self identity; “the basic dimension of human existence is temporality, and narrative transforms the mere passing away of time into a meaningful unity, the self” (pg. 119)

Polkinghorne (1988) explains that the study of lives as a narrative text has roots in psychology and anthropology. Polkinghorne (1988) cites roots in psychology, from early 20th century urges to document psychological development (as in Freud’s case studies) and individual life histories. In anthropology uses of “life-histories” can be found in 18th century studies of American Indians (Polkinghorne, 1988). Ultimately, Polkinghorne (1988) explains the focused study of single lives became less abundant as research in the United States began to focus on formal science. Since the 1960’s, however narration attained a more significant role in psychology. (Polkinghorne, 1988), The narrative creation of knowledge intersects with cognitive psychology, because cognitive psychology is “about the acquisition, organization, and use of knowledge” (Polkinghorne, 1988, pg. 108). Sarbin (1986) asserts that in psychology conducted in the narrative mode,
the focus is not hypothetical or deductive, but in locating the narrative text. Obviously, the life-history is connected to forms of qualitative research and writing, a fact I will further explicate.

As for the construction of identity, Polkinghorne (1988) asserts that identity construction through narrative is a necessary goal. Clark and Rossiter (1999) state “Construction of an acceptable life narrative is the central process of adult development” (p. 62). Clark and Rossiter (1999) explain that as one moves through life, one experiences changes of life development that are in fact plot changes within life-stories.

The understanding of a unified self in passing time is key. Riccouver (1981) explains time becomes meaningful through narrative thought as the narrator accepts an understanding of the world (that time passes), then conceives events into a logical order of experience, and finally presents the narrative text through presentation and reinterpretation. Similarly, Clark and Rossiter (2008) explain that there is a “narrative orientation to lifespan development” (p. 62). Crites (1986) argues that the temporal nature of unfolding life stories necessitates two modes of thought, arranging the past and imagining the future to create a sense of self. Thus, life-stories are inextricably intertwined with self-identity.

Moreover, these narrative constructions are socially bound. Scheibe (1986) explains self-stories are told in contemporary language, understandable speech, refer to known cultural norms and historical events, and patterns of prevalent ideologies. Further
explicating the social nature of narrative identity. Rosenwald and Ochberg (1992) explain that stories constructed from individual memory, reconstructed throughout life, do not simply “tell someone (or oneself) about one’s life”—they actually constitute a sense of self for the teller (p. 1). Identity is a life-story that is told, as well as created.

Assuming identity to be a story, it follows that authors make choices to determine the nature of the text. Clandinin and Huber (2002) argue that the creation of a life narrative is also an artistic and aesthetic creation. Moreover, Clark and Rossiter (2008) suggest that we “story” ourselves in ways that sometimes contradict other ways; an individual can understand him or herself as both a victim and a hero. Campbell (1991) offers an example of the artistic nature of lived life;

When you are at a certain age… it seems to be as orderly as a composed novel… As in Dickens’ novels, little accidental meetings and so forth turn out to be the main features of plot, so in your life. And what seem to have been mistakes at the time seem to be directive crises… Life seems as though it were planned (p.24).

Similarly, Beattie (2007) suggests that the artistic creation of narrative identity also allows the tellers to engage a holistic perspective involving multiple facets of identity. Life and identity, when narrated, seem planned as an artwork. The self, as a mass of heterogeneous experiences throughout time and social influences, attains unity through narration.
Storied Time: Constructing History

Narration is a strategy to render passing time meaningful and logical. As this applies to life-stories and identity, it also applies to wider social realms of existence. Humans are social animals with existences framed by passing time, place, and social organizations, these three facets of existence are also rendered into text through narrative. Ricouer argues that the narrative understanding of time is created from the illusion of sequence. Since we construct stories to account for the nature of experiences (what Bruner [1986] names “the vicissitudes of human experience”) on the level of individual experience, we also construct stories to account for the nature of experience on wider and more intricate levels. Therefore, history can be understood as a narrative text (Polkinghorne, 1988).

History, as a concept, is problematic in multiple ways. Polkinghorne (1988) explains that history operates on two levels—the index of actual events and the plot surrounding these events. A chronicle can offer a list of events, but the historian, through narration, offers meaning to the transition between those events (Polkinghorne, 1988). Therefore, history is argued to be an intertwining of paradigmatic thought and narrative thought. For example, in American history, the Great Depression is explicated on two levels that answer “How did it happen?” First, there are various economic theories that explain the progress of events from logical points of cause and effect; one explains the Great Depression occurred because business men made poor decisions based upon overly
optimistic banking trends and these decisions eventually spread to the greater market (Rothbard, 1972). Perhaps this might answer why the Great Depression occurred, but it does not explain the experience on the level of human experience. Herein lies the intertwined duties and problem of narrative creation in history.

Is history art or science? Does it represent fact or fiction? On the level of cognitive production the functions of a historian mimic the functions of author, and the constructor of identity. However, the narrative understanding of experience is dissimilar from that occurring within literature or history. Historians deal with actions and events that have already been lived; they work with materials already in story form (Polkinghorne, 1988). The historian does not tell facts, but retells experience from a current perspective. This fact has put the epistemological validity of the historian’s work in debate; it is a construction imposed by historians on the simple sequence of past events (White, 1984). White (1984) argues that history’s validity lies in its tie to the traces of real-life events and documents. Artifacts continue to exist beyond the lives of their creators and users; we can view the *The Constitution*, for example, and see an existing phenomenon that was tangible in a previous period of time. Essentially, there is no way to recreate the reality of a time past, but vestiges of experience may be re-experienced, in a way, through narration.

White (1984) suggests that history might best be understood as the construction of a story about reality. The assertion of a postmodern framework further complicates
questions of truth and representation in history; if individual identity is dynamic and multi-faceted (Macey, 2001), how could a historical text ever accurately represent the experience of peoples? This is a significant point to which I will return.

Ricouer explains how narrative thinking manifests in the construction of history. First, the historian’s work resembles the storytellers in motive—to argue that his or her explanation of events is more accurate than another’s plausibility (Ricouer, 1981). Secondly, the historian’s work (generally) deals with groups of people just as the storyteller deals with individual actions, they are characters and agents (Ricouer, 1981). Third, the main focus of the historian is to explain change, whether it be long change or fast change (Ricouer, 1981). History is conceived through narrative thought.

Storied Spaces: Constructing Place

Knowledge of place, and meaning of place, is constructed through narrative thought. Tuan (1991) explains that geographers have long constituted the meanings behind places by labeling their economic and material significances; also significant, he argues is language. Through narrative, Tuan (1991) argues, places acquire meanings socially and individually. Tuan (1991) explains that places achieve meaning through narrative through such ways as naming landmarks, the outcomes of written texts, informal conversations constitute a places sense of meaning. The process of investing meaning through personal experience, traditions, understandings of native cultures, sensual engagement is how “space” becomes “place” (Brady, 2005). “Space” becomes
“place” in our minds through lived and imagined experience. Obvious examples are the countless landmarks dotting the map of the United States—the National Mall, Gettysburg, New York City. We know places through their stories.

Like levels of sedimentary rock, land acquires layers of narrative text—meanings that shape its ongoing existence in human thought. As much as any classic work of literature that is continually re-read, land is re-experienced through imagined and lived experiences over the course of human life and lives.

I continually return, in thought and lived experience, to trails I have been hiking since I was allowed to enter the forest alone. Intertwined with the familiar trails are courses of thought as much directed by literature and artworks as much as my own curiosity and experiences. The embodied experiences and re-experiences of walking, seeing, smelling, breathing, and feeling present one level of narrative text. Framing this are the narratives of personal and local history—stories, related by my grandparents, their neighbors, and my parents.

Proliferating the boundless meanings of this text are those socially bound cultural experiences that frame experience. When I was younger, mythology provided a backdrop for forest-born daydreams about talking animals, and epic battles. I grew older and survival-romances framed experiences—Julie of the Wolves (George, 1972), My Side of the Mountain (George, 1959), and Hatchet (Paulsen, 1987). I grew older and classic literature significantly framed my experience—English authors like Wordsworth, and
Christina Rossetti, as well as American authors like Whitman, Thoreau, and Emerson. Growing older and returning to my interest in mythologies, the *Holy Bible* and the *Upanishads* reinvested this land with renewed spiritual significance.

The significance of narrative thought in qualitative research that investigates the human use of space is evident. Blandy and Hoffman (1993) link eco-theory to research and pedagogy in art education. Brady (2005) explains the utility of “ethnopoetics.” What both have in common is that meaning about land is produced through narrative thought, and this investigation of meaning is further linked to conscious critical thought about the ways we use our land (Blandy and Hoffman, 1993; Brady, 2005). How we know and use our land is a narrative matter, and any criticism of this may be intertwined with narrative thought.

