Determining the Role of the Art Museum in Students' Perceptions of Themselves as Artists

Lisa Casey

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PROFESSIONAL SOCIETIES AND ORGANIZATIONS

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DETERMINING THE ROLE OF THE ART MUSEUM ON STUDENTS’ PERCEPTIONS OF THEMSELVES AS ARTISTS

by

LISA CASEY

Under the Direction of Dr. Melody Milbrandt and Dr. Janice Fournillier

ABSTRACT
This single case study examines the role of the art museum in relation to students’ perceptions of themselves as artists. Within the school setting students are asked to create, study and exhibit art using similar techniques and methods of adult artists within the art community. Student artwork, however, is not perceived as art that is worthy of display within that art community and is usually limited to the school context. Additionally, if students visit museums with their school, the visit is typically limited to once per school year, if the budget allows. Students are not afforded the opportunity to visit the same museum or exhibit multiple times and are therefore limited in their ability to navigate the learning possibilities of an art museum and to establish an understanding of their role within an art community outside of school. The primary goal of this study was to understand how learning and exhibiting within the museum context affects
students’ perceptions of themselves as artists. Specifically, the study focused on both the unique learning environment afforded by a museum, along with student art exhibition situated in a professional, non-school context. Using a single case study design, seven elementary school students in grades three thru five participated in learning activities within the context of an art museum. Visiting the same exhibit multiple times, the students explored the galleries at the Marietta Cobb Museum of Art from the perspective of a museum visitor, docent, curator and artist. They also independently produced art work outside of the museum that culminated in a student exhibition held at the Marietta Cobb Museum of Art. The findings of this research suggest that exhibition within the museum setting positively impacted the students but did not immediately influence their artist identity. The findings also demonstrate the value of providing students with the opportunity to visit not only the same museum multiple times but also the same exhibit in order to deepen student understanding and strengthen their awareness of the art community that exists outside of the classroom. The implications for art and museum educators are examined along with suggestions for further research.

INDEX WORDS: Artistic perceptions, art museum exploration, student art exhibition, elementary artists, contextual learning
DETERMINING THE ROLE OF THE ART MUSEUM ON STUDENTS’ PERCEPTIONS OF THEMSELVES AS ARTISTS

by

LISA CASEY

A Dissertation

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Teaching and Learning in Art Education in the College of Education Georgia State University

Atlanta, GA 2015
DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my incredible family. To my mom and dad, Dick and Linda Burnem, who have taught me more than anything I ever learned in school. They are the source of all of my accomplishments and I am beyond thankful for the life and love they have provided for me. I dedicate it to my husband Patrick who always believes in me and supports all of my crazy ideas out of selfless love. He has helped me in more ways than I can name and in more ways than he even realizes. Primarily he has helped me to believe in myself. I am thankful to have his hand to hold and guide me and his heart to love and to be loved by. Finally, I dedicate this accomplishment to my kids, Jack and Kate. They are my cheerleaders, my research assistants, my inspiration and my heart. I hope that they understand how much they mean to me, how much I love them and how much I value their encouragement. They make me want to be the best I can be. Thank you all for helping, loving and dreaming along with me, I could not have done any of this without you.
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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

In this introduction I explain how I came to develop this single case study in which I investigated a group of elementary students who took part in a museum learning and exhibition initiative at the Marietta Cobb Museum of Art (MCMA) in the fall of 2014. I provide a brief description of the events that took place at the museum, the background and rationale for this study, the research questions, and an overview of the dissertation. The main objective of this case study was to determine how student learning and exhibiting within the context of a museum affects how students’ perceive themselves as artists.

This chapter also provides the background for the study which is rooted in my experiences as an art teacher and my desire to understand how students construct knowledge and learn outside of the traditional art classroom.

The Problem

As an art teacher of young children I encourage my students feel, act and create like professional artists. I implement learning strategies designed to perpetuate my belief that their work is important; worthy of our time and study. I often ask my students to write an artist’s statement at the conclusion of a project, which I hope promotes self-reflection about their artistic process and product. I host art shows in which the students are celebrated and referred to as artists. I encourage students to keep a journal of their artistic thoughts and plans. I hope to instill authentic artistic behaviors by requiring correct terminology and studio processes. My
students participate in peer critiques in which they discuss their artistic vision and look for ways to improve. Additionally, I demonstrate through our interactions that I am learning along with them. I seek to instill within the students that artistic growth is a process that never ends.

Despite all of my efforts to encourage students to feel and act like artists, I feel most of my students do not consider themselves artists or view their work as real art. As a teacher I am keenly aware that students do not view their own work or the work of their peers as art that anyone outside of the school setting would take seriously in terms of value, critique or authentic study. There are some exceptions; some students start school fully confident in their artistic abilities. During the first few weeks of school it is easy to find an eager group of five and six year olds who have been told by proud parents that they *are* artists and fortunately they still believe that. They come to class very self-assured in their abilities and are excited to take home every creation for someone at home to display proudly.

Heather Malin (2012) asserts that students within an art classroom create a “community of art practice” (p. 1). In her study, which examines identity and meaning in the elementary art room, Malin (2012) contends that “this community of practice had implications for how the children were developing as participants within the community, and for how they made their school art making into personally meaningful activity” (p.1). I too believe that many students find their place within the art community of a school or classroom and perhaps identify as belonging there, but what about the art world outside of the school walls? Do they consider themselves artists outside of the school context?

For many of my students the initial enthusiasm and confidence of the early school years seems to fade over time. My students in the upper grades tend to define themselves primarily if
not solely as students, confined by the classroom and limited by what it has to offer. They spend a great deal of time studying the art that is made and displayed outside of school but I do not believe they feel that they are an integral part of it. For some students, their artwork may continue to be valued by those who view it but that value is limited by their student status. Although, many students are still excited to create and often proud of their art work, it is still perceived by themselves and others as merely a student assignment rather than an authentic piece of art. It may hang in the hallway for a brief period or temporarily on the refrigerator at home if it makes it out of the school and out of their backpack. It is temporary, good for the assignment but certainly not worth valuing or studying beyond the confines of the art classroom or their family kitchen.

I believe that many parents seem to feel the same. They love their children’s artwork but certainly do not consider it worthy of study or appreciation by others. It is certainly different than work produced by professional artists, in both its permanence and importance.

Despite my attempts within the art room to make children feel like genuine artists, they find the obvious limitations hard to ignore. Professional artists do not have assignments to complete; their work is not displayed with staples on a bulletin board. Real artists create what they love and people come to see it not because they are required to but because they want to. Real art work does not hang for a few days before it makes its way quietly to the trash, it is preserved and valued in museums, not in elementary school hallways.

In my eighteen years in the art classroom I have become aware that the setting of school shapes self-identity. Students do not seem to look beyond the classroom to see where they fit in the larger artistic community. I feel the school culture makes it difficult for children to see
themselves as anything other than students. Teachers are often viewed as dispensers of
information rather than co-learners. Although students in my classroom are provided
opportunities to imagine what they could someday become, they are limited in their ability to
realize what they currently are. According to Eisner (2002), “Art education programs should
help students to create satisfying visual images, how to see and respond to what we call the arts
and other visual forms, and how to understand the role the arts play in culture” (p. 43). When
we discuss artwork in class students are acting as art critics but they would never consider seeing
themselves as an authentic art critic, worthy of attention from anyone outside the classroom.
When students are asked to select pieces for display they do not realize that the processes of
making their choices are rooted in curatorship. The idea of identifying their decisions with the
types of decisions a curator makes seems foreign within the context of a school environment.
When students explain to parents or peers what their artwork on display represents, they take on
the role of docent but when they hear the definition of that term they do not seem to connect that
process with their own. If we are to, as Eisner (2002) suggests, “help students learn how to
create and experience the aesthetic features of images and understand their relationship to the
culture in which they are apart” (p.43), then we must expand their educational experiences
beyond the confines of the school setting.

Motivation for the Study

Several years ago I took a small group of middle school boys to an art museum as part of
a summer art program developed by the Woodruff Arts Center in Atlanta. These were boys who
had little to offer in the art classroom in terms of peer discussion or passion for creation. They
did not consider themselves to be naturally artistic and had little to say when it was time for peer critique within our summer classroom. They did not demonstrate an obvious personal value for their own art work and I would guess very little of what they created during our few weeks together ever made it home. However, that same group of students was transformed within the context of the museum. On a day trip to an art museum, all of the boys sat in front of a large photograph, imagining the feelings of a selected person in the photo. They each wrote a short poem while sitting on the gallery floor and in that space they were able to articulate exactly how they felt. The boys each stood and read their words to the others and the group was changed. They perceived their own work and the work of their classmates as valuable in the mystical space of the low lit gallery. Their voices somehow seemed different outside of the classroom. There were not just students present in this space, but adult learners as well who had come of their own accord. The other visitors stopped to listen to the boys. The students had something to say and it was important.

I realized then that museums provide something to students that schools cannot. As outlined in Falk and Dierking’s (2000) Contextual Model of Learning (CML), it is evident that museums provide a physical context that cannot be replicated in the classroom. The authors contend that the physical space in which learning occurs is directly linked to our learning outcomes. Falk and Dierking state,

Children are placed within the context of a school classroom and taught a variety of subjects, including history, science, art, foreign language, health and even life skills such as babysitting and citizenship. The assumption is that these topics, once learned in the classroom will be permanently stored in memory and available for use in other contexts, such as other courses, the home or even the work environment. However, research would
suggest that this is not the case, and when faced with evidence that children even have problems transferring information learned in one course to other seemingly similar courses, researchers have offered a variety of explanations. The fact that children and adults are being taught concepts within decontextualized physical environments greatly impedes their ability to learn the material in the first place, let alone remember it. (p. 58-59).

The realization of the importance of space and context to learning outcomes has driven my desire to understand how museum learning shapes students both in how they think about art and how they consider themselves in relation to that art. I have taken many students to museums over the years. It is the physical, social and personal context provided by a museum that is missing in the art classroom. I believe the way students construct knowledge within a professional artistic space does not typically transfer to the art classroom. According to Falk and Dierking (2000), there is a “fundamental link between all learning and the physical environments and activities in which learning occurs” (p. 60). For many students art is only an activity for the classroom.

For my students, museum exposure is limited within the school setting. Some of my students visit the museum as a leisure activity with their families but they rarely if ever visit the same museum more than once and certainly do not go on a regular basis. Within our school structure they are lucky if budget and time constraints afford them one visit per school year. That one visit rarely allows them to independently explore the museum or to settle in with a particular piece of art before they are quickly directed by teachers to move on to the next gallery or prompted by an audio guide to merely look at pieces selected for them. They do not ever visit the same exhibition more than once with their peers. Very rarely are my students involved in art
making as part of their museum experience. It seems as though students are taken to art
museums, institutions that Falk and Dierking (2000) describe as free choice learning
environments in which learning is “personally motivated, and involves considerable choice on
the part of the learners as to what to learn, as well as where and when to participate in learning”
(p. xii) and limited them to our classroom norms rather than adopting museum norms. The
student’s ability to personally identify with the museum environment is limited by lack of
opportunity, choice and motivation.

Currently in my classroom, if I ask students to take on the role of art critic they are
limited by the lack of authentic art objects within my classroom. If I ask them to explain work to
others as a docent may perform, that is a difficult leap standing in a school hallway. If I ask
students to curate an exhibit they are limited to select from art they have made as part of a school
assignment rather than from art they have chosen to create on their own. If I encourage students
to connect personally with a wider art community but have not exposed them to that community,
the results will reflect this limitation. I wanted to discover what would happen if those
limitations were removed.

Statement of the Problem and Research Questions

The public school elementary art classroom does not seem to adequately promote the
concept that students are authentic artists who think, analyze, discuss, create and exhibit the
same way people outside of the school context do. It is important to understand not only how
these concepts can be introduced to students but to examine their impact in terms of artistic
perceptions. Although much research has been done in the area of museum learning, very little
has been done to examine how art museums affect students’ perceptions of themselves as artists.
The students I teach are not exposed to museum learning more than once or twice during a given school year. Because of the limited access to a museum culture it is difficult to understand the impact that out of school art learning and exhibition experience has on the artistic interests and merits of my students. Additionally, when my students are exposed to the art museum, time and budget constraints limit their ability to choose what is studied and for how long. Art production is not a typical component of the yearly museum field trip and art exhibition outside of the school setting is very limited.

I conducted this single case study in hopes of determining a potentially new role of the art museum in my students’ perceptions of themselves as artists. The study was designed to allow students to have full access to a museum environment for a period of several weeks. The goal of this access was to allow students to explore and become a part of a larger art community that extends far beyond the walls of our classroom. By designing and observing museum learning experiences I hoped to be able to understand how the museum context would shape and affect student understanding both of their own artistic merit and perceptions. This study was designed with two main research questions and four sub questions. The guiding research questions for this case study were:

1. How does learning within a museum for a sustained period of time affect how students perceive themselves as artists?
   a. How does the learning environment that museums provide influence student understanding?
   b. What are the effects of multiple visits to the same museum?

2. How does exhibiting art outside of the school context shape students’ perceptions of themselves as artists?
a. How does an out of school art exhibition affect artistic motivation?

b. How does displaying art in professional settings impact students?

### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative single case study is to help art educators consider the impact that museum exposure and learning can have on their student’s construction of knowledge and perception of themselves as artists. This study uses ethnographic methods of data collection including semi-structured interviews, journals, visual data along with partial participant observations to determine how the museum shapes student understanding and perceptions of themselves as artists.

I approach this task of developing meaningful learning experiences for this group of students with the understanding that “all learning is a cumulative, long-term process, a process of making meaning and finding connections” (Falk and Dierking, 2000, p. 12). I want the students to make personal, physical, and sociocultural connections to the museum, to the art work housed inside, to their peers, and to their own artwork and ideas. As the researcher I want to further my understanding of how free choice, informal learning environments affect student understanding of the larger art community and their role within it. But my research focus is not concerned with measuring how much students learn about art through museum experiences. I am interested in knowing if their experiences in an art museum setting impacts how they feel about their own artistic merit. The eight weeks spent at the MCMA provide the students with the personal,
physical and sociocultural learning contexts that are unique to museums and provide me with the opportunity to observe them.

Significance of the Study

The intent of the study is that teachers can use this information to justify the need for educational experiences outside of the school context. For both art and museum educators this study provides insight into the effects of allowing students to have choice in what they explore during a museum visit. It also addresses the power of visiting the same exhibit more than once; a practice that is almost unheard of in public elementary art education programs. It also provides a clear understanding of the impact art exhibition has both on students and on overall art education programs.

My study however, is significant beyond what it provides to the field of art education in terms of practical procedural matters and museum visit protocols. It speaks to the idea that student artwork and the understanding of art can be significant beyond the classroom context. The ability of students to impact how another person understands art or to elicit an emotional response through visual representation or verbal explanation is significant. To gain understanding of how students view themselves in terms of artistic merit and worth is crucial in order to develop meaningful art education initiatives that will encourage students to see the larger scope of art understanding. I feel strongly that this study adds to a limited body of research that seeks to understand how student learning outside of the art classroom impacts their overall quality of art education. This study provides insight into the important influence that the unique and powerful museum context provides.
Limitations of the Study

There are several limitations to my study. As with any case study my results are specific to the case. It is not generalizable to other art museums or art education programs. The participants in this study may not reflect how other students from other populations or school districts would behave based on varying degrees of art experience and motivation. The results of my case study may suggest how other similar groups of students may respond to museum learning but additional research would be needed to determine whether the findings of this study could generalize elsewhere.

The scope of this study is limited to seven elementary students enrolled in the Cobb County Public School district. The time frame of the data collection was a period of eight weeks in the fall of 2014. The research is limited to work done at the MCMA in Marietta, Georgia. The study only relates to the unique experiences of these seven individuals.

The delimitations set by the researcher for this study begin with defining the problem. This study seeks to determine if learning and exhibiting in an art museum affects how students perceive themselves as artists. This study does not attempt to study related research problems such as the museum’s role in providing effective programming for elementary students visiting the museum without a school group. Although this topic is closely related to this research it is more closely situated to future museum visitors and museum initiatives and not directly linked to this particular group of students or the case.

Additional delimitations include my choice of participants, which were selected at random from a large pool of willing participants in grades three through five. The participant selection process was not based on artistic talent, experience or interest.
Definition of Key Terms

I define and clarify key terms used throughout this study for readers who are outside of the art and museum education fields and who may be unfamiliar with the meaning of certain professional terms. Additionally I provide the perspective of certain common terms as they are used to inform this particular study.

Artist - I refer to the term artist in this study as someone who creates a visual representation or product as well as someone who understands how to interpret and analyze art created by themselves or others. For this study an artist is primarily someone with a role situated in an art community.

Free Choice Learning - the act of personally choosing what is studied or explored. According to Falk and Dierking (2000) Free Choice Learning “tends to be non-linear and personally motivated and to involve considerable choice on the part of the learner as to when, where, and what to learn” (p. 13).

Judgment - “informed and carefully considered opinions backed by reason and fashioned into a persuasive line of reasoning-an argument” (Barrett, 1997, p. 80).

MCMA - Acronym for the Marietta Cobb Museum of Art located in Marietta Georgia.
Overview of the Study

The aim of this study was to examine the impact of learning and exhibiting within the context of a museum on students’ perceptions of themselves as artists. The problem defined by this study is the idea that students do not see themselves as true artists or their artwork as valuable beyond the classroom context. The basis for this work is inspired by my work with students throughout my teaching career who see their once a year trip to the museum as a very compartmentalized event rather than an integral part of their art education. This study speaks to the notion that student artwork is worthy of study and display outside of the school setting. Additionally I seek to determine if the physical and sociocultural influence of the museum can encourage students to find validity in their own artistic thought and production.