**The Death of the Meta-Narrative… Maybe**

Stories are used to explain courses of human groups and the possible futures of human groups. Meta-narratives attempt to explain the course of actions for groups of people throughout history according to progress towards an ultimate goal (Macey, 2001). This goal is ultimately married to some concept of a universal truth (Macey, 2001).

Postmodern theory, however problematizes the meta-narrative (Macey, 2001). Postmodernists distrust meta-narratives first, because governing stories do not account for a reality that is continually in flux and in which utopianism is ultimately unachievable
(Macey, 2001). In lesson-plans and curriculum, Efland, Freedman and Stuhr (1996) suggest art educators asserting postmodern principles rely upon “little narratives” in lieu of meta-narratives (p. 92). After all, the promotion of one overlying story disregards differences in experience among groups and persons; no single story can explain the experiences or futures of a group of people (Macey, 2001).

Or can it? Two distinct arguments posit the possible worth of meta-narrative framing. First, there is the argument that postmodernism itself is a grand narrative. Second, theorists from schools of thought built around explicating how modernism has subjugated minorities, suggest that postmodernism declares metanarratives unsound at the precise moment some traditionally marginalized groups of people are finally gaining voice that threatens capitalist, hegemonic patriarchies (Macey, 2001). Thus, they argue, is postmodernism simply more of the same subjugation in another form? And is it time for meta-narratives that offer stories of liberation to guide subjugated peoples?

Obviously, the concept of meta-narrative, though it is a highly problematic basis to construct knowledge from, might still be a valid basis for some people to conceptualize liberation. This is not to say that meta-narratives are bases of knowledge appropriate for some “people” and not for others. Rather, it simply highlights the need for a meta-cognitive critical awareness of the how large governing stories might constitute knowledge about reality.
Understanding Stories: Literary Theory and Narrative Thought

Research covering narrative thought and text in literature is vast. Polkinghorne (1988) explains the field of literature study offers the most substantial input to the study of narrative discourse. Primarily these contributions are in the form of narratology, which is the scientific study of narration (Polkinghorne, 1993; Bal, 1985). Essentially, various movements of literary critical theory have produced ways to think about stories; these various movements are Russian Formalism, New Criticism, Structuralism and Post-structuralism. Essentially, theories derived form these movements explain narration through study of the text and bodies of text, by analysis (Polkinghorne, 1988).

Connecting narratology to narrative epistemology requires noting that these theories are tools to “make sense of stories.” It is also important to note that a number of theories and disciplines of study could align with the ones I mention. For example, since interpretation is a concern, I might have also have drawn in theories of communication (i.e. Jakobson’s model of communication). Similarly, I might have also delved into structural research that defines types of narrative texts (i.e. Propp’s “typology). What follows, instead are several specific examples of literary theory in an effort to demonstrate how theory intersects with narrative epistemology.

Bruner (1986) suggests “If it were the case that there are limits on the kinds of stories it could mean either that the limits are inherent in the minds of writers and/or readers (what one is able to tell or understand), or that the limits are a matter of
convention” (p. 16). Are there limits to narration or narrative texts? To study narrative
texts, scholars purposely must set analytical limits for themselves. Bal (1985) asserts to
study narrative, “it is… inevitable, that that which is in effect inseperable should
temporarily be disjoined” (p. 7). So, to study narrative constitution in texts theorists
purposely pick apart texts to systematically understand them.

First, there are theories that separate and organize narrative texts into parts. Bal
(1985) suggests there are three discernable levels to narrative texts. To illustrate her
examples, I rely on various conceptions of Steinbeck’s book The Grapes of Wrath
(1967). First there is the actual text itself (there is a film version of The Grapes of Wrath,
there is the novel The Grapes of Wrath, there is me telling you about The Grapes of
Wrath); next there is the sjuzet, that which is unique to the story’s telling (The Grapes of
Wrath is laid out in a linear telling that adopts various perspectives, and in the book
Steinbeck utilizes a specific writing style), and finally the fabula—those events that
occur, in logical order (the journey, tribulation by tribulation, of the Joad family as
depicted in The Grapes Wrath) (Bal, 1985). Bal notes some significant points about the
fabula: “events are transitions from one state to another,” “agents that perform action”
might not be “necessarily human,” and to act simply means to “perform or experience
action” (p. 5). And regarding the entire story, Bal (1985) asserts “the text is not identical
to the story,” and the three layers of a text do not “exist” independently of each other (p.
5-6). Bal’s explication readily serves as an interpretive device. For example, newscasts
between stations might be compared using this framework. The commonality of those events (the fabula) might be compared to the story told (the sjuzet) and how it is told (the text in its edited form of televisual media).

Aristotle’s theory of drama is another theory which scholars in literary and cultural studies readily use as an interpretive device. Essentially, Aristotle argued that the significant part of drama was its plot. Necessary to plot is the beginning, middle and end—events unified into a rational whole (ODonnell, 2008). Of course, not every story is laid out in such simple terms. Nevertheless, this framework is readily applicable—especially to television shows that must introduce, follow and resolve a plot in a restricted time-length.

Burke (1945) suggests another organizational scheme to narrative texts. Five essential parts exist to a narrative text—characters, action (what the characters do), characters’ intentions, the means they use to complete their intentions, and the setting in which the characters are immersed. Burke (1945) argues that an imbalance between these elements creates tension. The Scarlet Letter by Nathaniel Hawthorne (1986), for instance, is a perfect example; in the socially restrictive setting of a colonial American Puritan community, a woman, ostracized because she is unmarried, raises her child. Recognizing these imbalances provides a significant perspective on the narrative text, because it illuminates the intentions and causality, with which Bruner (1986) notes narrative thinking is so concerned.
Propp (1968) compared folklore (fairytales, folk-tales) to establish a framework of narrative texts. Essentially, Propp (1968) argues a story begins with a character exhibiting a lack that prohibits the harmony of a state of being and the end of the story is conceived with the curing of the lack. Lacks manifest in various ways. I was pleased with the utility students in a television criticism class found applying this framework to various sitcoms.

Because I feel it is an especially useful interpretive framework, I will briefly illustrate with an example. The premise of the sitcom Friends is that six white, middle class, young adults (three men and three women) live together while navigating life-steps toward adulthood like getting jobs, finding life-partners, and having children. One episode, “The One With Rachel’s Inadvertent Kiss” (Crane, et. al. & Jensen, 1999) begins by establishing the lacks of three characters. The lacks are understood to have dual levels; basic objects that metaphorically correspond to deeper lacks—lessons that need to be learned. Joey, a womanizer, sees a woman in a window across an airshaft. By counting the number of windows up from the bottom floor of the opposite building, he tries to visit her. He can’t correctly do the math, so he never can actually meet the woman. A second character, Monica, is becoming comfortable in a committed relationship, but when comparing her relationship to the newly formed relationship of a friend, becomes obsessively fearful that her relationship lacks passion. The third character, Rachel, is unemployed. She gains an interview, but due to her nervousness she
mistakes the moment when her interviewer leans in to shake her hand as a sexual advance, and she awkwardly kisses the interviewer.

By the end of the episode, Joey meets the woman, but finds her with another man. Monica finds that her relationship has progressed to a different level of passion. Rachel gains unemployment. The true lacks were lessons that needed to be learnt; Rachel and Joey consider the importance of thought before action and Monica realizes that her relationship has progressed to a deeper level of intimacy. This structure of remedying lack applies to plots in diverse situations, as one more way to “make sense of stories.”

As demonstrated, there are a number of theories utilized to systematically analyze narrative texts. Then, there are theories that theorize how audiences receive and interpret narrative texts. Fisher (1987) states humans are “authors and co-authors who creatively read and evaluate the texts of literature and life” being “full participants in the making of messages” (p. ix). Therefore I sketch a portrait of some theories that specifically concern the nature of audience members understanding “stories.”

As an initial example, Levi-Strauss (1963) argued that narrative texts are dependent on oppositions that create tensions. *The Lord of the Rings* (Tolkien, 1965) plainly operates on the tension of good versus evil, as the hobbit Frodo journeys with the help of his allies to undermine the Dark Lord Sauron’s attempt to control Middle-Earth.

Bruner (1986) outlines a threefold organization to the reception and understanding of narrative texts. First, is *pressuposition*, in which the reader recognizes the implicit
concepts inherent in a story (Bruner, 1986, pg. 25). I illustrate Bruner’s framework with the television show Buffy the Vampire Slayer (Whedon, 1997). For instance, the television show Buffy the Vampire Slayer is about a vampire slayer named Buffy; this much is evident from the title. Secondly, the reader enacts subjectification; he or she understands the constructed reality of the story through the “filter of the protagonists in the story” (p. 25). Certain restrictions, or laws of reality, govern the perspective and actions of the characters depicted in Buffy…; one is that vampires exist. Bruner (1986) recognizes the third stage is the assuming of multiple perspectives; the constructed reality of the story is understood to be multi-faceted (p, 26). As an interpreter of this text, I understand development of characters in terms of their own development throughout the series, in comparison to characters from other stories, people I know, and even in terms of my own development.