Although there are limitations to this study, much of the research provides evidence that the museum does provide a unique learning atmosphere that enables students to find their artistic voice and increase their understanding of the larger art context. It also suggests that despite the professional exhibition atmosphere of the art museum, students have a difficult time viewing their work as valuable or worthy of museum display. Additionally, the evidence of this study suggests that exposure to learning and exhibiting in the museum did not correlate to increased student productivity or quality of studio work but rather the gains made by students in this study were related to students’ ability to engage in substantial conversations about art and an increased comfort level in the museum culture.

Overview of the Dissertation

The second chapter of this dissertation reviews the current literature in the area of museum learning. I will also review several parallel studies and examine their relationship to this case study.
The third chapter addresses my choice of research methodology. I describe my rationale for choosing to use a single case study design. This chapter is further divided into four sections. In the first section I explain the conceptual framework and epistemology that informs my research methodology. The second section of the chapter outlines the procedures of conducting the study. The third section describes each of the participants and how they were selected. The fourth section describes the data collection methods that were implemented and justification for each along with explanation of analysis procedures. Chapter three concludes with a summary of my initial expectations for the study. Chapter four describes the findings of the study. It is organized by the evidence of the students’ experiences throughout the study.

In the fifth chapter I discuss the data analysis procedures along with an explanation of the emergent themes that developed from the data presented in chapter four. I discuss the implications of this research on the field of art education and how this body of work can inform practice both in and out of the art classroom. Finally chapter five concludes with suggestions for further related research.
CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

There is a wide body of research on how and why students learn in the museum setting. This section will outline some of the major research and ideologies on which this case study was informed and designed. Additionally, I will examine five other current studies related to my research topic in order to establish how my study improves and adds to the current body of research.

Contextual Model of Museum Learning/Student Choice

The two primary scholars in museum education research are John Falk and Lynn Dierking. They developed their Contextual Model of Learning (CML), which asserts that “all learning is situated within a series of contexts” (Falk & Dierking, 2000, p. 10). Learning, according to the authors, involves the interactions between three overlapping contexts: personal, physical, and sociocultural (Falk & Dierking, 2000). Their model is centered on the concept of free-choice learning in which acquiring knowledge is dependent upon visitor choice and motivation in regards to knowledge acquisition. Based on their many years of research, Falk and Dierking (2000) contend that the key factors believed to shape museum learning are motivation, choice and control as well as physical context (p.137). I believe that currently students taken to the museum on a field trip are not afforded true free choice leaning opportunities. Usually their experience is dictated by an assignment or classroom objectives rather than individual student led exploration. My study allowed for individual choice of exploration based on Falk and Dierking’s (2000) concept that the physical, social and personal context afforded by a museum is
unique and provides for understanding that cannot be achieved in other environments. In *The Museum Revisited*, Falk and Dierking (2013) discuss a conceptual shift in museums that are less focused on their collection and more focused on visitor experience. They contend that meaning within the museum setting is constructed from a “foundation of fundamental personal needs, prior experiences, and interests” (p. 213). Additionally they believe that everything the visitor experiences at the museum from the exhibition to personal conversations will be reshaped and reconstructed to form memories which in turn will construct individual meaning making (Falk & Dierking, 2013).

Because the students involved in my study were placed in authentic museum learning roles, their experiences allow for an in-depth exploration of museum learning, not associated with a school visit. The study will explore the utilization of Falk and Dierking’s Contextual Model of Learning without interference from school curriculum and teacher objectives, focusing instead on student interests and choice. According to Hsieh (2012), within free choice learning environments “the learners are not limited to the narrative and interpretation of certain individuals, but can actively reconstruct and synthesize their own” (p. 46). It is within this type of learning environment that this case study is situated.

*Shared Authority*

The allowance of student choice affords the ability to share authority. Much research has been done on the importance of allowing museum visitors to share authority, telling their own stories and making personal connections to the work on display rather than having all information generated from the museum. By doing so, visitors are able to become a part of the museum community and connect not only to the work but to other people who see the work. By allowing students the freedom to create their own narratives based on personal experiences and
to share their ideas with others, students are afforded the space to make their own artistic judgments. Within the museum setting this is achieved through role play, written narratives, and peer discussion. Additionally, as students created their own exhibition they were given the authority to determine what artwork was displayed, as well as how it is interpreted to visitors through their development of a collection title and description.

Determining the lens through which museums tell the story presented to visitors is essential to constructing authentic knowledge based on the collection. Museums are charged with the task of establishing their role as a cultural guide within a community. But museum visitors, especially young students, often believe that the voice of the museum is the only voice allowed. Corbett and Miller (2006) explore the role of sharing authority between museums and the public in their work, *A Shared Inquiry into Shared Inquiry*. Their research examines several exhibitions in which community members were a part of the interpretation process. For my research, Corbett and Miller (2006) lay the groundwork for establishing the importance of multiple voices. Sharing agency with students not only provides a format for them to connect to an exhibit on a personal level but also to see themselves as a vital role in the process.

*Alternative Authority*

Not only is sharing authority at the heart of my research but also the concept of alternative authority. Alternative authority is the idea that museum objects can be interpreted from many viewpoints not exclusively to a master narrative that has been adopted by a given society. Perhaps the most compelling study on the concept of alternative authority comes from curator Lisa Corrin and artist Fred Wilson (1994) in their book, *Mining the Museum*. Their work examines an exhibit in which the white male interpretative voice of the Maryland Historical
Society was shifted to that of an African American viewpoint. Wilson used objects already on display, changing their placement and context. He demonstrated how the absence of items and the juxtaposition of others can be very powerful. This type of exhibition shift forces visitors to reexamine what they have constructed as truth. It drives viewers to recognize that all interpretation is subjective, based on prior knowledge and experiences that are not universal to all visitors.

In my research, the concept of sharing and alternating authority was vital in the design of the museum experiences in which the students participated. Much of the current research related to museum learning examines teacher led initiatives or adult learners. Additionally, much has been written about student choice within the classroom. To expand this concept, the design of this case study focused on student-centered experiences within the museum setting. I believe that anytime students are given the opportunity to be active participants rather than passive observers, their experience will be enriched. Students involved in this research determined for themselves which art pieces at the museum were studied, they created art based on personal interests and their learning was intrinsically motivated. Allowing stakeholders to determine content and shape outcome is powerful. This concept is transferable to my study in that students were given the space and tools to become stakeholders in their artistic growth and their role as an artist outside of the school setting. Additionally, representing children’s art as fine art through museum display requires development of an alternative authority. Allowing children to determine what is valued in art display and subject matter encourages museum visitors which voices are allowed to be heard and valued. The impact of this experience was documented through interviews, field notes, and visual data.
Parallel Studies

Self-Identity

In my effort to determine what other researchers have done in the area of identify development through museum exploration, I discovered several studies that connect to my research issues. The first was conducted by Folkert Haanstra (2010) entitled, *Self-Initiated Art Work and School Art*. The researcher sought to determine the types of informal learning involved in self-initiated art and to define the relationship between art created at school and art created outside of school. Fifty two students were involved in the study. Data was collected through interviews with the students, their teachers and their families. The results of the study revealed that art produced at home was quite different than art developed at school. The art made outside of school was less realistic, contained subject matter of interest to the students, was considered less technical but more spontaneous and valued by the students. The study concluded that students preferred to keep art created at home separate from the school setting; stating that if it was brought into the school environment, the uniqueness of the work would be lost. The students feared the school would require it to contain certain elements and would destroy the very nature of the work. Haanstra (2010) suggests that teachers need to develop a relationship with art made at home by being aware of what students create on their own and to foster an environment within school in which students have more choice to create what they desire. This shift would give students more ownership of their creation process and more equality with the instructor in terms of decision making.

Although, this study does not deal directly with museum experiences it does examine how students approach artistic thought outside of the school setting. I believe it supports my
belief that students create a very different style of art outside of school. Being an artist at school does not relate to their out of school identities. This study emphasizes the importance of being aware of a student’s visual culture and understanding the art created out of the school context.

Children’s identity is further explored in Rosemary Richards (2014) study: The Private and Public Worlds of Children’s Spontaneous Art. This research involved four young children who were photographed and interviewed over the course of one year to gain insight into their artistic perceptions and actions. Building on previous studies that explored the sociocultural contexts of art making this research was designed to reveal children’s artistic interests and ideas. This qualitative case study breaks away from previous studies that examined children’s art making but failed to “give voice to children’s perspectives” (Richards, 2010, p. 144). The researcher used photo elicitation along with participant observation to collect data. The children in the study were interviewed about their art and their art making. The study concluded that “more exists of a child’s experience of art than can be gleaned from looking at his or her artworks” (Richards, 2010, p. 154). Additionally, the study calls for teachers to become more familiar and aware of children’s artistic perceptions and to develop interactions in which their public and private art experiences can be further developed. Richards (2010) encourages a more mutual learning environment in which teachers and students are learning together.

This study provides a working model for how to effectively interview young students about their artistic development. Richards (2010) allowed for children to determine the significance of their artistic process by placing the camera in their hands throughout much of the data collection process. Thus the researcher’s perceptions did not drive the data allowing the participant’s point of view to be clearly established. The importance of capturing the art making processes from the child’s perspective and using that data to elicit personal responses informed
my data collection methods. Although the Richard’s study is not situated in the museum context, it does provide a basis for understanding a child’s perception of their art world and identity.

Children’s identity is further explored in Jodie Pellish’s (2012) work: *Past, Present, and Future: Stories of Identity in an Elementary Art Room*. The author studied “the responses of a single class of third grade students to a culturally grounded unit of study about identity as a fluid construct” (Pellish, 2012, p. 20). Students were asked to create art based on their personal life experiences and cultural traditions. Through the process the researcher found that the creation of personal stories allowed students to increase their sense of self. Additionally when the students shared their personal stories with their peers they increased their own level of understanding. Pellish (2012) concludes that “when we encourage our students to interpret and share personal and cultural stories, we are allowing them to build a sense of who they want to become in this world” (p. 23). Although this work is focused on developing self-identity within the classroom, the use of personal narrative to create understanding is transferable to the museum setting.

**Collections**

Denise L. Stone of the University of Kansas wrote an article entitled, “Children’s Collections and the Art Museum” which was published in Visual Arts Research in 2008. In it Stone seeks to strengthen the collaborative relationship between schools and museums to increase student understanding of art collections. This article outlines her study conducted to determine how and why students collect things and their ability to relate personal collections and collection methods to that of an art museum.
Stone (2008) asserts that the study of collections will allow students to personally connect to the art museum. She states, “young collectors imitate the activities of sophisticated art collectors by acquiring, exchanging, safekeeping, and showing their items, and these activities echo museum functions” (p. 77). Stone sites literature in which studying collections was determined to increase a student’s skills of discrimination, classification, research and to extend learning outside of the classroom setting.

The purpose of this research was to learn about types of collections created by young students and to determine in what ways the process of collecting assists those students in relating to the art museum. Stone interviewed a group of students guided by three main points:

1. **How serious are the students as collectors?**
2. **How do they relate their collecting experience to museums?**
3. **How do students view and understand the museum?** (Stone, 2008, p. 83)

The results of the interview process revealed that the students understood the idea or concept of a collection. The students also were able to clearly define what an art museum was. Most of the students, however, had a much harder time connecting their collecting process with the work of a museum.

The author concluded that the student’s collections “promoted social interactions, possibly good consumer habits, a way to initiate parents and the chance for students to use their imagination” (Stone, 2008, p. 84). Stone also claimed that students who visited a museum were better at connecting aspects of their collection to that of a museum.
Thinking as an Artist

Perhaps the study that is most closely connected to my own research initiatives is a case study developed by Heather Malin (2012) called: *Creating a Children’s Art World: Negotiating Participation, Identity, and Meaning in the Elementary School Art Room.* Her work seeks to determine the role of art making in relation to a child’s place in society. The researcher conducted a case study in which students from one classroom were studied for the course of school year. The primary focus of the research was studying how visual arts prepare students to participate in culture and society. The study used ethnographic methods of data collection including field observations, interviews, and visual artifacts. The data was analyzed using both emergent and theory-based coding to determine the ways in which students negotiated their school art community practices to make it personally meaningful. The Malin study examined how social interaction influences student knowledge construction and understanding. The results of the study proposed that “In the adult art world, children are peripheral participants at best. They use the artifacts and methods of adult artists but they rarely impact the practice of the adult world” (Malin, 2012, p. 9). Malin (2012) concluded that within this school setting, the art classroom studied did allow students to negotiate what was personally important to them which encouraged them to “pursue art the way artists do: as a personal and cultural meaning making activity” (p. 19). Although this study is closely related to my topic of research, it fails to examine the student’s role within the art museum, their understanding of themselves as an artist or their perception of that role.
Summary

The studies and research outlined in this chapter lay the groundwork for my case study research. Clearly there is a gap in the current literature dealing specifically with museum contextual learning and experiences in relation to student artistic perception and understanding. My study seeks to fill this gap by providing insight into how museum learning and exhibition affect how students see themselves as artists and how they define their artistic role outside of the classroom. The following chapters outline how this study was designed, conducted and analyzed.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

In this chapter I begin by outlining my conceptual framework, epistemology and methodology. I establish justification for my use of a single case study design. Additionally I demonstrate how the methodology used for this study justifies the methods of data collection and analysis. The remaining sections of this chapter provide an explanation of how participants were selected, a profile of each participant, an overview of the types of data the study generated, an explanation of data analysis, general procedures of the study, limitations and finally my expectations of the process.

Conceptual Framework

Epistemology

This qualitative research study was designed from a constructionist viewpoint. Crotty (1998) explains that from a constructionist viewpoint, “truth or meaning comes into existence in and out of our engagement with the realities in our world. Meaning is not discovered but constructed” (p. 8). Thus different people from different backgrounds, cultures, and life experiences will construct very different meaning through the same phenomenon. According to Hein (1995), “Proponents of constructivism argue that learners construct knowledge as they
learn; they do not simply add new facts to what is known, but constantly reorganize and create both understanding and the ability to learn as they interact with the world” (p. 76).

Jerome Bruner’s constructivist theory of learning informs my epistemological framework and study design. According to Cooper (2004), Bruner believes that learning emerges out of exploration. His theory asserts that people construct new ideas based on prior knowledge. Bruner emphasizes the importance of intuitive and analytical thinking. In terms of motivation, Bruner asserts that the best stimulus for learning is interest in the subject itself (Cooper, 2004).

Additionally, Bruner stresses the importance of structuring knowledge. As Takaya (2013) affirms, Bruner believes rather than presenting information to students one should provide structure that makes it possible for students to discover information that is meaningful (p. 21). Bruner theorizes that categorizing information, presenting information in forms that learners can recognize from past experiences, using symbols, words and images to represent information as well as effective sequencing is an effective way to provide the structure necessary for learning to occur (Cooper, 2004). According to Bruner (1996) “the best introduction to a subject is the subject itself” (p. 155). Tajaya (2013) asserts that Bruner posits that “a child learning history, in this scheme, must be treated as a historian inquiring into the issues and problems of history” (p. 21). Likewise in my study for students to learn about art they must be treated as artists inquiring into the issues of art.

The understanding of agency and identity in my research can also be evidenced in Bruner’s writings. Bruner (1996) states that:

What characterizes human selfhood is the construction of a conceptual system that organizes, as it were, a “record” of agentive encounters with the world, a record that is
related to the past (that is, “autobiographical memory”, so-called) but that is also extrapolated into the future-self with history and with possibility. It is a possible self that regulates aspiration, confidence, optimism, and their opposites. (p. 36).

Bruner (1990) sums up the constructivist paradigm stating, “Constructivism’s basic claim is simply that knowledge is ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ in light of the perspective we have chosen to assume” (p. 25). The learning environment of the museum easily coincides with constructivist ideals. According to Jeffery (1998),

Museums are ideal constructivist learning environments. They allow visitors to move and explore freely, working at their own pace. They encourage group interaction and sharing. They allow for personal experience with real objects. They provide a place for visitors to examine and expand their own understanding (p. 220).

It is this understanding of the unique qualities of the museum experience that situate my epistemology.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework on which the study will be designed is symbolic interactionism. Bulmer (1969) developed the theory of symbolic interactionism based on the premise that human beings act toward things based on the meaning those things have to them. Additionally, meaning is derived from social interaction with others and that meaning is modified through one’s interpretation of the things encountered.
Sandstrum (2003) expands on Blumer’s premises by defining assumptions that guide the perspective of social interactionism. The assumptions of this theoretical perspective are:

- People are unique creatures because of their ability to use symbols
- People become distinctively human thorough their interactions
- People are conscious and self-reflexive beings who actively shape their own behavior
- People are purposive creatures who act in and toward situations
- Human society consists of people engaging in symbolic interaction
- To understand people’s social acts, we need to use methods that enable us to discern the meanings they attribute to these acts (p. 218-19).

Additionally, human behavior is shaped by the expectations of others with whom they interact. People, in theory, are able to empathize with others and envision how things appear from an alternate perspective (Crotty, 1998), an idea that is central to research framed from this viewpoint. Symbolic interactionism, often synonymous with qualitative research, falls under the umbrella of research being done for understanding. Scholars whose theoretical perspective is derived from symbolic interactionism are concerned with understanding why people behave in the way that they do. Coming to my research from this perspective, I believe that young students have shaped their identity through their interactions with others. They look at their own art work and develop their artistic voice through social interactions with the world around them.