The psychologist Jung (1969) argued that dreams and myths—narrative texts—display “archetypes,” or recognizable common patterns or representations that seem to be inherently etched in human thought across history and cultures, and these archetypes are linked to parts or conditions in the human psyche (Jung, 1969). O’Donnell (2007) explains these archetypes occur in diverse cultural texts and audience members innately understand the function of such archetypes; hero figures, for example, are recognizable throughout stories. As an example, the “trickster” figure often appears as a character that incites characters to take action, purposely breaks social norms and is often composed of
opposing character traits (Clinton, 2005). In Native American tales from the Western and Midwestern United State, the “trickster” is, in some tales, a coyote (Clinton, 2005). In a contemporary narrative text, readers might identify characters such as Bart Simpson, from *The Simpsons* (Groening, 1989) as a “trickster.”

Building upon the work of Jung, Campbell (1998) posited a theory of mythology that similarly relates to the study of narrative texts. As a comparative mythologist, Campbell (1988) argued that stories across cultures and histories exhibited much the same narrative framework; a character seeks some change to his state of being. Campbell (1988) states “What all myths have to deal with is transformations of consciousness” (p. 155). Campbell (1998) outlines a theory of story he names the “monomyth” or “hero’s quest.” Essentially, Campbell (1998) argues, stories mimic rites of passage; a hero or heroine follows a journey, beginning with a separation from a previous state of being, the an initiation into a new state of being, and finally a return with a changed consciousness. Religious stories recognizably follow this model. The story of the apostle Paul from the “Acts of the Apostles” in the *New Testament* is an excellent example. Saul was a Roman soldier that persecuted Christians, but after a revelatory spiritual experience, his name was changed to Paul. Afterwards he became a primary figure in the beginning religious movement. Personal stories of identity development similarly follow this model; in fact, this research itself represents a “hero’s quest,” for myself.
Obviously, theories about how people make sense of stories abound, and more could be written on this topic by drawing from ever more fields and disciplines. These theories recognize the interpretation of text through models of reception, outlines of understanding, and systematic analysis of the parts that make texts work. What they do not specify, is how stories reach significance in human lives. Once more, scholars debate what imbues story with profound personal significance as sources from which to draw guidance and re-interpret personal experience.

To begin, readers relate to experiences depicted in narrative texts; empathy for characters is key. As an example, Bruner (1986) suggests there are ‘triggers’ (p.19), points of experience to which readers relate. And, Bruner (1986) suggests that the two levels of meaning that stories create—one of outer reality, and one of inner consciousness—are the “magnets for empathy” (p. 21). There is a level of social reality, and then there is a level of individual human struggle.

Bruner (1986) suggests the matching of “‘inner’ vision and ‘outer’ reality” is “classic human plight” (p. 21). Similarly, Campbell (1998) suggests that myths are in fact blueprints about how to lead human lives. Drawing upon the Greek myth of Theseus in the Minotaur’s labyrinth, Campbell (1998) compares mythology to the “golden thread” with which Theseus marks his path to lead him back out of the labyrinth after he has killed the Minotaur. Myths are metaphorical guides towards understanding and action—“demons” are metaphorical obstacles that must be “slain” because they present lessons to
be learnt (Campbell, 1998). Campbell (1998) further explains that myths, including contemporary narrative texts, offer models to guide self-identity as humans grow older. I could understand part of my identity as an educator, for example, because previous stories of educators have impacted my development.

Similarly, Coles (1989), recognizes that literature provides a lens for learners to understand their own development. Coles, working as a psychology student and an instructor, found that patients and students often saw, through comparison, the actual events of their lives through the lenses of literature (1989). I find, as a reader, that this tendency renders much literature, and popular culture, personally significant. As a young male student I readily connected to characters like Pip from *Great Expectations* (Dickens, 1996) for example. Arguably, much more could be written about how narrative texts are interpreted, and then integrated into the world and life-views of readers.

Narrative Text and Thought as Qualitative Inquiry

As a final section to this investigation of “narrative epistemology,” I briefly examine the field of qualitative research. To understand qualitative research, two points are important. First, why is qualitative research not quantitative? The answer is that each has differing conceptions of what constitutes “data.” Quanititative data consists of numbers and statistics gathered through analysis (Huberman and Miles, 1994). Qualitative research, conversely, uses data like visual representations, stories, and words gathered through interpretation (Huberman and Miles, 1994). Secondly, I will restate
Mason’s (2002) question, “What is qualitative about qualitative research?” (p. 2). Mason (2002) explains qualitative research holds three inherent characteristics. First, it is “interpretivist;” meaning that it seeks to represent and understand how a “social world” is experienced (p. 3). Second, Mason (2002) explains qualitative research creates and uses data that is “flexible and sensitive to social context” (p. 3). Finally, whereas quantitative data focuses on the “surface,” or “trends” and “correlations,” qualitative researchers seek to create and represent data in ways that “produce rounded and contextual understandings on the basis of rich, nuanced and detailed data” (p. 3). These three points connect qualitative research to narrative inquiry, which in turns links it to narrative thought, and thus to a stake in narrative epistemology.

Qualitative research utilizes narrative thought in the form of narrative inquiry. Though it might seem overly obvious, it is helpful to explicate exactly how, qualitative research, in the form of narrative inquiry is linked to narrative epistemology. So, to first understand research through the lens of narrative epistemology, I argue that it is a product of the “narrative mode” of thought (Bruner, 1986). Consider Herman’s assertion that narrative thought is “making sense of stories,” and “making sense through stories” (Herman, 2003a). To rationalize the use of narrative inquiry as a way to conceive a “theory, basis and scope of knowledge” (Macey, 2001) for research, then, consider Clandinin and Connelly’s (2000) argument; “if we understand the world narratively, as we do, then it makes sense to study the world narratively” (p. 17). Thus, qualitative
research, under this paradigm is ‘stories told,” and “stories lived” (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000, p. 20).

Thus, narrative research is unsurprisingly found throughout countless disciplines (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000; Goodall, 2008). Moreover, it is hard to delineate the lines between methodologies and representations of qualitative research, when locating examples of narrative inquiry, because of the “pervasive” and “inherently human” quality of narrative thought. As overlapping examples consider, “creative nonfiction” and “arts-based research,” because both might subsume, or be subsumed by, narrative research. Gutkind (2005) explains “The word ‘creative’ refers simply to the use of literary craft in presenting nonfiction—that is, factually accurate prose about real people and events—in a compelling, vivid manner. To put it another way, creative nonfiction writers do not make things up; they make ideas and information that already exist more interesting and, often, more accessible” (Website). Or, “Arts-based research” as Leavy (2009) explains, “adapts, the tenets of the creative arts to engage social research questions in holistic and engaged ways” and utilizes methods of inquiry that include “literary writing, music, performance, dance, visual art, film, and other mediums” (p. 3). The manifestation and use of narrative inquiry in research can be found throughout arenas of discourse. It is nearly impossible sketch a portrait of this complexity and pervasiveness. To demonstrate however, note the relations, intertwining and overlapping of numerous terms—autobiography, memoir, autoethnography, biography, ethnography, essays. And then
different conceptions of perspective, understandings of objectivity and subjectivity, further overlap under a narrative paradigm (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000). Different forms of narrative text, and combinations of different forms, to represent research arise under the narrative paradigm (Goodall, 2008; Leavy, 2009; Mason, 2002). Narrative thought is evident everywhere, so it is no surprise that it is similarly existent in qualitative research. It thus mirrors the complexity of human experience, thought and representation- but it also mirrors commonality of human experience, thought and representation.

Questions about the validity of qualitative research arise primarily from concerns about narrative epistemology. One question essentializes these concerns-- Does narrative inquiry represent “truth?” Polkinghorne (1988) explains that the question of “validity” under a paradigm of narrative thought is problematic because the concept of “validity” is generally understood through “formal science” (p. 175). The narrative researcher uses stories and constructs stories, these stories are based on experience, and often experience that has been re-experienced and restoried through thoughts or representations in one or more person’s minds (Polkinghorne, 1988). The process of narrative inquiry is much like aiming arrows at the center of a target one can never, ever hit—a completely “true” representation of reality will never, ever exist. Nevertheless, Mason (2002) explains that the criteria vilifying scientific research similarly apply to qualitative research—claims of “validity” (“describing “what you say you are”), “generalizability” (“making wider claims”) and “reliability” (“accuracy of research methods”) (p. 38-39). Where does this
leave the narrative research writer? A fundamental point is that a researcher must maintain a significant awareness of how his or her methodology is both valid and questionable, due to the nature of narrative thought’s epistemological validity.