According to Bogan and Biklen (2007), from a symbolic interactionist framework the researcher assumes that “people come to see themselves in part as others see them” (p. 29). In other words, my participants may perceive themselves based on the interactions with others as well as the reactions of others to their self-perception. It is through this lens that I approach understanding of the social nature of knowledge construction and its impact on perception.
Methodology-Case Study

The methodology that is best suited to my research is a single, causal case study. According to Yin (2009), research seeking to answer “how” or “why” questions “are likely to favor the use of case studies” (p. 10). A case study is defined in a variety of ways by various scholars. According to Merriam (2009) a case study is “an in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system” (p.40). Yin (2008) defines a case study based on the research process, stating that this type of study investigates a phenomenon “within its real life context” (p. 18). Others define a case study with a focus on what is to be studied, the case itself. To me the most logical explanation of a case study comes from Stake (2005) who asserts that a case study is simply a methodological choice of what the researcher will investigate. The one condition of a case study that all of these scholars seem to agree upon is the need for the case to be a bounded system. It must have a limit to the number of people involved, the time allotted for research to take place or the amount of events or objects to be studied. According to Merriam (2009) “If there is no end, actually or theoretically, to the number of people who could be interviewed or to observations that could be conducted, then the phenomenon is not bounded enough to qualify as a case” (p. 41).

I chose to conduct a case study primarily because of the nature of the research questions I hoped to answer. A case study design suited my work, which focused on a very particular situation and as Merriam (2009) asserts a case study can reveal “knowledge to which we would not otherwise have access” (p. 46). My study design and motivation closely aligns with what Stake refers to as an intrinsic case study. According to Stake (1994) an intrinsic case study “is not undertaken primarily because the case represents other cases or because it illustrates a particular trait or problem but because in all its particularity and ordinariness, this case itself is of
interest” (p. 237). My professional interest in determining how my community’s local art museum, MCMA, shapes my particular students is the driving force in this research and established the population of participants for this study. The study may also be of interest to other art educators who are seeking ways to enhance their students’ understanding of art outside of the classroom. This ordinary case can be quite extraordinary in terms of art advocacy. Determining the impact of museum learning and exhibition can establish a need for increasing out of school learning opportunities for art education programs. The case study methodology informs my data collection methods and analysis.

**Procedures**

**Study Design**

This specific research focused on one group of students involved in artistic discovery for a set period of time at a specific location, MCMA in Marietta, Georgia. A specified group of seven students in third through fifth grade over a period of eight weeks took part in the study. During that time students were engaged in art learning outside of the school setting in an art museum. They took part in activities designed to give them insight into the roles of museum visitors, docents, curators and exhibiting artists. Each of these identities were selected to allow students to experience the art community from different viewpoints. The design of the activities
the students would participate in are illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Concept Map - Illustrates the structure of activities the students participated in throughout this study
During the eight weeks students also met once a week at their school to take part in studio sessions which involved the students creating artwork using materials and subject matter they selected. Although the museum had studio space it was designated for classes they offer to the public on Saturdays. Additionally, I did not want to contradict the idea that artists create in their studios and exhibit in museums, very rarely do artists create within the museum setting. The case is more concerned with the exhibition process in relation to art production. The planning of an art collection was done independently by the students.

The students were also asked to keep a journal of their experiences as well as a sketchbook. At the end of the eight weeks students designed and implemented an exhibit at MCMA and invited others to view their selected collection of artwork. The case study design incorporated ethnographic methods of data collection including: interviews, participant observations, visual data (artwork, photographs, and sketch journals) and documents (journals and other written materials). This data was analyzed to determine patterns in the participant’s perceptions of their artistic roles.

Research Design

This case study design studied a group of students involved in museum learning within the galleries of MCMA, studio time at school for art creation, and a student directed exhibition at the MCMA which featured work created by the participants. Students involved in the case were also asked to keep a written journal as well as a sketchbook throughout the study.
Context of the MCMA

MCMA is located in an historic suburb of Atlanta. The museum itself, as seen in Figure 2, is housed in a 1910 classic revival building which was originally built as a post office. The building has two gallery floors which now consist of two large galleries, conference room, lobby, offices and an additional level housing two large studio spaces in the basement. The museum has a small permanent collection and hosts many traveling exhibitions throughout the year.

Logistics

The students were asked to meet at the museum after school each week and parents were responsible for transporting the students. All of the students involved in the study live within five or six miles of the historic town square where the museum is located. We met as a group for
a period of eight weeks. During each week we met two times, one afternoon each week was spent at the museum and on Saturday mornings we met at school for extended studio time, interviews and to discuss the week’s events. The final week of the museum experience students spent time preparing an exhibition of their work.

*Role of the Researcher*

I approach this research as an art educator who has a great deal of experience with children in the museum setting. Throughout my career have taken many students to art museums and have designed and implemented related activities both in and out of the museum context. I have organized exhibits for my students at many out of school contexts including the High Museum of Art in Atlanta. For my Master’s degree I examined the typical museum experience of elementary students and explored ways to enhance their learning opportunities to make each visit more meaningful. For this study I acted as a partial participant observer. I guided the students in their museum experiences and participated in some of their group discussions. I also allowed the students to work independently at times during which I served as only an observer. I worked closely with the Education Department of the MCMA in order better understand their collection, to meet the learning needs of the participants and to establish transparency in the purpose of my research and the use of their facility.
Research Approval

In order to conduct this case study using human subjects I gained approval from the Georgia State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) in September 2014. Additionally because I was conducting research using students from the school system where I teach, I obtained approval from the Cobb County School District Department of Curriculum and Instruction. Finally I received approval from the Board of Directors of MCMA to conduct research within their museum and to access the museum free of charge.

Parents signed a consent form, agreeing to allow their children to participate in the study and to provide transportation to and from the museum. Students signed an assent form explaining that they had a choice to participate or not participate in the study. The assent form stated and it was verbally explained to the participants that they had the option to withdraw from the study at any point if they so desired. In order to protect participants, I have primary access to the locked filing cabinet in which research materials with participant information are stored. Participant’s identities are confidential and names have been changed for this dissertation.

Participant Selection

I selected students for this study from the school in which I teach. I teach at a public Title I elementary school in Cobb County Georgia. Students at my school represent populations from thirty different countries and a wide range of socioeconomic levels. As the only art teacher in the school I teach eight hundred and sixty students.
Selection Process

All students from my school in grades three through five were initially approached for this case study. I wanted to open the study to any student regardless of their artistic interests or abilities. I sent a letter home explaining that I would be conducting a research project at a local art museum for a period of eight weeks. The letter asked parents who were interested in having their child participate to please return the signed form. It also informed them that students would be selected randomly from the pool of interested participants. I received forty-three forms back from parents stating that their child would be allowed to participate if chosen. From the forty-three students, I sorted the students into groups of boys and girls and selected five from each gender grouping. I contacted each parent with a letter of consent and an additional letter that outlined the specific dates, times and location of the study to make sure they were able to make a commitment. All ten of the selected students returned the form stating that they were allowed to participate and were able to meet the time requirements of the study. However, the day the study was to begin four of the parents informed me that their child could not participate. Two of the students had been selected for afterschool tutoring because they were behind academically and the school had informed them that the tutoring sessions took precedence over the museum study. The other two had simply failed to realize some scheduling conflicts and could not transport their students to the museum. I attempted to fill the four vacant spots but was only able to fill two of them from the remaining pool of candidates. I chose not to add students after the study had begun so I kept the number to seven. The group consisted of three boys and four girls. Two of the students were in third grade, two in fourth grade and three in fifth grade. They represented a wide range of ethnicities, socioeconomic levels and artistic experience.
Participant Profiles

Although I teach each of the students involved in this study, my understanding of their personalities and skills outside of the art classroom were limited at the beginning of my research. Through the course of the study, I came to understand a great deal more about this group of students. The participant profiles provide a brief explanation of how I perceived each student. The profiles combine my knowledge of the students from our classroom and school interactions as well as observations I made of the students during the research study.

Sean

Sean is a fifth grade Caucasian male. He is in the gifted and talented program at school. He comes from a family that considers themselves very involved in the arts. His two parents have shown a great interest in his artistic development. He has a somewhat quirky, fun loving personality. He takes pride in being different in his thought processes and tends to think outside the box. He enjoys school but is not highly motivated unless the learning topic is of personal interest. Sean has a lot of ideas and is excited to share them. He is passionate about his opinions and is very confident in his abilities as an artist.

Eli

Eli is a fifth grade multi-race male. He is very shy at times and withdraws from interaction unless he feels comfortable. He struggles with socially and has a hard time communicating his thoughts with other students. Casual conversation is not casual for Eli. He can, however, talk at length about a subject or object that is of interest to him personally. He is an excellent writer and his thoughts are best communicated through written communication. His mom supports all of his social efforts to fit in and is clearly his biggest advocate. She
encourages him to try new things but is still cautious of him being in situations that are extremely unfamiliar or beyond his scope of adaptation. He enjoys drawing very much and is fixated on popular culture subjects and characters such as Pokémon and Minecraft. Eli is confident in his abilities and does not seem overly concerned with outside critique of his work.

Aria

Aria is a fifth grade African-American girl. She is quiet and reserved. She enjoys learning, is academically average and is very much a people pleaser. She is never in trouble at school and always does what is expected of her. She loves to draw and enjoys creating. She gets along with everyone and other students respect her. She has good ideas and easily communicates those ideas to others with an average amount of confidence. Her family is not overly involved at school in terms of volunteering or event attendance but they are extremely supportive of Aria and encourage anything she is interested in pursuing. She has a large extended family that she spends a great deal of time with and she very much respects her family’s values and opinions. She considers herself good at creating art but would not identify herself as an artist.

Ava

Ava is a fourth grade Hispanic girl. Her parents are immigrants. Ava is a United States citizen. Ava is proud of her heritage and often brings candy and treats that her family has purchased at the Mexican grocery to share. Her mom and siblings speak English but her father and most of her other relatives speak only Spanish and she is eager to translate for them. She is always smiling. Ava likes the social aspects of school and enjoys making things, the more glittery the better. She is passionate about clothing and shopping and is quick to point out a new outfit or accessory. She is the type of little girl who would wear sandals in January if she felt
like they improved her outfit. Ava is quick to offer hugs and loves to giggle. She is confident in her appearance but doubts her artistic and academic strengths at times.

Eric

Eric is a fourth grade African American male. He and his parents just moved to Georgia at the beginning of the school year. They are still in the process of getting settled and beginning new jobs. They struggle with Eric as he is in trouble at school more often than not, including several days of suspension. His parents clearly want him to achieve and do well. They encourage him to try and to excel. Eric makes that process as difficult as possible, almost by design. The school setting does not fit him. He loves to talk and seek attention in silly and disruptive ways that do not coincide with the school culture. He is very intelligent and is strong academically. Eric is an excellent writer and a polished orator. He enjoys art and is very confident about his art. Eric is sweet and fun to be around in settings that relax the rules and do not demand conformity. He is filled with interesting stories and is thoughtful. Eric simply prefers to show his silly side at school rather than reveal his intellectual insights.

Emma

Emma is a third grade Caucasian female. She is quiet at school. She struggles academically. According to her mom she is head strong and difficult to motivate but she would never reveal those qualities to anyone outside of her family. She seems to enjoy art. Her mom would like for her to enjoy art more passionately. Emma is difficult to know. She is the type of student who may not have a clue of what is happening around her, but will stay quiet so that perhaps no one will realize she is struggling to understand. She often ignores a direction and will do the opposite of what is being asked of her but does it so quietly and with an innocent smile
that it is unclear if she is trying to be difficult or simply does not know any better. Emma has
good ideas that she is slow to share. She exhibits more confidence one on one and takes time to
orient herself to new situations. She considers herself an artist because she makes a high
quantity of artwork.

Colleen

Colleen is also a third grade Caucasian female. She is giggly, bubbly and full of life.
She is well liked by others. She is well behaved at school and fits nicely into school norms.
Outside of school, however, in a small group setting she can quickly get out of control. She
loves to talk and ask questions. She also likes to instigate ways to get others acting silly as she
sits back and pretends to have no idea how everyone got off track. Colleen struggles
academically. She has creative ideas but has a difficult time communicating those ideas to
others. Her limited writing skills make it difficult for her to fully express her deep thoughts. She
enjoys art and making crafts. Her family is very involved in school and encourages her to try
lots of activities. She is not very confident in her abilities and seeks affirmation before moving
forward with any artistic decision. Colleen is easily embarrassed but tries to find the silver lining
of any situation she is not initially pleased with. She does not consider herself to be an artist
despite the fact that she enjoys creating.

Data Collection

Ethnographic data collection methods were used throughout the case study including
observations, interviews, visual data, and documents. According to Merriam (2009), the “data
collection techniques used as well as the specific information considered to be data in a study,
are determined by the researcher’s theoretical orientation, by the problem and purpose of the
study, and by the sample selected” (p. 86). The use of multiple sources of data collection allowed data triangulation for validity.

**Observations**

I collected field notes that recorded my observations throughout the eight weeks in both the museum and studio sessions of the case study. I served as a partial participant observer, acting both as a guide in the study and an observer. This ethnographic method of data collection allowed me access into their small social museum group. By participating with the students they realized that we were equal learners. It also allowed me to create a relationship with the students that facilitated natural, spontaneous conversations. By participating and observing simultaneously, the students did not change their behavior as they may have in front of an outside observer.

**Documents**

Journals - Students were asked to keep a written journal throughout the case study. The journals contained researcher generated prompts based on the events that unfolded each week. Participants were encouraged to respond to the prompt as well as use their journal for personal reflections and thoughts. These journal entries were coded, analyzed, and interpreted. According to Hamilton and Corbett (2013), “Encouraging participants in your research to write a journal or reflective log can be a way of understanding the inner world of the individual and the professional and personal aspects of participant experiences and responses” (p. 102).

Sketchbooks - Students were asked to keep a sketchbook throughout the case study. The sketchbooks contained a series of prompts but students were encouraged to fill the pages with
whatever they were inspired to draw or create. There drawings were categorized, analyzed and interpreted.

Photographs - I took photographs of the students interacting within the museum setting and creating during the studio portion of the study. Photographs were also taken of their artwork and during their exhibition at the museum. These photos were used for analysis and also to elicit interview responses and to validate participant answers. Harper (2002) contends that photographs provide validity to research. Harper states that photo elicitation “works (or does not) for rather mysterious reasons” (p. 22). The photo allows a viewer to see an event that has passed and this phenomena “of seeming to retrieve something that has disappeared belongs alone to the photograph, and it leads to deep and interesting talk” (Harper, 2002, p, 23).

Student generated writing - Part of the data collection included written responses to different activities such as descriptive paragraphs, written justifications for choices made in the gallery, poems, title creations and artists statements.

Initial Questionnaire - This was given to the students at the beginning of the study to provide a basis for their past museum experiences and their thoughts on their artistic identity. According to Hamilton and Corbett (2013), “a questionnaire can give the researcher a broader understanding of a particular group or groups and this allows you to contextualize the work done with individuals” (p. 108).

Interviews - The participants took part in both informal and formal interviews. The purpose of an interview is to find out “how people interpret the world around them” (Merriam, 2009, p. 88). Participant responses were recorded, transcribed, coded, analyzed and interpreted to generate findings.
Data Analysis

According to Merriam (2009) data analysis “involves consolidating, reducing, and interpreting what people have said and what the researcher has seen and read—it is the process of making meaning” (p.175-176). For the data collected in this case study each piece was interpreted from a constructivist epistemology. The lens of symbolic interactionism informed my understanding of the data and provided the theoretical framework on which the study was designed.

The data collected in this case included participant observations, journals, sketchbooks, artwork, photographs, student writings, a questionnaire and participant interviews. The written data including participant observations in the form of field notes, along with journal entries, student writings, questionnaire results and interview transcripts were coded to find content patterns. The visual data including student produced artwork, sketchbook entries and photographs were also coded to determine commonalities and used to validate other data sources.

Validity and Trustworthiness of Data

Data triangulation was achieved in this study by collecting data from multiple sources. According to Yin (2014) true triangulation is evident “when the case study’s findings will have been supported by more than a single source of evidence” (p. 121). The conclusions in this study were reached by what Yin (2014) refers to as a “convergence of evidence” in which multiple sources are aimed at “corroborating the same finding” (Yin, p. 121). According to Hamilton & Corbett-Whittier (2013) data validity cannot only be obtained through the triangulation of data, but additionally can be “enhanced through member checking” (p. 136) in
which participants are asked to confirm what the researcher perceives in the data. In this study, participants validated the visual data sources through image and photo elicitation.

Figure 3 illustrates how the data in this case study was triangulated for validity.

Figure 3. Triangulation. Illustration of data triangulation used.