Conclusion

The “narrative mode of thought” establishes the basis of a “narrative epistemology.” The boundaries of this chapter designate what I have constructed to argue for a narrative epistemology—the theory, basis, and scope of knowledge founded through narrative thought and texts. Working in this framework, I have subsumed a diverse array of concerns and practices across multiple fields.

First, I established that narrative thought is considered inherently human by its pervasiveness throughout cultures and history, a specific evolutionary development, and a significant step in individual cognitive development. Second, I explicated the narrative mode of thought, and how this type of thinking is the basis for the creation and understanding of narrative texts. Third, I sketched a brief portrait of how recognizing this mode of thought can impact curriculum. Fourth, I explained how narrative thought contributes to a sense of self-identity. Fifth, I briefly explained how the construction of history and place are narrative activities. Sixth, I considered the productive and destructive properties of the meta-narrative. Seventh, I briefly examined how various literary theories impact the understanding of narrative texts. Finally, I briefly examined how narrative epistemology widely impacts the world of qualitative research.


Barthes, R. (1975a) *An Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narrative New Literary History, 6*(2), 237-272


Rosenwald & Ochberg (1992)


Chapter 4: The Theoretical Contexts of Postmodernism, Poststructuralism and Constructivism

There's this expression called postmodernism, which is kind of silly, and destroys a perfectly good word called modern, which now no longer means anything.

Twyla Tharp, LA Times Interview

Acts of Substantiation and Location

At this point in this research, after the two major literature reviews on pedagogies of visual culture in art education and narrative epistemology have been illustrated, it is important to note that the guiding purpose of this research is to locate intersections between the two fields. As stated, two fundamental questions guide this research. The first is as follows: “What are the intersections that exist between pedagogies of visual culture in art education and narrative epistemology?” The second is as follows: “What might the significance of locating and analyzing these intersections be to the discipline of art education?” The next two chapters illustrate two distinct intersections in hopes of elucidating a significance in the act of location. The first, in this chapter, are the theoretical contexts of postmodernism, poststructuralism and constructivism. The second, representation, I examine in Chapter 5.
My desire to be meta-cognitive throughout this research led me to consider my research process through a variety of metaphors. In one, I continually imagined myself traversing through swamps of text. With this metaphor especially in mind while conducting these large-scale literature reviews, I have considered how research topics become existent in swampy research. These intersections, though they arose throughout the research as I compared knowledge between *pedagogies of visual culture in art education* and *narrative epistemology* manifested as different sorts of comparisons.

In some ways I have felt like a naturalist. There are, perhaps, distinct populations of creatures that are available for study—frogs in bogs, for example. This is how *pedagogies of visual culture in art education* seemed to be; it was something readily identifiable as a population of texts I could analyze for patterns of thought. Then there are those topics I had to form, as if I was a naturalist dipping a net into murky water and analyzing what stuck—tadpoles, twigs, globs of mud. This was how finding topics that constituted *narrative epistemology* seemed, as I purposely grouped together different sets of data.

And then there were the two intersections I chose to examine—the points where *pedagogies of visual culture in art education* and *narrative epistemology* connected. I noted many sites of intersection throughout my research, including underlying political intentions, an interest in the construction of identity, semiotics, and feminism. And many more became apparent as I continued. Ultimately though, I decided to focus on two
intersections that manifested in completely different manners. The first was the theoretical contexts of postmodernism, poststructuralism and constructivism. The second was more abstract; I understood it to be representation.

Through applying my metaphor of the research-bog, I noted how finding each topic was a different experience. The first was simply a matter of recognizing a context. I noted that aspects of postmodern, poststructuralist and constructivist thought were manifest in each field. If I were a naturalist I might suggest my bog was an Ohio bog, and then describe it as such-- perhaps because it held cattails, green frogs, blue herons, and white-tailed deer.

Locating the other intersection, representation, was a dissimilar experience. The actual word “representation” was like pollen on the wind; it was just a minute word existing countless times throughout text. But representation, as I came to understand it, is an abstract phenomenon. I felt as though I had to sense it. I knew something big and solid existed unseen, like bedrock underneath the swamp. I explain how I came to understand representation in the introduction to Chapter 5.

In this chapter, however, I first explicate postmodernism in a tightly focused manner, then explain how postmodernism manifests in my dual fields of research, pedagogies of visual culture in art education and narrative epistemology. Following this, I do the same for poststructuralism and constructivism. Essentially this is a three-fold
argument, I describe three sets of phenomena, then argue that each exists in my dual fields of *pedagogies of visual culture in art education* and *narrative epistemology*.

**Postmodernism**

Postmodernism is paradigmatic. It is extensive, and a thorough examination of the topic would necessitate a lengthy literature review of many primary sources. To begin with, however, it should be noted that “postmodernism” is “a wide variety of cultural practices and theoretical discourses” (Macey, 2001). Thus postmodernism is a framework of thought that characterizes fields such as research, pedagogy, architecture and art. For the purposes of this chapter, however, a brief, but focused and solid, demonstration of my understanding is necessary.

To explain postmodernism I will cite Giroux (2000), who is exhaustive—

Master narratives and traditions of knowledge grounded in first principles are spurned; philosophical principles of canonicity and the notion of the sacred have become suspect; epistemic certainty and the fixed boundaries of academic knowledge have been challenged by a "war on totality" and a disavowal of all-encompassing, single, world-views; rigid distinctions between high and low culture have been rejected by the insistence that the products of the so-called mass culture, popular, and folk art forms are proper objects of study; the Enlightenment correspondence between history and progress and the modernist faith in rationality, science, and freedom have incurred a deep-rooted skepticism; the fixed and unified identity of the humanist subject has been replaced by a call for narrative space that is pluralized and fluid; and, finally, though far from complete, history is
spurned as a unilinear process that moves the West progressively toward a final realization of freedom. (p. 175)

This may seem like a long list of many separate facets, however Ford (2005) suggests postmodernism distills into three main “stories” (p. 46). These are stories, Ford (2005) asserts, “of doubt regarding the dominant meta-narrative of modernity,” “of contestation regarding the privileging of the human consciousness as the prime mover of understanding,” and a “story that troubles assumptions of transparency with respect to language, subjectivity, and the presence of an objective world to human consciousness” (p. 36). To further distill postmodernism, postmodern thought recognizes that any knowledge of reality must be constructed by a learner through language-- and by recognizing this assumed certainty, any certainty of knowledge is destabilized.

To argue that postmodernism is an intersection between pedagogies of visual culture in art education and narrative epistemologies, I will first return to my definitions of each. In Chapter 2 of this thesis, I note that pedagogies of visual culture in art education is an amorphous concept, normally referring to the study of seeing (visuality) and of seen cultural phenomena-- outside and inside of the realm of institutionally validated artworks—a study which is guided by socially concerned pedagogical aims and often includes the production of visual culture by students themselves (Freedman, 2003; Freedman and Stuhr, 2004; Tavin, 2003). An extensive description of the ways that pedagogies of visual culture are postmodern would be near impossible given the limits of this study. This is for a number of reasons. Pedagogies of visual culture in art education
exist in many overlapping arenas of discourse that are affected by postmodern concepts and understood through a postmodern theoretical framework. Visual culture is one context, as is education and art.

But, how does postmodernism impact art education? Neperud (1995) suggests postmodern critique has affected art education in the following ways—content is not always “given by experts,” knowledge is understood to be a social construction, “content is historically and culturally situated,” there is “a willingness to accept” subjectivity “as a legitimate source of information,” “creative development” is no longer regarded as a “linear” process, “studio practices” are “supplemented” by “aesthetic, art history, critical and multicultural studies,” a “focus on the meaning of art” has “replaced, structural formal studies,” and “teachers… are increasingly regarded as legitimate interpreters,” instead of a “medium through which information created by others passes” (p. 9-10).

These points align with much of visual culture art education. In chapter 2, I explicate how VCAE is understood to accommodate learners in a reality understood through postmodernism. The conflation of high art and popular culture is a primary example. The recognition that visual culture texts are social constructions, and in turn lead to socially constructed meanings is one more. And postmodernism similarly affects pedagogy and curriculum in art education in profound ways because it reconceptualizes the positions of the teachers and students, the knowledge being formed, and the artwork
being studied (Clark, 1996; Efland, Freedman and Stuhr, 1996). All these areas that shape art education are destabilized and questioned by postmodern critique.

As for narrative epistemology, or the “theory, basis and scope of knowledge founded upon narrative thought and texts,” a dissimilar point must be made. Narrative thought and texts operate in both modernist and postmodernist paradigms. As Polkinghorne (1988) explains, evidence of narrative thought is simply everywhere.