I approached this task of developing meaningful learning experiences for this group of students with the understanding that “all learning is a cumulative, long-term process, a process of making meaning and finding connections” (Falk & Dierking, 2000, p. 12). I wanted the students to make personal, physical, and sociocultural connections to the museum, to the art work housed inside, to their peers and to their own art work and ideas. As the researcher I wanted to further my understanding of how free choice, non-school environments affect student understanding.
But my research focus was not on how much they learned by what we did throughout the process. I was interested in knowing if their exposure to a museum setting changed how they felt about their own artistic merit. Ultimately for this case study I hoped to answer the question: How does learning and exhibiting within the art museum affect how students perceive themselves as artists? By “artist” I do not mean solely their belief or confidence in themselves to produce artwork. For my purposes, the term artist is much wider. It is also about how they think artistically. This would include their confidence and ability to speak about art, justify their preferences for art to others as well as determining the value of art, both made by others as well as themselves. Based on this understanding of the term “artist” I broke the museum experiences down into four exploratory roles: visitor, docent, curator, and exhibiting artist. Through this process students would take on different roles and by doing so situate themselves within the complex museum learning environment. By guiding the group to use and approach the museum from these varying perspectives, I was able to observe their individual interests and strengths as well as the overlapping, integrated contexts in which their experiences took place. The eight weeks we spent at the MCMA would provide the students with the personal, physical and sociocultural learning contexts that are unique to museums and would provide me with the opportunity to observe them.

Limitations of the Findings

The findings of this study are limited in several ways. First, the data does not reveal the students’ actual level of motivation in terms of creating artwork. To evaluate their level of motivation properly would require a more in-depth look at their artistic level of understanding at the onset of the study and logging actual time spent creating at home. I can speculate that they spent very little time creating on their own but I cannot verify that with the data I collected.
Also, much of the students’ perceptions about their artwork are influenced by their family members. The family members of the students in this study were not part of the case so they were not interviewed to determine their family’s perception of art or how they value what was created by the students in the study. The findings are also limited by these specific students at this specific museum. The findings may vary greatly at other museums or with other sets of students. Perhaps if this study was done with students at an art magnet school the findings would be quite different. Finally, the findings are limited by time. According to Falk and Dierking (2000), “Looking at the museum experience as a snapshot in time, even a very long snapshot (e.g., the time a visitor spends in the museum), is woefully inadequate” (p. 10). The experiences and memories of these students may manifest into artistic perceptions and understanding in the future that cannot be measured by the current findings.

Expectations

When I first set out to design this case study I did have some preconceived ideas about not only how the weeks at the museum would unfold but also what the data would reveal. The purpose of the study was to determine how the opportunity to learn and exhibit in an art museum would shape the participants’ ideas about their own art work, their identity as an artist and their role in art outside of school. I imagined that the students involved would be transformed into believing that their work was meaningful and worthy of study, not only by them but by others as well. I imagined that their sketchbooks would be filled on front and back pages with colorful, creative designs that they barely had enough space to hold all of the visual information they wanted to record. I hoped their written journals would provide a space for inspiration and idea generating. I was certain that their collections would be cohesive and well planned and that the exhibit would solidify their understanding of their artistic role. I assumed that all of the
participants would find the experience as important and meaningful as I did and that they would be eagerly awaiting their next art and museum endeavor.

Summary

Approaching this research from a constructivist epistemology, framed in symbolic interactionism, I wanted to understand how learning and exhibiting within the context of an art museum affects students’ perceptions of themselves as artists. The single case study methodology aligns with the types of research questions I propose and the bound system in which I explore the answers. Multiple sources of data, determined by my theoretical orientation, were collected throughout the study. The findings support the fact that part of what I expected at the onset of the study came to fruition. And much of what I imagined did not. In the following chapter I present the findings of this research.
CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

In this chapter I describe the events that took place during the study time frame. The introduction gives an overview of the participants and reveals the findings from an initial questionnaire and descriptive exercise that the students were asked to complete at the onset of the study. The Observations and Artifacts section outlines the events that were observed over an eight week period and the artifacts produced as a result of those events. Four identities emerged from the students’ experiences in the museum: visitor, docent, curator and artist. The events related to each of these identities have been divided into subsections that allow the reader to better understand how this case study was organized. My research questions shaped and guided the data that was collected throughout the study. They are:

1. How does learning within a museum for a sustained period of time affect how students perceive themselves as artists?
   c. How does the learning environment that museums provide influence student understanding?
   d. What are the effects of multiple visits to the same museum?

2. How does exhibiting art outside of the school context shape students’ perceptions of themselves as artists?
   c. How does an out of school art exhibition affect artistic motivation?
   d. How does displaying art in professional settings impact students?
Using these questions as a guide I collected data in order to find common themes in my students’ experiences and responses. The data collected was coded based on common categories and analyzed in order to determine artistic perceptions for this particular group of students. The descriptions that follow demonstrate how the students participated in the study from the perspective of the following identities: Visitor, Docent, Curator and Artist. These roles, selected to provide a structure to the activities and experiences within the museum setting, allowed the students to experience the art community from a different perspective. Each subsection provides an overview of learning initiatives that took place from each perspective, and reveals the data that was collected. An additional subsection, Participant Interviews, reports the findings of the formal interviews that took place at the end of the study.

Introduction

The Marietta Cobb Museum of Art (MCMA) has a large set of steps out front and each day of the study I sat with my notebook in hand eagerly waiting on the students to arrive. The first day at the museum the students were escorted one by one to the steps by their parents. As the weeks went on parents no longer escorted their children who grew more and more familiar with the setting. On this day however, Colleen and Sean were the first to arrive, they had ridden together. The mom escorting them verified the time to pick them up, smiled, told them to have a great time and was off as quickly as she had appeared. Colleen is the youngest of the group and is more socially motivated than academically driven. Sean is considered gifted and by his two parents’ account, a little strange. He enjoys thinking outside of the box and his family has a great interest in the arts. The next arrival was Eli. He is a fifth grade student who seems to
enjoy art but does not really enjoy other students. He is a small, mild mannered, shy boy. He
struggles with certain social settings and communication, especially verbal, is not his strength.
He held his mom’s hand and jumped around a little with excitement. She made sure he felt
comfortable before leaving. Aria the remaining fifth grader then arrived with her grandmother
who talked about how excited she was for this project. Ava, a fourth grade student and her mom
walked up with great excitement too. Ava was smiling widely and greeted each of the other
students. Emma, the remaining third grader arrived, walking slowly behind her mom who was
busy talking about what a good experience this was going to be for her. Eric, the other fourth
grade student was the last to arrive. Eric is new to the area and he is frequently in trouble at
school. He is very smart but has a knack for finding ways to sabotage school success. His mom
was not smiling when she reached the steps. She harshly asked how it was even possible that he
was selected for this project. I quickly explained that the students were randomly selected from
the group that replied with interest in the study. She said he really wanted to do it but she feared
he would not behave. I could tell Eric’s mom was hesitant to leave him but I assured her that it
would be fine, although inside I too had my doubts. Seeing the group together for the first time
gave me a glimpse of the group dynamic, which I had not previously considered in my efforts to
keep the selection random and to avoid my influence of who was selected. I wanted this group
of students to be truly random so that I would not, even subconsciously, fill the set with students
I knew would excel. Looking at the group that now sat on the museum steps I wondered how
they would interact with each other; they were all very different in terms of personality and
artistic experience. If it was a random group that I was seeking, I had certainly found it.

The first day we stayed on the steps outside for quite a while. We talked about the
museum building, their knowledge of the museum and what they expected from the project. I
gave them an overview of how the next eight weeks would be structured and explained to them that I had no preconceived notions about their thoughts or ideas. I encouraged them to relax and just enjoy the experience. I handed each of them a large sketchbook and a separate journal. They all had a bunch of questions about what they could do in the books. The students were curious about the types of things they would be allowed to do in the books and wanted reassurance that they would be allowed to take them home and keep the sketchbooks at the end of the study. After logistical questions were answered, they each filled out a questionnaire about museums and their art experiences. They were also asked to choose ten words to write in their journals that they felt best describe art museums. Although I teach each of these students they are among over eight hundred students that I see on a weekly basis, so I did not know them very well nor was I fully aware of their museum experience or understanding.

The museum portion of questionnaire, summarized in Figure 4, was given to help me understand how much exposure they had to museum learning and to provide insight into their personal connections, if any, to art museums. Specifically I wanted to know how familiar they were with MCMA and the galleries we were about to embark upon. In regards to museum experience the questionnaire revealed:
Sean and Colleen had both visited a museum with their school and their family and they were the only two who had been to MCMA. Eric was the only participant who had never been to a museum previously. In response to the question about previous experience, Eric wrote “I have NEVER been to a museum in my life!!” The remaining students had been to a museum with their school.

The questionnaire also asked them about their art making habits as well their personal opinions in regards to defining what qualities make someone an artist. It also allowed me to
understand how they felt about their own artwork and their status as an artist. The students were asked to reveal the greatest piece of art they have personally created. Only two of the students, Ava and Eric stated that their best art was made at school. The others described things they had created outside of school. All of the students that revealed the subject matter had chosen to draw or paint something personal such as, “my mom’s dress”, “my mom’s van”, or “my puppets.” When asked how they knew the piece was great the answers dealt with the length of time spent, the details they had included or the realistic qualities of the piece. Eric simply stated, “Because I think all my art is great.” When asked if they save the artwork they create, six of the students said they save some of their work, and only Emma said she did not save any of her artwork.

The questionnaire also asked the students to explain who an artist is. They all agreed that an artist is someone who makes art and four of the students qualified it by saying an artist is someone who is good at making art. They were also asked about the differences between themselves and the artists who display work in museums. All but one student said that the artists who display in museums are better at making art. Sean replied the difference is, “Most artists are old and do it for money.” All of the students agreed that the two groups, the students and the museum artists, are similar in that they both make art but the reasons they make art are very different. The students reported that they make art for self-enjoyment and to please others. They theorized that the museum artists make art for fame, recognition, money and because they want to inspire others.

The descriptive exercise, which asked the students to describe an art museum, provided insight into their personal feelings and expectations regarding museums. All of the descriptive words the students selected were positive. They included things like: “amazing”, “beautiful”, “colorful”, “happy”, and “important”. None of the students assumed an art museum to be
boring, quiet, or negative in any way. Once the questionnaires and descriptions were completed and everyone’s anticipations seemed high, we all got up from the steps, opened the heavy antique entrance doors, entered the museum and began an eight-week journey together.

**Observations and Artifacts**

I designed the learning activities of this study based on Falk and Dierking’s (2000) CML. They assert that all learning “is situated within a series of contexts” and that it is an “organic, integrated experience that happens in the real world” (Falk & Dierking, 2000, p. 10). Falk and Dierking’s (2000) CML involves the personal, physical and socio-cultural contexts of a museum. Additionally they assert that time is a necessary component of their learning model (p. 10). The authors contend that free-choice learning, which takes place in the museum setting, “is personally motivated and involves considerable choice on the part of the learner as to what to learn, as well as where and when to participate in learning” (Falk & Dierking, 2000, p. 11). The study was structured to allow the students to learn about the art world from different perspectives. They took on the roles of: museum visitor, docent, curator, and artist throughout the study. The following sections outline each of these roles and the data that was collected through each.

Students as Museum Visitors

When the study first began, the students viewed themselves primarily as museum visitors. Although all but one of the members of the group had previously visited a museum, only a couple of the students had been to this particular museum before and therefore their initial role and understanding was that of new visitor. The first day they were full of logistical questions:
“Do we have to pay to get in?”, “Do they know we are coming?”, “How long will we stay?” “Do they have a Van Gogh painting?” (field notes, 2014). All of these questions were asked before we even entered the museum lobby. The students wanted to know if there was a bathroom, if they could bring in a snack, if the building was dark inside, etc. Very few of their questions concerned what they would be doing or learning but simply dealt with logistical details.

There are two large main galleries at MCMA, one on the main floor and one upstairs. The galleries are subdivided although the visual space is continuous. During the two months of the case study the downstairs gallery displayed a collection of portraits that were painted over several lifetimes by different members of the same family. The upstairs gallery featured a juried exhibition that had a variety of paintings from various artists and consisted of a wide range of subject matter. On our first visit I took the students to the upstairs gallery and asked them to look around. They walked from painting to painting without saying much. Occasionally they would ask a question or make a comment about the art. They said things like, “that’s pretty don’t you think?” or “I like this one” (field notes, 2014). They did not engage each other in a conversation. They selected the pieces they wanted to look at and we talked about the gallery itself, the lighting, the floor, color of the walls, etc. It was very quiet among the group. I expected their initial hesitancies. MCMA is small and on many occasions we were the only visitors in the entire building. This made for an interesting dynamic in that the students were very aware of the silence initially but as the weeks went on and their comfort level grew, they felt free to express their thoughts loudly since no other visitors would be disturbed.
The downstairs gallery was filled with portraits of all sizes and types. The space has a separate door off of the main lobby and is separated by large glass windows as illustrated in Figure 5. Many of the works currently inside the gallery were nudes. The students did not have time to visit this gallery on the first day and as we passed it on the way out they could see the nude bodies on display inside. They whispered and giggled quietly to each other. As we got closer to the gallery door, Colleen stopped and asked “why aren’t we allowed to go in there?” (field notes, 2014) She smiled as she asked as if she was confident I would say something about the inappropriateness of the work for children. I simply stated “oh you can go anywhere you want in this museum, we are simply out of time but we will be sure to start in that gallery next time” (field notes, 2014). This interaction established to the group that they would be able to choose what artwork they explored and that they had ownership in their learning within the
museum context. This connects to Falk and Dierking’s (2000) physical context of learning. The authors assert that for humans the need to make meaning of the physical setting is innate. This need plays out in the museum in many ways—in the need for visitors to orient themselves in space, to explore that which is novel, to prepare themselves mentally for what is to come and to make overall sense of the museum environment (p. 132).

The role of museum visitor took shape over the next few weeks. Students were asked to select pieces they wanted to explore further while in the galleries. Their journal entries revealed that they established their preferences for art based on both how the artwork looked and how it made them feel. They established their personal criteria for their choices. Many of the visitor based activities included games and group discussions. My role as a participant observer allowed me to get them involved in an activity and then to step back and observe how the activity was carried out. As visitors the students were encouraged to explore the art which appealed to them personally and to make decisions based on personal preference and understanding. This correlates with Falk and Dierking’s (2000) personal context of museum learning. The authors assert that, “museums should strive neither to entertain nor to teach but to engage people in educationally enjoyable experiences from which they can take their own personal meaning” (p. 76). On one occasion the students were asked to select a piece that contained a person or people. They were to imagine that they were one of the people in the scene. Then, from that person’s perspective they were to write a short poem describing that person’s feelings. The students all took a spot in the middle of the gallery floor, not revealing which person they were personifying and began to write. In the early days of the study the students were cautious of sitting in the
floor. By the end of the eight weeks they were stretched out and lying on the floor for maximum viewing and comfort as illustrated in Figure 6.

![Students Working in the Gallery](image)

Figure 6. Students Working in the Gallery. Ava and Colleen writing in the gallery

Once the poems or descriptions were complete the students stood and read them aloud. Based on their descriptors, the rest of the group tried to guess which painting and character they were describing. We did this exercise a couple of times over the course of the study. The students initial descriptions were very direct, “I am a young woman” and occasionally moved into much more subtle descriptions that involved emotions such as “I am troubled” (field notes, 2014).
After Aria read her description, as illustrated in Figure 7, and revealed who she was describing Colleen asked her how she knew the woman was in love. Aria explained that the woman would not be sitting and having lunch with some man she wasn’t in love with. Colleen said she did not agree that the woman was in love and that the man in the painting could even be her brother (field notes, 2014).

Figure 8. Student Writing. Emma’s description of a painting of a woman in a fancy dress holding flowers.
After Emma revealed who she was describing, as seen in Figure 8, the group had a lengthy discussion about her assumption that the woman was going to a wedding. Sean said people do not bring flowers to a wedding that the flowers are already there. Eli simply said he thought the woman was pretty but could not tell from the painting where she was going. Eric agreed that she could be going to a wedding and that maybe she was in the wedding and already had the flowers before it began. Emma did not argue but simply took in all of the comments and then quietly told the group that she had picked the woman and that she knew she was going to a wedding (field notes, 2014).

Figure 9. Student Writing. Sean’s description of a stylized figure drinking from a Container.

After hearing Sean’s description, illustrated in Figure 9, most of the group immediately guessed the painting Sean was describing. He and Eric laughed at how frustrated the woman
probably was when the water would not come out. They broke into an impromptu role play each pretending to be the woman and yelling out all of the things she might say. The two stomped in place in the gallery for added effect. No one argued the accuracy of their narrative. Aria and Colleen did assert that they thought the figure was a boy not a woman. The group all agreed that whether the figure was male or female they were probably mad and frustrated (field notes, 2014).

Figure 10. Student Writing. Ava’s description of a man sitting alone at a table.

Ava giggled as she stood in the gallery and read her poem to the group, illustrated in Figure 10. She was sure that they would know right away which painting she was describing.
Aria and Eric both selected a different painting based on her description. Colleen correctly identified the painting after a few minutes and Ava was surprised at how long it took. The group began debating her points, saying that she had no reason to assume he was hungry. Ava argued that if she had been sitting for a long time at a table she would start to think about food and get hungry no matter how bored or disappointed she was (field notes, 2014).

Their group discussions were always lively. Most of the time the students worked at getting the others in the group to see the art from their point of view. They were, however, surprisingly open to new ideas and other perspectives despite their desire to have their ideas validated among the group. The students were always eager to share, even Eli and Emma, the shyest students of the group, wanted their ideas to be known. Occasionally they seemed hesitant to communicate their thoughts, but once they got started the others made them feel comfortable enough that they not only shared but were often eager to go first. As much as the group debated, they also enjoyed telling the others that they liked their ideas or that their description had made them look at a painting differently. I often observed the students laughing and having little side conversations about what the person in the painting might say based on how one of the students had described them (field notes, 2014).

The students also played visitor games such as Token Response (Erikson and Katter, 1991) in which the students awarded various paintings paper tokens for the one they felt took the longest or the one they would like to have at their house. They wrote a brief description of why they selected each piece on the award and then tried to convince other members of the group to agree with them based on what they had observed. The criteria they established included basic themes such size, detail, artistic skill, and emotional response.
Figure 11. Gallery Game Photo. Emma selecting which piece she would like to hang in her house and writing an explanation as to why this piece was selected.
Emma, seen in Figure 11, selected the piece for her house “because it seems relaxing”. The painting she argued took the longest to create was selected because it contained people and “people are hard to paint perfect”. Ava selected work for her home because of how it made her feel. She wrote, “I feel like I’m in it.” Colleen awarded the best work ribbon to a painting of flowers because “it pops out”. Eli’s criteria for best work was simply because “it has watercolors” as he wrote on his blue ribbon.

How the group acted as museum visitors changed over the course of the study. On the first couple of visits to the museum the students were cautious about how they spoke, how they stood, their voice volume level and even their proximity to me physically. At the beginning they all stood fairly close by waiting before venturing to one end of the exhibit and rarely being farther than a painting or two away from the other students. By the end of the study, the students were very comfortable with themselves and the physical space of the museum. They appeared to feel as though they belonged in that space and that they did not wait to be prompted to move about the gallery. They each had their own favorite spot to sit or to gaze while waiting on the next game or discussion to take place, as illustrated in Figure 12 (field notes, 2014).
One of the most revealing activities the students participated in as museum visitors was a game in which the students formed partnerships and blindly selected a descriptive word from a group of words that were placed on cards, illustrated in Figure 13. They then had to go and stand by the piece of art in the gallery that they felt best personified that word. Examples of the words included vague art concepts or descriptors such as saturation and miniature or emotions such as fearful or calm.
They then had to convince the group that their choice was the most valid. Often times they also had to convince their partner that their choice was the direction the partnership should go. One word was lonely and Eric quickly stood near a portrait of a man. He said to his partner, “can’t you see it in his expression-he has no one” (field notes, 2014). Aria, seen in Figure 14, selected a large painting of a tree to match the word peaceful and justified it to her partner who saw the tree as scary, she said “my grandmother has one just like it and it is always peaceful there” (field notes, 2014). The personal context of learning was evident in the students’ need to connect the artwork to their individual meaning and memory.

Figure 14. Student Reflection. Aria and the painting in which she found a personal connection.

One day we arrived at the museum and as it was their customary practice to head straight up the stairs into the upper galleries, they bounced loudly up the stairs ahead of me. Before I reached the second level they were coming back down. “Someone is here today and they are in our gallery” (field notes, 2014). They were hesitant to work as they normally did because of the extra visitors. They cautiously followed me into the space as I explained what we would be doing. Their normally loud voices got lower and they followed the lead of the quiet family that
was now standing nearby. “What if they don’t know what we are doing?” Emma asked (field notes, 2014). The students were cautious with their actions and their words until the family moved farther away in the gallery space. Toward the end of the study this dynamic shifted. On another day the students encountered a couple in the downstairs gallery. They continued to spread out their journals and other materials across the gallery floor, as illustrated in Figure 15, paying little attention to the other visitors. The couple stopped briefly to listen to their comments.

Figure 15. Group Discussion. Sean, Eric and Eli discussing their decisions to present to the girls.

The museum over time became a place of comfort and held a familiar safe quality for the students. They were motivated to explore it every week as if it were brand new. Eric’s mom was running late one afternoon and the group was already inside when they arrived. He came bursting through the exterior doors with his mom following behind him. He excitedly asked, “What did I miss?” and his mom explained that she did not know why but “getting to this
museum each week is the thing he looks forward to most” (field notes, 2014). That was true for Ava as well. She had to leave early one afternoon for an appointment and her mom had to pry her out of the museum. Aria would be the first to arrive each week. She would jump out of the car as soon as she saw me reach the museum steps and would ask each time when I thought the others would be there; she was eager to start.

As visitors they were confident in their ability to move freely throughout the galleries. They easily flowed from one space to the next with leisure and enjoyment. Occasionally we would wrap up the day’s events in the basement of the museum. The basement of the museum is accessed down a narrow set of old steps. The floors are bare concrete and the space has been divided into two studios where the museum holds art classes for the community. The worn look of the studio space is in sharp contrast to the polished wooden floors and marble countertops of the museum entrance on the floor above. The students took this physical context clue as one that permitted silliness that may have been frowned upon upstairs. They often had a hard time getting settled while in this space and were anxious to explore the shelves of paint or other art materials inside the rooms. According to Falk and Dierking (2000), this behavior is related to the physical context of learning. They contend that humans associate behavioral norms with a given context. The authors explain that, “Because learning is context specific, contexts can facilitate or inhibit learned behaviors” (p.55-56). Clearly in the context of the museum the polished gallery setting elicited a different set of norms than the gritty workshop space.

Student as Docent

As the students gained experience in the museum setting they took on the role as docent. This involved expressing their artistic interpretations to others and being able to explain and
justify their opinions. One afternoon in the gallery I gave the students a piece of paper, as illustrated in Figure 16, that had the word docent written on it and asked them to write down what they thought it meant.

Figure 16. Docent Definition. “A painting with lots of paint.”

Other definitions included:

“I think a docent is a paper that is like extra piece paper. Way more important than others.”

“I think a docent is a postcard or a note.”

“A docent is a statement someone has”

The group discussed their answers and their ideas. I then explained to them what a docent in a museum is actually responsible for and how they assist museum visitors. I then asked the students to select a painting in the gallery. They were to sit in front of the painting for a few minutes and study it. Then I asked them to make up some fun assumptions about the
work. Examples could include things such as when it was painted, who painted it, the title, etc. Then they teemed up with a partner and walked them through the artwork just as a docent might do. The students explored how some docents encourage others to talk about art by asking open-ended questions and encouraging commentary. This practice allowed the participants to gain confidence about their ability to analyze art without having prior knowledge about it.

The students quickly selected a painting they were interested in and began the process of looking. Eric selected a portrait of a lady wearing only undergarments, stockings, and heels while drinking a glass of wine. The other participants questioned his selection but he was confident in his choice. He explained later to the group that he had selected her because of how well she was painted. He went on with a very detailed explanation of the brushwork and the artist’s skill level (field notes, 2014). He never giggled or made light of the subject matter but stayed in the role of serious docent. Colleen was a little less confident in her tour guide abilities. She gathered a couple of participants over to hear her explanation of an impressionist style bird painting only to stop every few words and ask if she was saying the right thing. Aria selected a large western landscape and explained in much detail about how it was created. Sean selected a portrait of an old man and told a detailed account of why he was painted and by whom. Emma had written down a few notes about what she wanted to say and read from her paper without looking up. Eli talked mainly to himself, he had a lot to say about the painting he selected but was not sure he wanted to share with the group. Most of the students did more explaining than questioning and engaging their audience but seemed to grasp the concept of the museum docent role.

On another occasion the students took part in role play, illustrated in Figure 17. They chose to take on the identity of an artist or a person in the painting and talk about the selected
work from that person’s perspective. These activities allowed me to observe how the students
interacted as a group and how those interactions shaped their own thoughts and conclusions
about the art work and their opinions of it. According to Falk and Dierking (2000), “All social
groups in museum utilize each other as vehicles for deciphering information, for reinforcing
shared beliefs, and for making meaning. Museums create unique milieus for such collaborative
learning” (p. 138).

Figure 17. Role Play. Ava listens to Colleen take on the persona of the artist during role
play and explains her inspiration for her work.

In their journals students were asked to respond to docent related prompts including
artistic judgments such as whether they believed that art had to be beautiful. They also
responded to prompts that asked them to consider their guiding abilities, and their beliefs
regarding the artistic knowledge of adults compared to children. Some of the journal entries
included:

Prompt: Does art have to be beautiful?
“I think art doesn’t have to be beautiful because everyone is not inspired by beauty”-Aria

“Sometimes no, because art can be anything like abstract art or candy art, so it doesn’t have to be beautiful”-Eli

“Art does not have to be beautiful because people make mistakes and it's ok to make mistakes”-Eric

“no it doesn’t. Art can be beautiful but it doesn’t have to be. Some of even Monet and other artists’ art is dull, gray and not pretty.” - Sean

“it doesn’t because it can be ugly, it just has to make us feel something”-Ava

“it does not have to be beautiful but he or she has to take time on it”-Emma

Prompt: Would you make a good tour guide at the museum? Why or why not?

“no, because I am SO loud!”-Colleen

“Yes, because I feel like some people need to know the place, the materials, where things are located and get to know the place.”-Ava

“I wouldn’t make a good tour guide because I want people to figure out how to get around”-Eric

“I do not think I would make a good tour guide at a museum because I get shy around people I don’t know”-Aria

Prompt: Do you think adults know more about art than kids? Why or why not?

Four of the students believed that adults do not know more about art than kids:

“No, they don’t because adults aren’t creative and don’t see the other side of things”-Sean

“I think adults do not know more things than kids because kids have more creativity”-Aria

“kids because they are more creative”-Colleen

“They don’t because they don’t worry about art as much as kids”-Emma

The other students all agreed that adults do know more about art than kids:

“Adults know more about art than kids because, adults know more about the rules of art and children don’t know that much about the rules”-Eric

“Yes because they probably already drew art or learned about it and kids are still learning about it”-Ava
“Yes, adults do know more about art than kids because adults have more experience with art than kids do” - Eli (student journal entries)

Figure 18. Student Exploration. Eli deciding which portrait he wanted to select to get to know better.
One of the docent related activities that the students participated in at the museum was an interpretative exercise where I asked the students to select a portrait in the gallery of someone they think they would be friends with or someone they would like to get to know better, as illustrated in Figures 18 & 19. Once they had selected the painting containing a good friend candidate, the students were asked to write a short descriptive narrative of the person they
selected. The students walked slowly around the gallery, taking their time to choose their portrait carefully. Sean selected a painting of an old man. He wrote that the man “has always been poor, he never is crazy, he’s happy with who he is, he doesn’t worry about being old, he’s not mad about it” Emma choose to be friends with a couple feeding birds in a painting. She choose not to write about their personalities but simply wrote, “I would like to make friends with them because if you feed birds they would be happy and that is nice of them.” Colleen chose a painting of a woman looking in a vanity mirror. She wrote that the woman “probably has a husband who looks cute.” Eric questioned Colleen asking her if she was just going to be friends with this woman because her husband might be cute and Colleen quickly told Eric he must not have been listening—she was going to be friends with the woman not the husband and that it was just an observation. Eric said he did not think you can tell how cute someone’s husband is based on this painting (field notes, 2014). Aria selected a person she described as “shy.” The narrative Aria invented explained that the girl in the painting “grew up in a wealthy family, she has always been shy and she loves dresses!” Ava selected a person holding flowers. She wrote, “they look like a nice person and they are carrying flowers that they might give to someone and I like it when I get gifts.” She went on to explain that the person she selected to be friends with always asks if she feels ok and never argues with her. All of the students selected and described someone who had similarities to their own personality. Their narratives demonstrated the students’ ability to personally connect to each of the paintings they chose.

Part of their docent experience at the museum also involved being a guide for their family and guests they invited to their art exhibition, as illustrated in Figures 20 & 21. They were responsible for explaining and prompting discussion for the visitors the night of the art show. The students seemed reluctant to generate any deep discussions with their families the night of
the exhibit. We had discussed different things they could do to get their families engaged in the artwork. The group had discussed which painting they were most excited about sharing with their families. I had expected the students to show off some of their interpretation skills they had been working on. However, during the exhibition I observed very limited conversations among the students and their families regarding any of the artwork in the museum. I noticed that the students would point out a painting and ask their mom or dad if they liked it and when the parent responded with a simple yes or no the student would move on rather than engage them in conversation. It seemed as if the students had the skills and the intentions to engage in a meaningful dialogue but did not find the comfort level they had established within our little museum group.

Figure 20. Student Guide. Colleen explains a piece to her mom the night of the exhibition.
Students as Curators

Perhaps one of the most distinct roles within a museum is that of curator. The curator has privileges that the general public does not. This includes the power to determine what is viewed by visitors and what is not. The students involved in this case study were challenged to make curatorial decisions throughout the research project.

Our first Saturday morning at school began the curatorial experience. When the students arrived at school we entered the quiet building and I turned off the alarm. At the onset of the study I worried that being at school for much of the studio production time would be too familiar to the students. It was not. The quiet atmosphere of the deserted building provided a physical context vastly different from the school they were used to. The students were so excited about being at school on a Saturday. It was as if they had received a back stage pass or been granted
special access to something forbidden. They were filled with logistical questions again about how the alarm worked, if the principal knew we were there, if anyone else was in the building, etc. They all wanted to stop inside the teacher’s lounge.

There reactions to doing so included:

“I have always wanted to come in here and now I have!”

“I saw in here once but my teacher said it was not for students. I can’t wait to tell my class I hung out in here” (field notes, 2014)

After answering their logistical questions we sat down in the school lobby and I explained to the group that part of our time together would be spent determining what should be on display in a museum. This included their own work and work already in the museum galleries.

Before the students arrived I had arranged sixty art reproductions along the hallway that led from the lobby to the art room where we would be working. Before we made our way to the art room that first morning I asked the students to look at all of the art work and to think about what would make a collection. They all discussed things such as common subjects, colors, types of art (paintings, sculptures, etc.). Once they had a firm understanding of what may constitute a collection, they were asked to look at each piece in the hallway and to then select three pieces that they felt would make a good collection, as illustrated in Figures 22-24. Once their collections were complete we discussed as a group the reasons for their choices and possible names for the collection. Examples below show some of the collections formed by the students:
Figure 22. Print Collection. Sean’s *Old Man* Collection

Figure 23. Print Collection. Ava’s *Fruit Smash-Up* Collection

Figure 24. Print Collection. Aria’s *Colors* Collections
The students were also prompted to write a journal entry about things their family collects.

Examples entries include:

“My mom collects fabric for her sewing projects. In my mom’s fabric collection there are many colors, prints, patterns and textures. They are beautiful and they are used for making clothes, furniture, pillows and dolls.” - Eric

“my mom collects shirts that don’t fit us anymore and most are pretty” - Emma

“box tops” - Colleen

“they are all different but they are also alike, They are all wood bowls. But they are not all the same shade of brown” - Aria

“old video games” - Ava

“fish and starfish, the starfish are scaly and beautiful and they are brown, but the things in common with starfish and the fish is that they both live in the deep blue sea” - Eli

“I collect rare/ordinary bottles. I collect handy/cool pocket knives. My mom collects quarks from different parties and places. My dad collects ticket stubs from movies/plays. My mom and dad both collect matches from restaurants (Ibid) and places.” - Sean

The students were told that they would be creating a collection of their own artwork over the next eight weeks. They could use any materials they wanted and subject matter was up to them. They would be naming their collection, selecting pieces from their collection to be displayed at the museum and writing an artist statement about their work and its meaning.

Curatorship was also explored at the museum itself. Students were challenged to examine the art work the museum had deemed a collection and then they had to select pieces they felt would best fit into that grouping, as seen in Figure 25 & 26. They also made determinations about which pieces they felt did not belong in the collection and debated with the
group why their selected piece should be removed from the gallery display. The students competed in groups for many of these activities and earned points based on the effectiveness of their argument. The groups who accumulated the most points were able to select the next activity or painting that would become our focus.

Figure 25. Student Curators. Students determining which portrait would best match the style of a portrait they selected from the current display.
The students asked to do curatorial challenges on several occasions. They loved trying to convince the other group that their curatorship was more accurate. They were fierce debaters and were passionate about their choices. From my perspective as an observer it was clear that over time their understanding of the paintings grew. Most of their selections were not based on personal preference but rather on what would be best for the collection. Sean was defending his choice of a portrait to be added to the collections and he said, “I don’t like it either, I mean the colors are terrible but it just fits with the others because of her expression” (field notes, 2014). They rarely argued because after each group debated their reasoning for their choices, the other group could see a different perspective and although they were not always happy about it, they could understand the thought process involved.
Perhaps the biggest curatorial task the students took part in was selecting which of their own pieces would make up their personal collection that was displayed at the conclusion of the project. The students had to decide which pieces would be a part of their collection, the theme of the collection as well as deciding how the display would be set up in the museum space.

On our final day at the museum the students used the workshop area to lay out all of their paintings and drawings they had created as part of their studio experience. They selected which pieces they felt best represented their collection, as seen in Figures 27 & 28. The students decided as a group how the artwork would be arranged. They discussed the benefits of grouping each collection together or mixing up all of the pieces throughout the display. Ava asserted that she felt the work should be arranged by collection because “if we mix everyone’s work together randomly it will be too confusing” (field notes, 2014). They made gallery cards for each of their pieces and their artist’s statements were included in the display. They named their collection, as seen in Figure 29, based on the overall theme of the work.

Figure 27. Exhibition Preparation. Creating gallery tags and artist’s statements.
Figure 28. Curatorship. Students in the museum workshop space determining which pieces will be part of their display.

Smile

#Happy

Hobby

One Man with Many Cats

The Worthington Collection,

Eli

Bubbles

Figure 29. Student Collections. Titles of each of the students’ collections
Sitting in the workshop space the day the students prepared their work for exhibition was chaotic. The atmosphere of the museum basement did not promote the same professional behavior that was warranted in the gallery space. The students had a lot of work to do and they were slow to get started. Only Sean and Aria were busy working on their gallery tags. The others were busy being silly, running from one studio space to the other and there was some complaining about the look of the workshop. They could not imagine that the grungy studio could be transformed into suitable exhibit space. I explained to the students that they could design it however they wanted. If they felt we should cover the walls in black paper, for example, they needed to make that determination for the design of the exhibition. Colleen very sarcastically said, “I sure hope you are planning to clean this place up” as she continued to spin around on the studio chair (field notes, 2014).