With this idea in mind, narrative texts can be used in either the postmodern or the modern paradigm. Their purposes and fundamental natures both differ and mirror each other in each mode of discourse. There is first the basic principle that postmodernism refutes the meta-narrative in favor of smaller, local narratives (Giroux, 2000). Two more points might be made about narrative thought in reference to postmodernism. First, narrative thoughts and texts are portrayals of realities; they are those ordered portrayals of events imbued with meaning. But the construction of narrative texts might also destabilize realities created by narratives texts. Consider how historical narrative accounts, for example, offer a representation of experience or reality. But, each narrative text establishing a history can never describe an accurate account of a past time. The creation of new narrative accounts of histories, might falsify or problematize previous narrative accounts. This point about epistemological validity under postmodernism has repercussions across multiple arenas of discourse including history, qualitative inquiry, law, and psychology.
Obviously, much more might be written about how postmodernism affects pedagogies of visual culture in art education and narrative epistemology. By illustrating that this intersection does exist between the two fields, I have demonstrated that the fields are indeed theoretically related. I will further narrow the focus of this intersection into poststructuralism and constructivism.

Poststructuralism

Postructuralism arguably rests under a paradigm of postmodernism. It is helpful, first, to reexamine one of the three fundamental stories of postmodernism Ford (2005) describes—first: “a story that troubles assumptions of transparency with respect to language, subjectivity, and the presence of an objective world to human consciousness” (p. 46). Language is the primary concept with which poststructuralism is concerned.

To clarify poststructuralism, it must be understood as a reaction to structuralism. Structuralists theorized that cultural texts might be understood through systematic (structured) thought, relations between meanings and symbols (Eagleton, 2003). Narratology, for example, is structuralist in that it seeks to categorize elements—parts, relations, etc.—of narrative text (Bal, 1985). Structuralism explicates the operation of language—therefore, structuralists seek to examine how “signs are combined into meanings” (Eagleton, 2003, p. 84). Since it seeks to understand the relations by which signs, or symbols, combine or connect to create meanings, structuralism influences and
overlaps with other theoretical fields, like Russian Formalism and semiotics, as well as disciplines of literature and anthropology (Eagleton, 2008). Macey (2001) asserts that structuralism was an effort to “unify the human sciences by applying a single methodology” (p. 364).

Poststructuralism, however, asserts that “meaning can never be nailed down” (Eagleton, 2008). Language is not simply a set of concrete rules. Macey (2001) states,

If there is a common core to all the tendencies that have been described as poststructuralist, it lies in a reluctance to ground discourse in any theory of metaphysical origins, an insistence on the inevitable plurality and instability of meaning, a distrust of systematic scientificity, and the abandonment of the old enlightenment project. (p. 307)

How readers establish meaning is the concern. Images or words do not simply constitute meaning is a neat order. Instead, meanings are never stable; words are continually adjusted by other words in innumerable chains and they bear the influence of those words they are not, and exist in the dynamic temporal state of language (Eagleton, 2008, p. 111). Thus, deconstruction, or the act of demonstrating how words resist the closure of meaning due to their foundations of inherent contradictions overlaps and is utilized in poststructuralism (Macey, 2001).

So to argue that poststructuralism is an intersection between pedagogies of visual culture in art education and narrative epistemology, the basic question to answer is how does thinking in each field assert or demonstrate that meaning, since it is constituted through language, is never stable?
In pedagogies of visual culture in art education, visual images and the ways we see and understand them, or visuality, are examined. Visuality denotes “the social construction of the visual” (Tavin, 2003). As a peripheral relation, in Chapter 2, I noted that the field of visual culture art education intersects with semiotics (Smith-Shank, 2004). However, note that visual culture, in what Tavin (2003) describes as its “substantive state,” is composed of countless texts in which signs are in relationships by which viewers construct meanings. As visual culture texts are formed of signs, which exist, as Eagleton (2008) describes, “in countless strings” of other signs, meaning in visual culture texts are never “stable” (p. 119). Tavin (2003) writes “art educators can attempt to position particular forms of popular culture in a hermeneutical field of contradictory meaning” (p. 199). “Contradictory meanings” can arise in the chain of signs that endlessly resist a closure on meaning. Texts are understood to be sites of struggle, especially between ideologies (Tavin, 2003). One way to elucidate this might be through recognizing, through a poststructuralist lens, how meanings can be contested through the instability of language.

Narrative epistemology, similarly, is invested with postructuralist concern because of its basis in language. Narrative epistemology is the theory, basis, and scope of knowledge founded upon narrative thought and texts. Both narrative thoughts and narrative texts rely on depicting, through language, events and experiences in ways that give meaning to phenomena according to human concerns (Bruner, 1986). To account for
how narrative epistemology is connected to poststructuralism, note there is the basic fact that all thought and text is structured in language; thus is narrative thought and text in what Polkinghorne (1988) describes as the “prison-house of language” (p.25). An application of poststructuralism can destabilize perceived meanings of stories, and words within those stories.

Both narrative epistemology and pedagogies of visual culture are rooted in meanings made through intricate and boundless systems of signs. Educators, researchers and theorists are and should be aware of this. Language is recognized to be dynamic and unstable in poststructuralist thought (Eagleton, 2008). Pedagogies of visual culture in art education and narrative epistemology, as ways of thought rooted in and built through language, must be understood within this context. Similarly, an awareness of how each field connects to constructivism is necessary.

Constructivism

Finally, there is the theoretical context of constructivism. Constructivism, as a theoretical lens, asserts that knowledge is socially constructed from previously created knowledge (Thayer-Bacon). Bednarz and Larochelle (1998) assert that “all forms of knowledge are inevitably reinterpreted according to the postulates, ends, and sociocognitive experiences of the person who takes an interest in them” (p. 4). Constructivism is a theory of how a learner socially creates a his or her reality (Bednarz
and Larochelle, 1998). Von Glaserfield (1996) explains how a constructivist stance frames learning and teaching—environment is perceived in subjective ways and knowledge cannot be simply transferred from one person to another. The point for teachers is, Von Glaserfield (1996) states, “not to dispense knowledge, but to provide students with opportunities and incentives to build it up” (p. 7).

Constructivism is subsumed by postmodernism specifically because in each theoretical context knowledge is understood to be constructed. Postmodernists assert that reality cannot be known outside of our interpretation of it, and that these interpretations of reality are bound by social structures, and will ultimately be subjective. Essentially, the common basis between the two discourses is that perceptions of reality are built through interaction and experience by the learner.

In Chapter 2 of this thesis, I note that pedagogies of visual culture in art education is an amorphous concept, normally referring to the study of seeing (visuality) and of seen cultural phenomena—outside and inside of the realm of institutionally validated artworks—a study which is guided by socially concerned pedagogical aims and often includes the production of visual culture by students themselves (Freedman, 2003; Freedman and Stuhr, 2008; Tavin, 2003). And, narrative epistemology is “the theory, basis and scope of knowledge founded upon narrative thought and text.”

Two points suggest how both pedagogies of visual culture in art education and narrative epistemology might be considered constructivist. First, Bednarz and Larochelle
(1998) explain that constructivist teaching urges teachers to take into account students’ knowledge and urge greater participation in the creating of knowledge. This occurs in both fields of study. On a basic level, this manifests in lesson plans, curriculums and pedagogies in which both teachers and students directly participate in activities that construct knowledge (Freedman, 2003; Jaeger & Lauritzen, 1997).

On a deeper level, each field accepts that learners come to know the world by constructing knowledge about it. In pedagogies of visual culture in art education, visual images and the ways we see and understand them, or visuality, are examined. Once more, visuality denotes “the social construction of the visual” (Tavin, 2003). In other words, how we see is how we have learned to see through interactions with other humans, and what we see is a similarly social construction relying on both common and specific constructed knowledge on the viewer’s part. Visual culture, and thus the pedagogies that subsume its study in art education, reflects the human process of constructing knowledge.

Similarly, narrative epistemology-- the theory, basis, and scope of knowledge founded upon narrative thought and text-- is concerned with the same of study of texts and thinking processes that assume knowledge to be constructed, rather than existent outside the learner. The “narrative mode of thought” Bruner (1986) describes is arguably an example of constructivist learning. In the narrative mode of thought, learners construct stories to arrange events and experiences in a logical order and thus imbue experience
with meaning (Bruner, 1984). The construction of stories then, correlates to construction of knowledge.

Postmodernism, and its subsumed theoretical fields of poststructuralism and constructivism, represent an intersection between pedagogies of visual culture in art education and narrative epistemologies. Both fields are arguably affected by applying the theoretical frameworks of postmodernism, poststructuralism and constructivism. Art educators must be aware of how these strains of thought might affect their pedagogies and curriculum, as well as the ways in which they, and their learners construct and know their realities.

References


Chapter 5: Representation

*From the perspective of mere representation,*

the external world always remains only a phenomenon.