Eventually the group got to work and decided to cover the tables with black tablecloths and to string twinkling lights. They selected which of their pieces would remain in the studio portion of the exhibition and which piece would be displayed in the main gallery. It was difficult for a few of them to decide which piece would be in the gallery and others knew immediately. Eric made his determination based on the material, he selected the painting he had chosen to do on canvas and explained that he felt that fit better in the gallery. Sean selected his fish painting although it was on painted on paper (field notes, 2014).

Students as Artists

The idea that the students would engage in the studio process as a professional adult artist was a two-fold design. Students would be involved in both creating visual art as well as
exhibiting their art in a professional setting. The following subsections outline how this process was conducted and outlines the data that was collected.

Creating Artwork as Artists

The students spent time on Saturdays in a studio atmosphere. Although the studio was set up at their school it was designed to be vastly different from their regular art classroom experience. The students were allowed to determine and use whatever materials they needed for their particular piece. This included canvas, varying sizes, colors and textures of paper and a variety of mediums including acrylic paint, oil pastel, chalk, pencil, watercolor, etc. They could select their own subject matter, size of the work and determine when the piece was finished. They were encouraged to also create art outside of the time we were together. They could produce as many pieces as they desired. It was explained to the students that at the end of the eight weeks they would determine which of their art pieces would make up their collection which they would name and display at MCMA.

The students eagerly arrived each Saturday morning and got right to work. I would bring donuts and we got into a routine of eating and talking about what they were working on while waiting for each student to arrive. The students spent a great deal of time talking while they created, primarily about what they were painting. They also used a lot of the time looking at what the others were creating. Eli, seen working in Figure 30, was always anxious to show the other students what he was doing. If any of the students asked about his work he would begin a long discussion about why he selected ducks or Pokémon characters. He would continue to discuss at length why he loved the subject and would still be talking long after the student had returned to his space to continue working. Ava seemed to work non-stop yet she always ran out
of time and was surprised each week when it was time to leave. She would smile and laugh and proclaim she would definitely finish the following week. Aria, seen in Figure 31, often worked quietly by herself, occasionally asking one or two of the girls what they thought of her work. Eric, seen in Figure 32, talked to the group as a whole, announcing whatever ideas popped into his head but never waited for a response. Colleen and Emma looked for reassurance to make certain that whatever they were doing was liked by the others. The atmosphere of the studio time was very much that of an artistic community in which the members were creating and discussing ideas for what they would create next. The students would leave each week with their art and many plans to finish and perfect their work over the course of the week. The following Saturday, however, the students would arrive with the artwork untouched since the previous gathering. They were eager to start again but apparently any work outside of the organized studio time never developed.

Figure 30. Student Art Production. Eli working in his sketchbook.
Figure 31. Student Art Production. Aria working on a painting she had planned in her sketchbook.

Figure 32. Student Art Production. Eric in the studio.
The sketch books they were given were also a part of their visual artist experience. They could be used to generate ideas and also act as a visual diary. The students were shown examples of visual journals and artist’s sketchbooks. The sketchbooks were collected each Saturday so that I could document their work and add prompts depending on their progress. They were returned to the students each Tuesday at the museum and they worked in them throughout the week.

Several sketch prompts were provided for the students. They could choose to respond to the prompt or decide for themselves what they would like to write or create. The prompts were very direct such as: Paint something you love, others were more abstract with one word prompts such as balance or believe. Often the students selected something from their sketchbook.
to expand upon for a finished piece. Aria, seen in Figure 33, painted a figure based on one of her sketchbook prompts. Ava, in Figure 34, also worked from her sketches to create final pieces.

Figure 34. Student Art Production. Ava creating a painting from a sketchbook entry.

Overall very few drawings and ideas in the sketchbooks were generated by the students.

Aria was the exception to this observation. She had more sketches than any of the other students. She was proud of what she had produced and every week when she arrived on the museum steps she was eager to know if I had seen how many pages she had filled. She clearly saw valued quantity in her work, but she did take the time to add color and used a variety of mediums. Most of her sketches were simple objects like a flower, fruit, as illustrated in Figure 35, or her name in different colors. She drew things she loved and that were easy for her to do.
Emma had only sketches for the prompts that I had added to the book. She would arrive at the museum each week and ask if she was supposed to have done anything in her sketchbook. Her mom told me several times throughout the project that it was like pulling teeth to make her do any of the sketches (field notes, 2014). Despite her lack of sketches in her sketchbook, she wrote in her artist’s statement, “I feel so comfortable about art because whenever I get home from school I always feel like doing art. This is why art is comfortable. I want artists to know that I love doing art.”

Colleen’s sketchbook had a few pages filled out. Most of her work was in response to a prompt that I had given the group. Throughout most of the project her sketchbook remained empty. Toward the end of the eight weeks she went from having four or five pages with something quickly drawn on them to filling a page in one night with fast pencil drawings and she reported that she had finished ten sketches, as seen in Figure 35. The last week I asked her why she did not have much done in her sketchbook, she said “I had a lot of homework this weekend” (field notes, 2014).
Ava’s sketchbook was perhaps the most personally motivated. She consistently drew throughout the eight-week period and many of her sketches inspired her final art pieces. Most of her sketches were done in pencil although she did paint a few of the pages. Ava’s subjects included her family, her cats, her phone, shopping, and flowers, as seen in Figure 37. Ava did not produce a large amount of work she did show that she was personally motivated in terms of subject matter and the time spent on each sketch.
Sean’s sketchbook remained empty for much of the study. He did a few sketches that could not have taken more than a couple of minutes to complete, as seen in Figure 38. He looked surprised each week when he looked in the sketchbook and saw nothing in it almost as if he had expected drawings to magically appear.
Eli filled thirteen of his sketchbook pages over the eight week period. All but a few of his sketches were drawings of Pokémon or Minecraft characters, illustrated in Figure 39. He spent a great deal of time on each sketch and was very proud of how much they looked like the real drawings. He did not want to branch out in terms of subject matter and did not differentiate his drawings of Pokémon from original subject matter.
Eric’s sketchbook contained full color drawings, illustrated in Figure 40, some prompted and others not. He did not produce a lot of work but seemed to really enjoy the process. Each week he was anxious to show the group what he had completed. If he was unable to do anything in his sketchbook he was clearly embarrassed and always pulled me aside to let me know that he wanted to do more for next week (field notes, 2014).

![Image of a sketchbook entry](image.png)

**Figure 40. Sketchbook Entry.** Eric’s response to the sketch prompt “Believe.”

I considered the sketchbook entries and artwork produced during the project to be average or below average in terms of both quantity and quality.

**Exhibiting As Artists**

The students took part in an exhibition that they curated and produced at MCMA. The students selected their favorite piece from their collection and that selection was used to generate
an invitation to their exhibition, as illustrated in Figures 41 & 42. This was done to create a sense of professionalism and to signify to the students that they would be exhibiting as an adult artist may exhibit.

Figure 41. Exhibition Invitation. Eric’s Exhibit Invitation.
The students also prepared an artist’s statement that was also displayed with their work.

Examples of students’ artist’s statements:

*My grandmother was a famous artist who died when I was about three years old. When she died she passed her love of art to me and my dad. Art can be anything from A-Z, you can express more things than you can speak.* - Sean
Art is important in my life because it lets my expressions come out. I think it’s really fun and it calms me down.-Eric

Eric wrote on another page of his journal that his art is also “important to other people like Pablo Picasso or Vincent VanGogh”-Eric

The students created gallery tags and titled each of their pieces. They wrote brief statements about their inspiration or material choice.

The painting I have created is very colorful, very calm like the ocean and very warm like the sun.-Eli

Ava’s explanation for her work is illustrated in Figure 43.

Figure 43. Student Artwork Description. Ava’s explanation of her cat portrait.

The exhibit took place the evening after our final museum day. The museum hired an intern to stay after hours and opened the museum just for the purpose of the exhibition. The
public was allowed to attend the exhibit and students invited as many of their friends and family members as they wanted. The workshop area was transformed with black tablecloths and twinkling lights. In addition to the finished pieces that were on display I selected sketches from the student’s sketchbooks and enlarged them onto large paper panels, as illustrated in Figure 4.4. Each student had a panel with a collection of their pencil sketches that hung from ceiling to floor as part of the exhibit.

Figure 4.4. Exhibition. The students’ sketches enlarged and on display.
The students had most of their work in the downstairs studio areas of the museum. However, they each selected one piece they considered the most important to be displayed in the main upstairs gallery, as illustrated in Figure 45.

![Figure 45. Exhibition. The upstairs gallery with the students’ artwork on display](image)

As the students arrived they were all smiles. The students quickly ushered their guests through the lobby and down the stairs to see their artwork. The upstairs gallery was also quickly filled with excited parents and family members crowding around the wooden easels that held the work of the students. The students dressed up, as illustrated in Figure 46, despite the fact that we had never discussed what would be appropriate for them to wear.
They eagerly led their families through the gallery space, as illustrated in Figures, 47-52, explaining the smallest of details such as where the bathroom was located juxtaposed with commentary about their choice of materials.
Figure 48. Student and Family. Ava and her dad, the subject of her favorite painting.

Figure 49. Exhibition. Sean’s family admiring his artwork.
Figure 50. Exhibition. Ava discusses her collection with her mom and other family members.

Figure 51. Exhibition. Colleen enjoying being center of attention
Figure 52. Exhibition. Families filled the gallery

Figure 53. Student and Family. Aria and her family and friends the night of the exhibition
Student Interviews

After the exhibition the museum participants met for two more sessions. We met once at school to conduct individual interviews. Our last meeting was the following week at the museum to formally thank the museum staff for allowing us to use the galleries and workshop space for the study. The group then took part in a group interview to see how they felt about the exhibition and the experience of the previous eight weeks. The interviews were semi structured. In a semi structured format the topics and issues for the interview are specified but the way in which the questions are asked is open ended (Diamond, 2009). I organize the findings revealed in the interviews by student.

Aria

When I sat down with Aria she was anxious to talk about the time in the museum. She had brought a large group of family and friends to see her work and they were all so excited for her. She revealed in the interview that she was proud of the work she had created and displayed. She said when she got the artwork home she hung them in her living room. I asked her about the piece she had selected to place in the main gallery. I asked her if she felt it was more special because of its placement. She said, “I never really thought of it that way, I think I just did better on that one because it was kind of easier than the big ones on really big paper and I sketched it out more.” When I asked her if she considered herself an artist she replied, “I think I would say no because I don’t really think I’m like famous people.” When I asked her how her family would answer if I asked them if she were an artist and she quickly responded, “That I am!” I showed Aria a picture of her sorting images in the gallery and I asked her to describe the image and she said, “confused”. When I asked her to elaborate she said “Because like that was the time
when we were trying to choose what would be in that area of the museum and it was hard!”

When I showed her another image of her sitting in front of a painting she described the image as “calm and relaxed”. She talked about her sketchbook and said she may finish it although she was not sure. I ended by asking Aria if she felt confident about her ability to navigate in any museum, if she were to take someone to any museum would she know how to guide them. She smiled and said, “I would probably have a good idea.”

*Sean*

When Sean and I talked he was very excited by the outcome of the exhibit. He said his parents loved everything he had created. I asked him if he had a chance to do the exhibition again what he would change. He replied, “I would do more pictures”. Like Aria, Sean did not see any added importance to the piece displayed in the main gallery. He said all the pieces on display were of equal importance. When I asked him to elaborate on the name he gave his collection, *The Worthington Collection* he explained, “well I named that because my grandmother she was my dad’s mother, she was an artist in Tennessee and what she really wanted, her wish was, what she always wanted to do was to get her art-her artwork in a museum, so I named it after her.” He also explained to me that he really felt like he liked doing the art outside of an assignment because he could spend more time on it. He also said that he loved the sketchbook. When I asked him if he would describe himself as an artist he said, “Well everybody is kind of an artist, I mean if you make art you are an artist basically.” I then asked him if it changes someone’s status to have their artwork displayed in a museum. Sean replied, “it doesn’t really matter, I mean if you make art then you are an artist, museum or not.”
Colleen

Colleen was also excited to discuss her time at the museum. I asked her about the exhibition and she reported that both she and her family loved the exhibit and that they were all really excited. I asked her to talk to me about when she first came into the exhibit and saw her sketches enlarged on the wall. That night she said she wanted to take them down and throw them away. Reflecting back on it Colleen said, “Well it was weird to see them so big and really big and I did not like them because I knew I just didn’t, I did not spend very much time on them and I knew they were not very good!” She went on to explain that she did not like them because they were “just whatever sketches” and that when she saw them she hoped her family would just keep walking. She also reported that she liked to sketch but does not have much time for it. I asked Colleen if she considered herself an artist now that her work had been in a museum and she said, “no, I am not famous.” I asked her if her family thought of her as an artist and she said she was not sure but “not like the ones in a museum”. She told me that she probably would not be going back to the museum anytime soon just for fun because there are so many other things to do. But she did say that if she took her family there “it would be fun because I could just describe things better after I had this experience”.

Eric

Eric reflected on his experience at the museum with pride. When he talked about the exhibition he said, “I was proud of it because I know I really took my time and I am really good at art so you know”. He said his parents loved his artwork and “it made me feel important.” He reported that he felt that he is sort of an artist but that his mom would say he is a really good artist. I asked him to think back about the first day at the museum when I asked him to describe
an art museum and asked him if his description had changed. He said, “I feel differently about it now, I mean I know my place around almost like it feels comfortable.” I asked Eric what the hardest part of the whole experience was and he said that he was really nervous about the exhibit. I asked him what he was nervous about and he replied, “how the picture would be in the gallery, if it was good or not.” Another part of the experience that Eric classified as hard was trying to convince the other students that his ideas about the art in the gallery was correct. He said, “it was really hard to convince them.” We ended the interview talking about visiting other museums. I asked Eric if he visited another city would he stop in the art museum and he said “I would go for a couple of hours.”

Ava

Ava was most excited about the painting she had exhibited of her dad and his reaction to it. She reported that her whole family loved all of the work but that was their favorite because it looked so much like him. When I asked her if she considered herself an artist she said, “uh, yeah!!” She talked a lot about the subject of her art, mainly cats. She said she loves to do art based on her favorite things. I showed her pictures of the students in the gallery and asked her to title the photograph and her title was “hard work.” Ava said that her description of the art museum would be different now because she knows so much more about it than she did on the first day. I asked her if she would feel confident returning there and she replied, “yes, it is so familiar.”

Eli

Eli was the only student involved in the project that reported he was an artist based on the fact that he had exhibited in a museum. When asked if he is an artist he said, “I would say yes, I
would say yes because I got to put my artwork at the museum exhibit”. He went on to explain that if I asked his mom she would say yes because “clearly I am an artist who exhibits at the museum”. When I asked him what the hardest part of the experience was he said, “having to leave.” When I showed him photos of the gallery and the students writing about the pieces he described the scene as “happy” and “thinking.”

**Emma**

Emma reported that her family’s reaction to the exhibition was “oh wow”. She said their reaction made her feel great. I asked her what she thought about her sketches so large and on display and Emma replied, “I thought one of them could use a little more work.” She reported that she does believe that she is an artist based on the amount of paintings she creates. And she believes her family would agree. Emma said the hardest part of the whole experience for her was trying to stay focused. When I asked her about the sketchbook she said it felt more like an assignment than fun. When I showed her a photo of her and some of the other students looking at a painting in the gallery and asked her to describe it she said, “working.” A summary of individual student interviews is illustrated in Figure 54.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Aria</th>
<th>Sean</th>
<th>Colleen</th>
<th>Eric</th>
<th>Ava</th>
<th>Eli</th>
<th>Emma</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Considers themselves to be an artist</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Considers themselves to be an artist based on having work exhibited in a museum</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
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<td>✓</td>
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<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family perceives them as an artist</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confident about their ability to navigate in a museum</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reports wanting to spend more time on creating art in the future</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Believes artists must be famous</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 54. Student Interview Summary Chart.
Group Interview

A week after the individual interviews all of the students sat down as a group and discussed their time together during the study. The group interview was used to compare to the individual interviews and to get a sense of the group as a whole. During the group interview the students discussed what pieces they liked at the exhibit. I asked the group if we did it again what would they do differently and Colleen was the first to say, “this time I would try harder and take my time,” the others were quick to agree with her. I asked the group if we would have left our paintings up in the museum if visitors would have known they were not really part of the museum’s current exhibit. They all were adamant that it would be obvious to everyone that their work did not fit with the professional artist’s work in the museum. I pressed the issue asking them how someone would know. Colleen said, “no because it’s a museum and you have to be like good to get into a museum well maybe we were good because we got in a museum.” I asked them if I had switched out some of the paintings the night of the exhibit and put the museum’s work on easels and their work on the wall would their families have known. Aria said they would because they did not spend enough time on their work and that was obvious. Eric said if he had it to do over he would paint other things, different subjects. He said his work did not have to be in a museum for him to be an artist. I asked the group if their parents would have taken the work seriously if we had just sent it home, if it had not been displayed in the museum and they all said “no!” Even Ava said that if the painting of her dad had just been on paper and something she did at school it would not be hanging up in her house right now. Prompted by her response, I asked the group if materials matter. Some said yes and others like Emma said “it depends”. I asked the students if they were more of an artist than when we started and Colleen said “I am different”, Aria said “Better!” and Sean said he “planned on getting better and
spending more time on it.” I asked them about the invitations and if that set any expectations.
Emma said it made her nervous because she told her family her work would be on a wall and not an easel and she was not sure they would think that was as good. We also talked about the enlarged sketches and Emma said, “When I saw them and my parents were right behind me I got a little nervous because I wasn’t sure what they expected”. Colleen reiterated her embarrassment of seeing the sketches that big. “I wished I had worked harder on them”. Sean replied to her and said “but no one else knew you didn’t work hard on them” and to that she replied, “I did.” We finished our discussion by talking about the requirements to be considered an artist. Sean said it can be anything, there are not requirements that you just have to like the work yourself. Colleen said you have to “take pride in your work and do something that will impress people.” Aria said “you have to not be afraid to tell people you made it” and they all agree that above all you have to create something.

Summary

The findings for this study are derived from participant observations, journal entries, student sketchbooks, student produced artwork, photographs and interviews. They are presented in this chapter from the perspective of each artistic role the students were exposed to throughout the case study. It is this body of data that informed my interpretations that are discussed in the following chapter. Chapter five provides an explanation of my data analysis procedures along with the implications of the interpretations derived from the data in regards to future practice and research.
CHAPTER 5

INTERPRETATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

The previous chapter presented the data that was collected during a case study conducted at the MCMA in order to determine the role of an art museum on students’ perceptions of themselves as artists. In this chapter the data previously reported is discussed based on how it was analyzed and interpreted. Initially emergent themes evidenced in the data are explained along with the relationship between the findings and previous literature in the field. The following section frames each research question proposed by this study and outlines how each question is answered based on the findings. The answers to the research questions are followed by the limitations of the findings within the context of this study. The implications of this research are included along with suggestions for future research. The chapter then summarizes the relationship between the findings and previous literature in the field. The chapter concludes with a summary of the case study and researcher comments.

Themes

After the data was analyzed and coded for similarities, four major themes emerged: Familiarity, Authority, Motivation and Self-Perception. These emergent themes informed my understanding of the data collected in this case study. My recommendations based on this research are rooted in my understanding of these themes in relation to student learning. In the following sections, I discuss each of these themes as they relate to the varying perspectives
assumed by the participants during the study. The study was structured to allow each student to experience the museum from the perspective of visitor, docent, curator and artist to provide a wider view of the art community. The interpretations of the findings are organized from each of these perspectives. Embedded within the explanation of my interpretations I demonstrate the relationship between the findings of the case and previous literature in the field.

Familiarity

Familiarity was a constant theme in all of the data collected throughout this study. The students began their experience at MCMA as novice visitors. They were unsure of what to expect from the museum. The students were unfamiliar with simple logistical issues such as bathroom locations and snack policies as well as museum programming matters such as the types of artwork they would see and what they would actually do while at MCMA. The data shows that as novice visitors the students were limited in their art discussion abilities and were cautious of their social interactions both in terms of voice volume and willingness to share ideas. As the case study evolved the students became visitors who were very familiar and comfortable with the museum. According to Falk and Dierking (2000), “Research in museums shows that first-time visitors behave and learn very differently than do frequent visitors” (p.55). The museum became both a place where students were secure in their understanding of museum norms as well as a place in which the students were so comfortable they were not afraid to operate outside of those norms. For example, when the study began the students stood quietly in the galleries and moved about with caution. In contrast, as the weeks went on the students moved about freely, stretched out on the floor to have discussions and passionately discussed their ideas.
The theme of familiarity in the role of docent was evidenced in the students’ lack of understanding of the term docent. None of the students began with any knowledge of what a docent is or what their role in a museum involves. During the course of the study, however, the students not only understood the job of a docent but they successfully interpreted works of art and were able to establish justification for their ideas. The students often returned to the same pieces of art for exploration and understanding. According to Falk (2014), “The need to feel secure in an environment drives all of us to seek that which is familiar; moderate novelty is quite stimulating while excessive novelty is quite disturbing” (p. 97).

In a curatorial role the students sought paintings and subject matter that was personally familiar to them. When they were challenged to match emotions to artwork they relied on personal stories to connect to the work and to justify their decisions. Subject matter that was familiar to the students allowed for ease of conversation and zealous debate when another student saw the same piece from a differing perspective. Students wrote about their own collecting habits and found familiarity among the objects that their families collect. When asked about artwork the students had created in the past and had chosen to keep, the students easily recalled a familiar piece that was connected to a personal narrative either about when they created it or why they considered saving it.

From the perspective of an artist, familiarity is evidenced in the subject matter of the artwork produced by the students. Throughout the course of the study the students were encouraged to create art that they wanted to create. Their choices included familiar subjects such as family members, favorite characters, toys, things they like to eat, etc. They created the art for this project at their school, a place that would typically be very familiar to the students. However, on Saturday mornings, an empty school with professional art materials at their
disposal, the unfamiliarity of the setting allowed for a different art making experiences than the students were used to. As exhibiting artists, the students were displaying art that was very familiar to them in a setting that had become quite familiar but not in relation to their personal artwork.

The idea of familiarity is significant for several reasons. First, students think and perform differently in familiar settings. Students in public school are rarely given the opportunity to spend enough time in the art museum to foster a familiar learning environment. Additionally, visiting the same exhibit and exploring the same pieces in different ways cultivates personal connections to the artwork. Finally the aspect of familiarity in this study calls into question how much I really understand about the students’ visual culture. I have come to realize that I am not only unaware of much of the visual imagery important to my students but I also do not utilize their familiar, visual interests in my teaching practices.

Authority

The second theme to emerge was that of authority. The theme of authority is embedded throughout the data. From a visitor stand point the students discovered that they could decide, based on their own interests and personal experiences, the type of museum experience they would like to have. According to Falk and Dierking (2013), the personal context of museum learning “includes differences in individual interests, attitudes, and motivations for visiting” (p. 27). The authors assert that people are more motivated to learn “when they have choices and control over their learning (Falk & Dierking, 2000, p. 32). Each visit strengthened their ability to determine the focus of their exploration based on their own personal insight rather than from
the museum itself. The data collected from the students’ writings in the museum support the understanding that they could create their own narrative rather than have it dictated to them.

From a docent perspective the students participated in activities that encouraged the authoritative voice within the museum to be their own. The students were the driving authority as they decided which pieces to examine or when they created a narrative to share with the group based on their personal understanding of a painting. According to Falk & Dierking (2000), “learning is at its peak when individuals can exercise choice over what and when they learn and feel that they control their own learning” (p. 138). The students realized that their voice was valid. They discovered that their ideas and the ideas of the other students were important. This relates to Pellish’s (2012) study in which the researcher discovered that when students share personal narratives with their peers their own level of understanding is increased. My study builds on Pellish’s (2012) classroom research by exploring the sharing of narratives within the museum context. According to Falk & Dierking (2000), the sociocultural context of the museum allows for interaction among people and that these interactions allow for the sharing of experiences. Through this act of sharing personal narratives people are able to “negotiate personal and cultural meaning, actively making sense of the interpretations presented and attempting to relate it to their own experience and worldview” (Falk & Dierking, 2000, p. 46). According to Eisner (2002) learning in the arts can “encourage students to seek the meaning or significance that works have” (p. 123). The socio-cultural context of learning as outlined by Falk and Dierking (2000) recommends the opportunity for small groups to work together and to interact through shared stories and narrative explanation. They assert that social interactions among visitors “for the purpose of sharing and building upon each other’s knowledge can be rewarding both personally and intellectually” (p.194).
Perhaps the theme of authority is best evidenced from the perspective of a curator. The students in the study discovered that they could determine the criteria for a collection. They had the power and ability to decide which pieces make up an effective museum display. Denise Stone’s (2008) study established an understanding of why students collect things and how those collections relate to museum collections. She asserted that “young collectors imitate the activities of sophisticated art collectors by acquiring, exchanging, safekeeping, and showing their items, and these activities echo museum functions” (p. 77). The Stone study focused on collections and their relationship to museum studies but did not explore this relationship outside of the school context. My study also explored the types of personal collections student create and expanded this understanding of collections within the museum setting. Through the curatorial exercises, the students created museum collections based on criteria that they set much like they would for their own personal collections. The students realized that within the museum setting different people see the same work in very different ways and classify them into groups based on this understanding. During their curatorial exercises they found that using alternative authority helps the viewer to see things in a new way that perhaps they had not previously considered. The students had to be the guiding voice as they were responsible for not only creating a collection but also naming it, writing about it and displaying it for others to see. The data supports the impact of the concept of authority and who has it within the museum setting. For my students the act of reinterpreting objects based on their personal experiences and construction of reality demonstrated to them that they have the power to influence how others see their artwork and the artwork of other artists.

For this research the idea of authority informs my understanding of the importance of student voice and student choice. Within the museum the allowance of student authority
promotes the idea that the students’ understanding of an artwork is valid and their opinions are equal in importance to any other museum visitor despite age or experience. Allowing students to choose what they want to explore within the museum puts the students in control of their learning. The findings in this study support the fact that the students learned about the art on display, not from information the museum provided, but rather from discussions with their peers and through the process of sharing their own interpretations.

Motivation

The theme of motivation can be evidenced in every activity the students participated in throughout the study. As visitors they were eager each and every week to get into the gallery. The students arrived excited and always full of anticipation about the museum’s possibilities. They were sad when it was time to leave and often asked to stay longer. As a group they started as an odd mix of students with a wide variety of interests and experiences. But motivation to work out problems and to discover new ideas brought them together as a cohesive group that depended on one another and trusted one another enough to eagerly share their individual ideas.

Motivation from the lens of a docent was evident in field notes collected in the museum as well as the students’ writings. The students were anxious to share what they felt an artwork was about or to reveal the perfect title that they had invented. The students always chose to participate and never opted to merely watch. The students were actively engaged not only in their own interpretations but as active listeners when others wanted to share. They loved role playing and the student’s ability to share their thoughts improved with every painting they explored.
Motivation was most evident in the curatorial activities in which the students participated. As teams deciding which work best matched a collection the students were highly motivated to debate their ideas. They worked to convince the other students that their choice of artwork to add to or eliminate from a collection was the best choice. They also had little difficulty establishing their own collection complete with a theme name. When the students saw their exhibition invitations advertising their collection, they could not wait to give them to their families. The motivation to set up and design their exhibit space, however, was not high. Although the students displayed excitement to attend the exhibit they were not motivated to do the work to get the space ready or to organize their display.

The students were least motivated when it came to their role as an artist. They were excited to meet on Saturdays for studio time and they enjoyed the variety of paints and canvases that they did not usually have access to. In terms of creating, however, they did very little work outside of the time allotted despite the fact that they were told they could create and display as many pieces as they liked. The students were encouraged to explore the art materials and to choose subject matter that they personally loved. It was a struggle, however, to motivate them to do any extra work. The same directions were given for their sketchbook. They could follow prompts given to them or they could go out on their own and fill their book however they wanted. Although I wanted both the studio pieces and the sketchbook to be solely student generated I understood that often young students need direction. Wachowiak (1985) asserts “Teachers have been misled too often by the false assumption that anything a child draws, paints or constructs is art. It may be, indeed a child’s visual statement, but it is not necessarily a work of art” (p. 2). Wachowiak (1985) recommends promoting understanding of this expressive language by providing students with ideas for art making along with exposing them to visual
examples in art museums, galleries and reproductions. Based on this theory I provided the journals and sketchbook prompts for the students. Even with the prompts, however, most of the students did as little as possible in their sketchbooks. The sketches they did produce were done with little effort and their lack of motivation was clear.

Haanstra’s (2010) study explored the relationship between art children create at school at self-initiated art. Haanstra concluded that art made outside of school was less realistic, less technical in terms of art elements and principles but more spontaneous and valued by the children. This proved to be true in my study as well. The artwork the students produced both for the exhibit and in their sketchbooks was not quality work in terms of design elements or technical skill. The artwork created by students on their own not only looked very different than school generated art but was also valued differently by students based on personal criteria rather than academic based objectives.

The findings of this study related to motivation reveal that people are individually motivated. I cannot assume that my students desire to fill their visual journals with beautiful, detailed images simply because I would enjoy that process. Perhaps art educators mistakenly assume that students will be motivated by the artwork and projects presented in the classroom without fully considering the things that students are motivated by. Throughout this study, motivation to explore the galleries was achieved through student choice and personal connections, concepts that can be afforded to students both in and out of the classroom. The findings related to motivation in this study reveal, however, that what is motivating to students in one context does not always translate to others areas. For example, student choice motivated the group in the gallery but student choice did not equate to increased art production. The students in the study were motivated to have an exhibition but were not very motivated to organize and
set up the exhibition space. The findings of this study support the need for art and museum educators to identify sources of motivation for their students and capitalize on those in their learning experiences.

Self-Perception

Self-Perception is the theme that is most closely related to my research questions. From a visitor standpoint the data suggests that all of the students perceive themselves to be someone who visits museums. The student interviews suggest that most of the students felt they could visit any museum and know how to navigate their way through effective art exploration. The interactions that took place in the museum support an understanding of how the students perceive themselves. According to Falk (2014), “the socio-cultural context both defines who we perceive ourselves to be, as well as how we perceive the world we inhabit. In a very real sense, the world in which each of us lives has meaning because of the shared experiences, beliefs, customs, and values of the groups that inhabit it with us” (p. 100).

The students’ writing reveals that a couple of the students doubted their effectiveness as a docent but the others reported that they believed they would make successful guides for museum visitors based on their skill set. The data also suggests that the students were very effective in their ability to curate a collection. The students’ understanding of collection criteria and personal meaning allowed them to perceive themselves as someone capable of curatorial understanding and to value their own authority. The students demonstrated a belief that they were effective at museum related learning activities and games. They showed through their actions that they enjoyed these activities in part because of the confidence they had in themselves to be successful.
From an artist perspective, the theme of self-perception emerged from the students’ writings about how their artwork differed from artwork at MCMA. The students also wrote about the reasons artists make art. The reasons the students gave for creating art included enjoyment and to please others while they perceived the reason professional artists make art involved fame, money and recognition. The data reveals that the students perceive their own artwork very differently than they perceive artwork on display at a museum. Although a few of the students claimed to be an artist, only one connected that status to the fact that his artwork had been in a museum. The other self-proclaimed artists in the group considered themselves artists based on other criteria such as the fact that they make art or that their family thinks they are an artist. According to Falk (2014),

Our identity is a reflection and reaction to both the social and physical world we consciously perceive in the moment, but identity is also influenced by the vast unconscious set of family, cultural, and personal history influences each of us carries within us (p.72).

Self-perception related data was crucial in my understanding of this case. The students in the study perceived themselves as successful museum visitors but not necessarily museum exhibitors. I believe these perceptions are related to their experiences. As students learning in the museum most of the students were not relying on pervious knowledge of adults they have witnesses learning in a museum. Most of the students had not experienced a museum with anyone other than their peers. The adult visitors they encountered at MCMA were simply viewing the artwork but were not participating in passionate discussions or complex learning games. The students were the most involved visitors they knew and based the self-perception of their role at the museum accordingly. As visual artists, perhaps the students perceive their role
compared to the famous artists they have studied at school or their families’ view of professional art compared to student art. The understanding of how students form their self-perceptions are crucial for art and museum educators who are in control of the types of artwork their students study and the variety and professional levels of the artists their students come to know.

**Research Questions**

The data collected in this case study was done so in order to answer the following research questions:

1. How does learning within a museum for a sustained period of time affect how students perceive themselves as artists?

To answer this question it is important to define the term *artist*. In chapter one I defined the term as: *someone who creates a visual representation or product as well as someone who understands how to interpret and analyze art created by themselves or others. For this study an artist is primarily someone with a role situated in an art community.* Based on the responses from the students in the study they would define the term *artist* as: *someone who makes art or someone who makes good art.* The two definitions require two very different answers to this research question.

Based on the students’ definition of an artist, the time in the museum had little effect on their perception of themselves as an artist. They did not connect their museum experience with increased artistic status. When the students were asked at the beginning of the study about their personal art making compared to artists that have work in the museum, the students reported that both groups are similar in that they both create. But that is where the similarities end. The students said they make art for enjoyment and to please others while the artists in the museum
create art for fame, money and recognition. The data also shows that the students felt their artwork was not as good as the art work produced by the artists at the museum. At the end of the study, after the students had an exhibition of their art at the museum, they still did not elevate their status as an artist. Aria and Colleen both said they do not consider themselves to be artists because they are not famous. Sean reported that he does consider himself an artist but that perception has nothing to do with the fact that his work was in the museum. He asserts that if you make art, you are an artist, the museum is irrelevant. Eric said he considers himself sort of an artist but did not connect that status with the museum. Ava also believes herself to be an artist but she makes that assertion based on the fact that she enjoys creating things. Emma had a similar assertion, she too considers herself an artist but not based on her exhibition experience but rather on the number of paintings she produces. Eli was the only student in the study who perceives himself to be an artist and bases that perception on the fact that his work was in a museum. He said, “Clearly I’m an artist who exhibits at a museum.”

Based on my definition of an artist as someone who creates a visual representation or product as well as someone who understands how to interpret and analyze art created by themselves or others; primarily someone with a role situated in an art community, the data suggests that the experiences in the museum had a huge impact on student perception. Although the data does not support that idea that the museum motivates students to produce visual art, it does suggest that the exposure to museum learning greatly impacts their perception of themselves as an artist in terms of their ability to interpret and analyze art as well as their role in an art community. The students in the study became part of the museum culture. They perceived themselves as having equal skills to anyone that would visit the art museum. The poems and verbal descriptions they generated in the gallery demonstrate their strength in
interpretive skills. Their excitement and confidence documented throughout the study suggest that they have come to realize that their understanding of the museum experience is unique and valuable.

a. How does the learning environment that museums provide influence student understanding?