*Wilhelm Dilthey, Introduction to the Human Sciences*

Introduction: Locating, Synthesizing and Defining

As I mentioned in the previous chapter, this intersection was one that I had to construct. Though the actual word *representation* occurred countless times throughout research different discursive contexts often bound its use. Moreover, the word has multiple denotations accompanied by varied connotations. So to first demonstrate *representation* as an intersection between pedagogies of visual culture in art education and narrative epistemology, I must first define *representation.*

I begin with a basic definition of the word. *Representation* is “the act of standing for, or in the place of, a person, group, or thing, and related senses” (http://dictionary.oed.com). Given such a basic meaning of the word, context becomes evidently significant. For example, the sentence “I am represented by the man.” might lead the reader to assume my self was represented by another human agent in a political, judicial or business arena. Or, it might also lead a reader to assume that some interpretation of my likeness has been replicated through some means, perhaps visually or verbally. Other interpretations could certainly be made in other contexts.
Note two points between the differing senses of the word. The first point is dissimilarity. Each case *connotes* separate contexts. The second point, however, is the sense in which they overlap. Each sense of the word also *denotes* similar actions. The essential actions in both cases are reception, interpretation, and depiction. In the first case, a Senator, perhaps, interprets the wishes of a voting population, and depicts those wishes and needs. In the second, an artist, for example, sees my likeness, interprets it, and renders it on canvas. Many processes exist underlying representation, then--communication, interpretation, presentation, depiction, reception.

It seems both complicated and simple, depending on perspective. Therefore, it is helpful to consider representation through the lenses of scholars operating within the bounds of *pedagogies of visual culture* and *narrative epistemology*. To render this chapter cogent, I first examine *representation* from a variety of perspectives. Then I synthesize these definitions to form an understanding of representation. Further considering this, I use Jakobson’s model of communication to explicate representation. Finally, though it might seem obvious, I explain how both *pedagogies of visual culture in art education* and *narrative epistemology* are both concerned with *representation* (according to my working definition) thus proving it exists as an intersection between both fields.

Analyzing representation from a variety of perspectives renders patterns of thought perceivable. Representation is a concern in literary theory. Mitchell (1990), a
literary theorist, suggests that representation is seemingly simple; “representation is always of someone or something, by something or someone, to someone” (p. 12). Aristotle wrote that representation is clarified in three ways—object, manner and means (Mitchell, 1990, p. 13). These are the object (what actual phenomena is interpreted and depicted), manner (the way symbolism, interpretation and depiction occurs) and means (medium to achieve a specific reaction) (Mitchell, 1990, p. 13). However, acts of representation are problematic. Plato argued, Mitchell (1990) explains, that because representations depict phenomena from reality in certain ways, or “substitute,” they ought be avoided (p. 14). In other words, representation obscures truth. Of course, this argument is grounded in an assumption that there is truth, which becomes problematic under a postmodern paradigm. Nevertheless, these points make clear that representation is clearly a matter of social interaction and depiction of reality.

Schwandt (2007) asserts that representation is “depicting, portraying, or describing social phenomenon…as resemblance, replication, repetition, description and duplication” (p.263). Moreover, he asserts it is pivotal in a modernist understanding of the world. There are two significant points in Schwandt's description. The first is that representation is an attempt to describe reality through depiction. The second point is that representation is social in construction.

Reeve, a philosopher, offers an account primarily concerned with political phenomena. Reeve (1998) explains representation in a political sense occurs in three
distinct ways. The first case is between a “principal and an agent… with respect to a particular facet of their affairs,” as in legal cases (Reeves, 1998, p.270). Second, one phenomena can symbolize a person or persons, as Olympic athletes stand in for their nations (Reeves, 1998). Finally, a person might “represent others” by being in some way typical of them (Reeves, 1998, p. 270). To further clarify representation in these regards, Reeves (1998) elucidates two pertinent processes—election and authorization (p. 271). These processes are significant. Speaking from my perspective as a citizen of the United States, I might wonder, “Who do I elect to represent me?” and “How have I authorized myself to be represented?” The political repercussions of representation are significant; an underlying, unstated, word in each question is choice; I choose to be represented or I do not choose to be represented. Representations are social in that they are political.

Narrative research provides a lens to view how implicit political concerns merge with the explicit act of depiction. Of representation Goodall (2008) states:

Representation is never a simple matter of transferring “truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth” from lived experiences to the page. Of course, the people named (or given pseudonyms) are those of real people, and the events depicted are events that really happened, but beyond those fundamental elements of reporting are important questions of language and perspective. (p. 23)

Note how Goodall echoes Plato’s concerns with truth. Representation focuses a deep concern underlying all research, both quantitative and qualitative; how can it truthfully
depict phenomena? More precisely, how can it operate as an inevitably social construction to depict perceptions of reality?

Eisner’s (2002) definition yields similar points. Representation, he writes is composed of three cognitive functions—“inscription” (“the idea is preserved”), “editing” (“working on inscriptions so they achieve the quality, the precision and the power, their creator desires”) and “communication” (Eisner, 2002, p. 6). He goes on to say: “Representation is always mediated through some form. Some of these forms are carried by the meanings that language makes possible” (p. 8). Eisner’s contribution suggests that representation is a process; note the social dimensions of this process connoted by the words he uses (i.e. communication, language, editing, mediated).

Finally, Efland, Freedman and Stuhr (1996) discuss representation through the theoretical lens of postmodernism. “Illusion” is key in their description, because the act of representing suggests a depiction of knowledge in a stable form; knowledge, of course, is a social construction continually in flux, so the depiction of it as stable is illusory (Efland, Freedman and Stuhr, 1996, p. 22). Moreover, given that knowledge is also subjective, another person can never accurately depict another person. They write, “The act of representation inherently deletes something or adds to that which is represented” (Efland, Freedman and Stuhr, 1996, p. 22). Note how the description of representation that these art educators offer problematizes Eisner’s. Also, note how these authors’
concerns correspond to Plato’s. And, a focus on the social aspect of representation is once more apparent.

Other considerations could have certainly been cited, but what these sources offer is a synthesis. By recognizing the commonalities between these sources, it can be argued that two key points underlie representation as an act and/or a text. It is social, meaning that representations are socially constructed and received. Second, representations are depictions, meaning that they are symbolic, standing in place of phenomena (i.e. knowledge, perceptions of reality, another human’s thoughts). Representations, for the purpose of this argument, are socially constructed depictions of perceived realities.

Explication

Key elements are interpretation and communication. Representations are constructed and received; they are transmitted and they are interpreted. To illuminate this process, I will illustrate with Jakobson’s (2001) model of communication. Briefly stated, Jakobson (2001) explains that a communicator sends a message to a receiver. This message is constituted with, and in the context of, a common structure of symbols between both parties; however, being that it exists between disconnected minds, there is room for misinterpretation (Jakobson, 2001). This accounts for the creation and reception of representations. Moreover, each part of this process accounts for specific actions with representation. For example, I create an artwork for a friend and my friend receives it. I
suggest it was a portrait of someone we both knew. He suggests it is not a likeness, while I argue it is. There is recognizably a disconnect between interpretations of a common experience.

Theories of interpretation, or hermeneutics, might inform this explication, but I will instead rely on constructivism. Constructivism implies that learners base all understandings of experience on prior experiences (Thayer-Bacon, 2005). Moreover, this learning process occurs in a social context by unique individuals (Thayer-Bacon, 2005). Noting this, I explicate the actions of both the transmitter of representations and the receiver of representations. Both apprehend representations according to their own constructed knowledge; the transmitter creates and the receiver interprets. In construction (to transmitting) and interpretation (from reception) the social and depictive elements of representation are found.

By applying our definition of representation, “a socially constructed depiction of perceptions of reality,” a number of facts about representation become clear. Representations are created with the knowledge of their receivers in mind. But, any number of actions might occur according to the existence, or inexistence, of this knowledge. Representations might purposely or unavoidably use or misuse a receiver’s knowledge. Representations are inherently social, so they inherently concern how power is maintained between learners in social structures. Speaking specifically of popular culture representations, Anderson and Tavin (2003) write, “Representations are
ideological texts that provide pleasure, communicate information, influence consumption and arbitrate power relations” (p. 21).

Representation is a concern in both pedagogies of visual culture in art education and narrative epistemology, and I therefore argue that it is an intersection of the two fields. To further clarify how, I return the two definitions I utilize to describe each field. In Chapter 2 of this thesis, I note that pedagogies of visual culture in art education are amorphous entities, normally referring to the study of seeing (visuality) and of seen cultural phenomena— outside and inside of the realm of institutionally validated artworks— guided by socially concerned pedagogical aims and often includes the production of visual culture by students themselves (Freedman, 2003; Freedman and Stuhr, 2008; Tavin, 2003). And from Chapter 3 in this thesis, I note that narrative epistemology is “the theory, basis and scope of knowledge founded upon narrative thought and texts.”

First, representation, or socially constructed depiction of a perception of reality, is a concern in pedagogies of visual culture in art education. Obviously this manifests in what is studied. As stated, the entirety of images experienced and made throughout human experience offer choices for valid study—paintings, sculpture, film, television, etc. (Freedman, 2003). Thus visual culture, in what Tavin (2003) terms the “substantive” sense, is depictions. More significantly, the fact that the objects of study are socially constructed undergirds pedagogies of visual culture in art education. And, visuality is a
concern, being “the social construction of the visual” (Tavin, 2003). In other words, *how we see* is how we have *learned to see* through interactions with other humans, and *what* we see is a social construction. Moreover, placing further lenses attributed by pedagogies of visual culture in art education—like *education, pedagogy, art, or art education*—it is apparent that any study of socially constructed depictions will in turn be social in nature. And especially in forms of art education, this might result in more socially constructed depictions, or representations.

In the field of narrative epistemology, representation is also a concern through these two elements—the depiction and social construction of perceptions of reality. Narrative epistemology is the theory, basis and scope of knowledge founded upon narrative thought and text. So, as in pedagogies of visual culture in art education, there is the basic fact that the concern is study of narrative texts (stories manifested in thoughts, literature, visual arts, etc.), because these texts are evidence of a narrative epistemology. I used a specific definition of a “narrative text” in Chapter 3-- “a narrative text represents events through the human experience of passing time.” The argument that some narrative texts do not accurately depict reality (as in a fantasy movie, for example) is unnecessary because descriptions of worlds where, perhaps, laws of formal science do not apply, still operate within the bounds of narrative knowing. And narrative knowing, of course, is a primary way humans construct perceptions of reality, whether these realities actually
exist or not. A narrative text, thus, is likewise a *representation*, according to my definition.

Based on the synthesis made in this chapter, a representation is a *socially constructed depiction of a perception of reality*. Similarly, narrative texts—storied thoughts and texts—are *socially constructed depictions of perceptions of reality*. The “narrative mode of thought” is arguably social because it is based in social contexts, with understandings of socially constructed prior knowledge (Bruner, 1986). So, the outcomes of narrative thought—research, self-identity, history, understandings of place, literature—are *representations*.

**Conclusion**

Much more might be written about the politics of representation in each field. Narrative research, narrative thought, narrative theory, narrative constructions of identity, history and place all accept, construct and disavow certain realities that are inherently limited in perspective. Similarly, visual culture, and the pedagogies of visual culture in art education, accept, construct and disavow certain realities that are inherently limited. Sometimes this is overtly political, depending on who is receiving or transmitting these representations. Because representations are socially constructed within social structures that maintain power, they are inherently political. Moreover, since all knowledge is
socially constructed and education is an inherently political action, I argue that representation in both fields is implicitly political.

To conclude this chapter, I argue for a significant awareness of how representation manifests as an undercurrent in both pedagogies of visual culture in art education and narrative epistemology. By synthesizing a working definition of representation as socially constructed depiction, it becomes clear that representation is not only an undercurrent in research about the two fields, it is a primary, fundamental concern in each.

References


Chapter 6: Conclusion

Where do we go from here? The battle’s done, and we kinda won...

So we sound our victory cheer... Where do we go from here?

*Once More With Feeling, Buffy the Vampire Slayer,*

Where have we been?

In Chapter 1 I articulate two questions that direct this research. The first is as follows: “What are the intersections that exist between pedagogies of visual culture in art education and narrative epistemology?” The second is: “What might the significance of locating and analyzing these intersections be to the discipline of art education?” After articulating and describing the contexts of my concerns as a researcher, educator, author, student in Chapter 1, my answer to the first question [“What are the intersections exist between pedagogies of visual culture in art education and narrative epistemology?”] begins with dual literature reviews analysing research on *pedagogies of visual culture in art education* and *narrative epistemology*. To remind the reader, the chapter on *pedagogies of visual culture* uncovers patterns of thought characterizing the field. These include visual culture art education (VCAE) as a response to the conditions of current living, the comparison of VCAE’s currently amorphous state to other historical and contemporary pedagogical projects, a concern on what images and acts of seeing to study, and finally, possibilities for learning and teaching in VCAE.
In Chapter 3 I present a literature review of research on *narrative epistemology*. Having to articulate what I understand this field to be—the theory, basis and scope of knowledge founded upon narrative thought and texts—I also draw together a number of research topics to constitute a literature review. The topics I cover to constitute this literature review, in order of discussion, are as follows: assertions that storytelling is an inherently human trait; the purposes and processes of narrative thought; narrative curriculums; explications of how narrative thought creates senses of self-identity, history and place; the meta-narrative as a problematic, but possibly constructive, context; demonstrations of various ways literary theory explicates the understanding of narrative texts; manifestations of narrative thought throughout the world of qualitative research.

Through the process of these reviews, intersections between the fields become more clear. These intersections have been located in two ways. First, I pinpointed intersections through outright comparison of theoretical concepts embedded in research in the dual fields of pedagogies of visual culture in art education and narrative epistemology. Second, my scholarly instincts similarly led me to uncover embedded concepts. In the previous two chapters I described two significant intersections at which the fields of *pedagogies of visual culture in art education* and *narrative epistemology* meet. The first was an intersection of theoretical contexts; both pedagogies of visual culture in art education and narrative epistemology exist within contexts of *postmodernism, poststructuralism* and *constructivism*. Impacted by these contexts,
research on the fields arguably illustrates implicit or explicit concepts, or perspectives, that are postmodern, poststructuralist and constructivist. The second intersection, representation, presents a dissimilar location of intersection. By defining representation as a *socially constructed depiction of perceptions of reality*, I locate and articulate an abstract concern between the fields of pedagogies of visual culture in art education and narrative epistemology.

The second question necessitates reflection on the process of locating these intersections. The second question is as follows: “What might the significance of locating and analyzing these intersections be to the discipline of art education?” In this conclusion, I articulate a response to this question, and finalize this thesis. Following this answer, I note possible topics for future research.

Toward what purpose?

What might the significance of locating and analyzing these intersections be to the discipline of art education? By locating and describing two intersections between the fields of *pedagogies of visual culture in art education* and *narrative epistemology* I demonstrate that these two fields are, in fact, *theoretically related* in distinct ways. The intersections reveal two significant relations between the two fields. The first is a relation of *theoretical context* through *postmodernist, poststructuralist and constructivist perspectives*. The second is a relation of *inherent concerns* through an explicit and
implicit emphases for the abstract concept of representation, which I have come to define as socially constructed depictions of perceptions of reality. Moreover, if not for the boundaries of this research, I might have located and described more intersections, and proved additional similar and dissimilar relations between the fields. What significance does the existence of these intersection hold for art education? These intersections draw significant attention to the fact that these ways of thinking are intimately connected.

What is the significance to these acts of location for art education? By reiterating the title of this thesis, I note the significance is dual; I consider the possible impact of this significance through reconceptualization and research. Locating these intersections suggests possibilities for reconceptualizing forms of art education and research on forms of art education. Undoubtedly, these two impacts correspond on a basic level with my dual interests in pedagogies of visual culture in art education [reconceptualization] and qualitative inquiry/narrative epistemology [research]. However, both forms of impact are intertwined in the significance of this research. I have proven that the fields are intimately related; given that these two fields intersect in pronounced ways, they can, and do, arguably impact one another in ways that will, in turn, impact the practice of art education and its research.

Although I have proven that the fields are intimately related through embedded concepts, I will return to a point I have illustrated throughout this research. Both fields implicitly, and sometimes explicitly, maintain attributes of the one another. Visual culture
art education can assume a narrative epistemological stance, and as I demonstrate in the previous chapters, often implicitly does. Objects of study in visual culture are often narrative texts—institutionalized works of art, television shows, films, or advertisements are examples. The learning about these narrative texts is similarly subsumed under narrative epistemology, because learning under the constructivist paradigm is often narrative. And, the histories, ideologies, social structures, or personal stories surrounding the production of these texts are often narratively represented. As examples, consider how the modernist meta-narrative of progress impacts education, or how representations of artist-lives affects the interpretations of their works. Also, the social structures framing how viewers see and construct knowledge in response to these texts (visuality) are likewise represented narratively. Finally, I note that research on visual culture in art education is often represented through narrative inquiry. For these reasons, narrative epistemology undergirds and complements forms of visual culture art education.

Similarly, ways of narrative thinking—those topics I synthesize to form my conception narrative epistemology in Chapter 3—often operate in tandem with visual culture. Narrative texts are often visual culture. Our interpretation of these texts is often constructed through narrative thought. Histories, identities, places and meta-narratives are often represented through narrative thought in visual culture texts. Finally, pedagogies of visual culture and research on pedagogies of visual culture, is often qualitative research constructed through forms of narrative inquiry.
What can art educators do with assertion that these fields are intimately related? First educators and researchers can foster and maintain an awareness of how the fields of pedagogies of visual culture in art education and narrative epistemology overlap. A more specific focus of this awareness might be an acknowledgment of the ways images combine with, and often are, narrative texts. Another more specific focus of awareness might be a purposeful use of narrative inquiry in lesson plans on visual culture. However, to reiterate the significance of locating these intersections—thereby proving that the fields of pedagogies of visual culture in art education and narrative epistemology are intimately related—I will reiterate that the significance, especially for the field of art education, lies in the possibility offered for reconceptualizing understandings of art education and research on art education. I do not suggest that all pedagogies of art education and art education must be reconceptualized. Instead, I hope that this research, as an example of a specific way of thinking, might suggest possibilities for reconceptualization.

How can an awareness of the intimate relation between these fields reconceptualize understandings of art education? To briefly demonstrate possibilities of reconceptualization I return to topics I address in Chapter 1. In Chapter 1, I explain that one way I understand this research is as a response to concerns manifested in current art education research. In doing this, I demonstrated that a number of art educators currently argue for forms of art education that respond to current social issues. An awareness of the
interrelatedness between the two fields—pedagogies of visual culture in art education and narrative epistemology—initializes response to these stated concerns.

One of these concerns, or social issues, was the vast proliferation of “new technology” (Duncum, 1997, p. 69). Art educators can and do respond to this condition by integrating new media technologies. Moreover, this use of technology can reveal and utilize narrative thought, through a wide range of technological media.

A second issue I highlight is that art educators advocating forms of VCAE commonly challenge traditional conceptions of art by questioning values to uncover ideologies. This concept is implicitly linked to narrative epistemology through those stories (meta-narratives, histories, life-stories, personal stories) associated with knowledge, artworks, artists and art movements. In Chapter 2 I note that stories about museum artworks are especially linked to stories that validate a sense of unbalanced value. Extending this idea further, narrative inquiry can uncover the ideologies in visual culture texts. By more deeply promoting narrative inquiry in art education, learners might understand how ideologies are represented in narrative form. Maintaining this awareness might similarly emphasize, to the educator and student, how knowledge about visual culture is constructed through narrative thought.

A third issue I demonstrate in Chapter 1 is that art educators maintain forms of art education can positively benefit their communities. I have described how narrative epistemology and pedagogies of visual culture are intimately related and implicitly or
explicitly overlap. I will begin with my proof that the fields of narrative epistemology and pedagogies of visual culture in art education are, in fact, mutually compatible. I will combine this argument with a second argument. Understandings of community—deeply human concerns of belonging, exclusion, citizenship, cooperation, representation, group action and individual agency—are understood through narrative thought, and represented in visual and narrative ways. Narrative thought and text demonstrate these concerns on countless levels of community. Some of these levels might be described as environmental, local, cultural, institutional, national, and global. For this reason, I argue that the mutual compatibility of narrative epistemology and pedagogy of visual culture can be used a lens to further understand the concerns of community already inherent in art education. Similarly, an awareness of this mutual compatibility and intimate interrelatedness can suggest possible responses in the practices and research of art educators in the future.

Further possibilities of reconceptualizing art education through the lens of mutual compatibility and intimate interrelatedness might be demonstrated. To briefly describe an route of possible action, I will return to the intersections that I locate in this research. This is because an awareness of specific intersections points offers a significance to art educators and researchers. Being so embedded in each field, those intersections that I recognized—the theoretical contexts of postmodernism, poststructuralism and constructivism and concern of representation—can provide distinct, focused points to
enter and investigate narrative and visual texts. And, the possible points of intersection beyond the two I noted could be utilized similarly. Entering texts this way, whether as researchers, students, or instructors, texts can be interrogated, critiqued and problematized with focused questions or issues in mind.

Though other intersections arguably exist, I located the theoretical contexts of postmodernism, poststructuralism and constructivism, as well an overall abstract concern about representation. By using the two intersections I located, lesson plans might be created. In discussion, I might ask my students: “How does this narrative visual text subscribe to a poststructuralist framework?” Or after discussing the denotations and connotations of such a seemingly simple word like representation, any number of popular culture texts and institutionalized artworks might be analyzed, with the aim of considering the multiple ways a text is socially constructed in creation, meaning, transmission, and reception, as well as the multiple ways it depicts a perception of truth or reality.

Thus, at the end of this research, I conclude that I understand the significance of locating these intersections between the fields of pedagogies of visual culture in art education and narrative epistemology to first be wide-reaching on a fundamental level--because the fields are intimately and theoretically related, overlapping in implicit and explicit ways. I also understand the significance of locating these intersections to be focused--as the mutual compatibility and interrelatedness of each field designates specific
sites of possibility, initializing possible responses in various ways according to those concerns art educators and researchers hold. Significance for art education is found in the locating of intersections between pedagogies of visual culture in art education and narrative epistemology. To end, I assert that possible future applications of this research can therefore impact reconceptualizations and research of art education.

Future Qualitative research

Undoubtedly, my goals of future research inform this research. With these presently un-crystallized goals, or research questions, in mind, I construct a solid review and analysis of literature about narrative epistemology and pedagogies of visual culture. I am purposely opening three doors into art education-- narrative representations, the navigation and critique of visual culture, and the relation between the two as a third. I thereby gain points of entry to discuss a wide spectrum of topics. Since I have no grand tour question articulating my dissertation research, I will briefly sketch the various interests about which I hope to write scholarly research in the future. Briefly stated, the issues I hope to investigate are as follows: representations of U.S. national identity through narrative and visual texts; representations of masculinity and the impacts they have on male learners; and visual and narrative representations of human/nature interactions.
Building upon my knowledge gained as an undergraduate in art history and English, in which I focused my study on American writers and artists, I am interested in exploring how representations of American visual and literary creative output, and their creators, presently influences, or might influence, the representation of and reflection on what constitutes “American identity” in visual culture art education. This research will, of course, problematize issues of canonicity, nationality, citizenship and globalism. I hold a unique perspective on the issue, and I hope to imbue this research with the frameworks of critical theory, political grounding, and artistic narrative inquiry.

Additionally, I hope to utilize my experiences as a male learner, educator, and educator of male learners, in tandem with the foundations of knowledge constructed through my literature reviews in pedagogies of visual culture in art education and narrative epistemology. Especially because of my unique perspective, I am interested in a specific body of research that examines the context of how young men construct knowledge in an epistemologically changing reality. Kimmell (2008) asserts that both changing conceptions of adulthood and socially maintained perceptions of masculinity necessitate continuing awareness, especially by educators, of the social contexts within which young men learn and form identities. And, art education has been informed by a number of movements—postmodernism, feminism, multiculturalism, and queer theory, for example—that undoubtedly position men in contexts that must be continually investigated.
Third, I am quite interested in representations of the human-nature relationship, and how those representations affect our construction of knowledge about this relationship. Though it might seem to present a binary relation—humans and nature, or humans in nature—this relationship is complexly intertwined, in numerous ways.

Undoubtedly, visual and narrative representations of this relationship presently impact the beliefs, actions and identity of learners. Thus far, however, this has been an interest I have avoided, save for using specific descriptions of experience to illustrate concepts in the body of my research. And yet, these interests are embedded in my everyday life, and therefore, by extension, my subjectivity as a researcher, writer and educator. Building upon hooks’ (1998) conception of “engaged pedagogy,” in which the educator presents and understands his or her self holistically to become a healthier, more consciously socially aware educator, I hope to relevantly write more about these experiences. A foundation in narrative epistemology and pedagogies of visual culture will provide ways to begin and justify this study.

Fundamentally, I hope to contribute to the study of qualitative research writing. By crafting my research through creative scholarly writing about the future research-topics I have described, within the context of art education, I will add to a body of qualitative research with certain foci. More significantly, I hope to contribute to the growing body of research about conducting qualitative research. This thesis, as it is conducted with narrative reflection, and since it offers reflection on my own research
process, is an initial contribution. Doubtlessly, my future research has invested this present research with specific research-goals constructed around the pivotal ideas of pedagogies of visual culture in art education and narrative epistemology.

References


Bibliography


Blandy, D & Bolin, P. E. (2002). Beyond visual culture: Seven statements of support for material culture studies in art education. Studies in Art Education. 44(3) 246-263.


Boughton et. al. (2002) Art education and visual culture. *Advisory NAEA.*

Bowen, S. (2008). *Recovering and reclaiming the art and visual culture of the Black Art Movement.* Unpublished master's thesis. The Ohio State University, Columbus, OH.


Buda, S. L. (2005). *Curriculum design for teaching citizenship through character and diversity education using arts-based integrated curriculum for art educators.* Unpublished master's thesis. Ohio State University, Columbus, OH.


190


195