The museum learning environment is unique and the physical context of an art museum cannot be replicated in the school setting. The type of learning that took place throughout this study had to be situated among real art objects and within a public space that encouraged students to explore art within their community. According to Falk (2014), “the things people see and do in museums are memorable because museums are places that allow people to build tangible memories based on seeing real things in appropriate contexts” (p. 153). For the students in this study learning within the museum was exciting and novel. Interestingly, the novelty never faded throughout the entire process. The data shows that the students were highly motivated to explore the museum despite the fact that they had been in the same space for a period of eight weeks. In the public setting the students experienced learning that I assessed to be equal to adult learning in terms of process, and understanding. While at MCMA the students were equal to adult learners in their exploration of art. They took part in discussions that I learned from and that would challenge any adult to think about artwork from their perspectives. The students participated in the same type of exploration activities and games that I would engage adults with in the same setting. In this study, the students grew to realize that their understanding of art and the museum culture was equal to if not more advanced than any visitor, child or adult, would experience at the museum.

b. What are the effects of multiple visits to the same museum?
The impact of multiple museum visits emerges as a critical factor throughout the findings of this study. The familiarity of the students in relation to the museum allowed them to feel like they belonged there and that they were part of a learning community that did not only involve students. If the students had only visited the museum once, as most school groups do, they would know very little about the work. Because they were able to visit the same exhibit multiple times, the students were able to examine the artwork from differing perspectives and for multiple purposes. The data suggests that the students were excited to revisit spaces and objects, not deterred by their familiarity but rather inspired by it.

2. How does exhibiting art outside of the school context shape students’ perceptions of themselves as artists?

The data in this study suggests that the students did not associate the exhibition of their art outside of the school setting with their status as an artist. The students enjoyed having their work in the museum. The students were proud of their families’ reactions to their work in the museum. The fact that their work was exhibited in a museum caused their families to treat their artwork differently in terms of home display and value. Despite all of this, however, the students themselves did not equate museum exhibition with their artistic identity. Most of the students reported that they believe themselves to be artists but that label had more to do with the fact that they produce art rather than where they display their art. The practice of displaying their art in a processional context created a meaningful memory for the students but did not appear to shape their understanding of their artistic role.

a. How does an out of school art exhibition affect artistic motivation?
In terms of artistic motivation it is important to note that for this study artistic motivation would involve art production and art understanding. The data does not support the idea that the students were motivated to create art based on the fact that it would be publically exhibited. The students did not demonstrate a desire to create art on their own time either in their sketchbooks or art for display. In the week that elapsed between the exhibition and the student interviews, none of the students added to their sketchbook or created any pieces on their own. Their comments suggest that if the students were given the opportunity to exhibit at the museum again that they would want to spend more time on their creations and put more effort into what they produced. There is, of course no way ensure that they would actually be motivated to work harder on their art, but they believe that they would. In terms of artistic understanding the data shows that students were highly motivated to learn within the museum context but that the idea of exhibition had little to do with that excitement. The students did not work to perfect their docent skills in order to be an effective guide during the exhibition. They worked hard in the galleries because they enjoyed the work but that enjoyment was not associated with the idea of their own exhibition. Evidently the engagement with art materials and the work provided an intrinsic reward for the students that the lure of museum exhibition did not.

b. How does displaying art in professional settings impact students?

The data from the study indicates that the display of the students’ work at MCMA primarily impacted the students in relation to their families. The families of the students were so proud to see their work. Seeing the artwork in a professional setting changed how the parents viewed what the students had created and altered the value they placed upon the work. In turn this impacted the students understanding of their art in that their work was taken more seriously within the museum context than it would have been had it just come home with their regular school work or
displayed briefly at school. The students also benefited from seeing their work as a body of work or collection that is subject to change based on theme; the understanding that their work is not limited to just one piece solidified the idea that their artistic scope can be wider. The invitations produced for the exhibit impacted how the students perceived the exhibition. Because the students were advertised in a professional format they dressed accordingly and invited extended family and friends to the exhibition.

**Summary and Researcher Comments**

I set out on this research journey to discover the role of an art museum on my students’ perceptions of themselves as artists. As a teacher I encourage my students to create and think about art in the same way that an adult or professional artist may think and create. The students I teach, however, do not seem to consider their artwork or art ideas worthy of merit outside of the school context. I wanted to see if learning and exhibiting within the context of a museum would change their perceptions.

Seven elementary students spent time learning about art at MCMA from the perspective of a visitor, docent, curator, and artist. The students also spent time creating art on Saturday mornings at their school and independently at home. Data was collected using ethnographic methods including participant observations, student journals, sketchbooks, visual art, photographs, student writings and interviews. From the data four themes of understanding emerged in regards to the students’ museum experience: familiarity, authority, motivation and self-perception.

What I discovered from my research was not entirely what I expected and in some ways it was more. The unique atmosphere of an art museum changes how students interact and learn.
This study has solidified my understanding that art education programs should include opportunities for students to explore art outside of the classroom. This must move beyond the once a year field trip to the art museum that is typical practice in so many art education programs. The findings of this study demonstrate that students benefit from multiple visits, not only to the same museum but also to the same exhibit. This familiarity allows students to understand the pieces in-depth and more importantly understand their personal connection to the art and the museum that displays it. Affording students the chance to share authority in the museum validates their ideas and increases their understanding.

The students in this study were motivated by the novelty of the museum and I was surprised to realize that over the course of the study that excitement and novelty never diminished. As the students’ confidence grew so did their desire to share ideas and to explore further. Allowing the students choice in what was studied increased their enthusiasm and promoted personal connections to the artwork.

At the onset of the study I did not know the students very well despite the fact that I teach them for a short time each week. Over the course of the study, however, I came to appreciate their unique personalities and artistic insights. The group developed a close bond that continues. They still identify themselves as an integral part of this museum group although our time at the museum has long since expired. The students’ social interactions within the museum context contributed to their construction of knowledge. This group dynamic is directly related to the constructionist theory of learning which asserts that people construct their own knowledge based on their experiences with the world and the people in it. This small group of students developed a learning community that allowed their ideas to be heard and valued. Even now, when the students gather together at school, the relationships they built during this study are evident.
through their social interactions. They have a shared experience that is unique to these seven students and to me. I believe that the size of the group impacted the students’ sense of belonging and increased the fostering of a positive collaborative learning environment. The fact that the students visited the same museum multiple times, with the same group of peers, impacted their relationship to the museum and to the other students. Unfortunately, the public school context rarely allows for small group, out of school learning to take place.

Another large part of this research concentrated on the production and exhibition of student artwork. At the beginning of the study, I had envisioned that the students would fill their sketchbooks every night with colorful, artistic representations of their thoughts and ideas. I imagined that they would have so much visual information collected and stapled into their books for inspiration that they would have to add pages. What resulted, however, was quite the opposite. The students generated very few sketches and many of those were only after I prompted them or challenged them to do more. Their thick, professional sketchbooks still looked almost new at the end of the study with a huge section of blank white pages preceded by a few quick pencil drawings. They were not intrinsically motivated to sketch ideas or keep a visual diary. The same was true for their journal entries. The students wrote responses to what I had requested they write, but none of them wrote independently.

The quality and quantity of the artwork the students created was less than I had expected as well. The students worked excitedly in the studio time that was built into the study but very little artwork was produced at home. The students put average effort into the pieces they produced but by their own account most of the group felt they should have spent more time on their artwork.
The students exhibited their work at MCMA and had a positive experience. They proudly showed their work and guided their families around a museum that had become a place of familiar exploration. The students did not however, equate the exhibition as part of the criteria for being an artist as I imagined they would have. Most of the group saw their work as very different and very separate from artwork at the museum despite the fact that they were displayed together.

Based on these findings I have come to understand several things. One, as an art teacher I mistakenly assume that students share my desire to create and to be an artist. Not all of them do. I try to put this in a context that I can relate to. If I were involved in this project as a student but situated in a science museum I would love to participate in the experiments and activities designed to increase my scientific knowledge. I do not believe, however, that I would be motivated to conduct experiments on my own time or desire to carry the identity of scientist. I like science but it is certainly not my passion. The students involved in my research may enjoy art and exhibit a high level of enthusiasm to participate in the activities designed to increase their art understanding, but I cannot assume that it is their desire to create on their own time or that they want to think of themselves as artists. Perhaps this research serves as a reminder that not all students will become or even aspire to become artists, but all students do make up a larger community in which art plays an important role. It is the job of art educators to help students to understand art is something adults and children create, display and explore outside of school. I feel it is crucial to help students understand that art is made every day by a variety of people, most of whom are not famous but who do identify themselves as artists.

Additionally, it is also important to not only make students aware of the larger scope of the art community but to make it available to them through out of school learning opportunities.
After all, how would they know that artists do not have to be famous if they only study those that are? Teachers that only present famous artists to their students are not only teaching them about the famous artist but they are also implicitly teaching their students that all artists are famous. Eisner (2002) refers to this practice as the “null curriculum” (p. 159). In referring to the null curriculum, Eisner (2002) states, “What is not taught can be as important in someone’s life as what is taught, whether explicitly or implicitly. The null curriculum constitutes what is absent from the school program, what students in schools never have the opportunity to learn” (p. 159). Art educators must examine what they are teaching their students about the criteria to be an artist by examining what they are not teaching them.

This case study was developed to assist art educators in furthering their understanding of the role of the art museum on their students’ perceptions of themselves as artists. This study promotes the need for further and continued research for those interested in non-school contextual learning, art and museum education partnerships, art exhibition and free choice learning environments.

**Implications**

Art Education

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to help art educators consider the impact that museum exposure and learning can have on their students’ construction of knowledge and perceptions of themselves as artists. This study adds to a limited body of research that seeks to determine the impact of widening the art education experiences of students beyond the art classroom. It is significant in that it shows that students do not always equate
their artistic identity with the same criteria that adults and community members may. This research supports the understanding that learning in a museum context is unique and cannot be replicated in a classroom. Additionally the study findings suggest that there is value in having students visit the same exhibit multiple times and to allow the students choice in their museum exploration. This identifies the need for museum educators to prepare and promote learning initiatives that welcome and encourage multiple visits and provide for shared authority. For art educators this study demonstrates the need to allow students to have free choice learning opportunities both inside and outside the classroom. It also suggests that art educators need to increase their understanding of the visual culture of the students they teach and to determine how this knowledge can increase student motivation. Additionally, this research promotes an examination of the null curriculum within the art classroom. Art educators should explore what is being taught to their students by the practice of not teaching certain content. Teachers should be encouraged to introduce local artists to their classes and to further a dialogue about working artists; artists that may never achieve worldwide recognition and yet fill our world with visual imagery. Additionally, teachers need to increase their use of young artists in their exemplars and class critiques. This case suggests that the common practice of teaching exclusively about famous artists may be teaching students that to be an artist one must be famous. By discussing artists with varying degrees of experience and recognition the students will be able to develop a more realistic criterion for determining what defines an artist. An expanded view of the art community may even allow the students to better realize their role within it.

Finally, this study advocates for expanding students’ awareness of the art community beyond the classroom by providing out of school learning and exhibition opportunities. Developing school and museum partnerships may allow for more meaningful visits to occur.
Teachers must seek out public spaces, not only in museums, to display their students’ artwork. The students will then have the opportunity to recognize that their artwork is a part of a larger art community. Small group size was major factor in the learning environment fostered by the students in this study. Working with small groups of students and budgeting for multiple museum field trips is a luxury not often afforded to public school teachers. Finding creative ways to allow students the possibility to develop relationships and socially construct knowledge within the museum setting may need to be achieved through after school programs or the organization of independent groups that visit museums outside of the school day.

Future Research

Suggestions for future research include:

- Replication of this study design with the inclusion of more extensive guidance and instruction in the area of art production. Adding structure to the production process may increase students’ feelings of success in terms of art quality and thus change their perception of the exhibition.

- Since this single case study is not generalizable to other contexts and students, replication of this study design in larger museums and with a variety of student groups.

- Exploration of school group visits to not only the same museum within a school year but also the same exhibit. The research available on multiple visits to the same exhibit is often currently limited.

- Examination of how museum educators can effectively design programming that support a multiple visit model, perhaps developing activities for inquiry around multiple theme for the same exhibition.
• Investigation of the impact of family norms and attitudes concerning art creation and understanding on students’ perceptions of their own artwork.

• Exploration of the ways that art educators can expand art instruction outside of the classroom in order to widen their students’ understanding of the art community.

• An in-depth examination of the impact of displaying student work in a variety of contexts beyond the school setting.

• An investigation of the effect of preserving students’ artwork on students’ perception of the value of their artwork and the amount of effort students put into creating artwork.

• Investigate effective ways for museum educators to expand their programs to allow for increased student choice.

### Conclusion

My desire to understand how museums impact my students led me to this research. I wanted to determine if my students would think of themselves as artists if they were given the chance to study and exhibit within the museum setting. The findings in this case suggest the factors that shape how students perceive their artistic merit and status are complex. Perhaps what students believe an artist to be does not fully define the term. To be an artist is not only about production. It is also about appreciating art, discussing it, and making personal and social connections because of it. It is within the unique learning environment of the art museum that this understanding resonates. This research has afforded me the opportunity to see firsthand how students are impacted by museums. Learning and exhibiting within an art museum may not have caused the students in this study to consider themselves to be artists. But it does situate the
students within the larger art community that they are not only now aware of but are also a part of. As educated members of that community my students must be made aware that the study of art is not something that only happens at school. By exposing students to the culture of the art museum they come to understand that the study of art is wider than the school projects they create and the famous artists that they study.

The connection between what is taught at school and life experiences beyond the classroom is made visible in learning opportunities situated outside of school. The art community is much wider than the four walls of an elementary school classroom. Art museums can provide avenues for students to better understand the role of art and artists within the community. This research may be of interest to anyone involved in providing opportunities for students to construct knowledge about art in learning spaces outside of the classroom; spaces that will nurture personal understanding of the art community and their role within it.
References


APPENDICES
Appendix A

Georgia State University IRB Approval
Principal Investigator: Melody Milbrandt

Key Personnel: Casey, Lisa K; Fox, Dana; Milbrandt, Melody

Study Department: GSU - Art Education, GSU - Georgia State University

Study Title: Determining the Role of the Art Museum in Student’s Perception of Themselves as An Artist

Review Type: Expedited 6,7

IRB Number: H15106

Reference Number: 329416

Approval Date: 09/17/2014

Expiration Date: 09/16/2015

The Georgia State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) reviewed and approved the above referenced study in accordance with 45 CFR 46.111. The IRB has reviewed and approved the study and any informed consent forms, recruitment materials, and other research materials that are marked as approved in the application. The approval period is listed above. Research that has been approved by the IRB may be subject to further appropriate review and approval or disapproval by officials of the Institution.

Federal regulations require researchers to follow specific procedures in a timely manner. For the protection of all concerned, the IRB calls your attention to the following obligations that you have as Principal Investigator of this study.
Appendix B

Cobb County School District Approval
September 5, 2014

Ms. Lisa Casey
330 Clear Spring Court
Marietta, GA 30068

Dear Ms. Casey:

Your research project titled, Determining the Role of the Art Museum in Student’s Perception of Themselves as An Artist has been approved. Listed below are the schools where approval to conduct the research is complete. Please work with the school administrator to schedule administration of instruments or conduct interviews.

School
Selma Park Elementary School

Should modifications or changes in research procedures become necessary during the research project, changes must be submitted in writing to the Academic Division prior to implementation. At the conclusion of your research project, you are expected to submit a copy of your results to this office. Results cannot reference the Cobb County School District or any District schools or departments.

Research files are not considered complete until results are received. If you have any questions regarding the process, contact our office at 770-426-3450.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Jennifer Allen, MPA
Manager, Research & Grants Administration
Office of Accountability & Research
Cobb County School District

jennifer.allen@cobbk12.org

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BOARD OF EDUCATION

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SUPERINTENDENT

Cherie Logsdon, Interim Superintendent
Appendix C

Marietta Cobb Museum of Art Approval
Project Proposal

education@mariettacobbartmuseum.org
Sent: Tuesday, August 12, 2014 12:56 PM
To: Lisa Casey

To whom it may concern:

Lisa Casey has permission to use the Marietta Cobb Museum of Art to conduct research for a period of 8 weeks, making use of the gallery and workshop space with a group of elementary students.

Rachel Rhule
Director of Education
Marietta/Cobb Museum of Art
770-528-1444
Appendix D

Letter of Consent-English/Spanish
Title: *Determining the Role of the Art Museum in Student’s Perception of Themselves As An Artist*

Principal Investigator: Dr. Melody Milbrandt  
Student Principal Investigator: Lisa Casey

I. **Purpose:**
Your child is invited to participate in a research study. The purpose of the study is to investigate how museum learning affects a student’s perception of themselves as an artist. Your child is invited to participate because they are an elementary art student in 3rd-5th grade. A total of 8 participants will be recruited for this study. Participation will require sixteen hours of their time over a period of eight weeks.

II. **Procedures:**

If you decide to allow your child to participate, your child will participate in museum learning activities, keep a sketch journal and create their own art work to be displayed at the Marietta/Cobb Museum of Art. Your child will take part in group discussions, museum role play (putting themselves into a painting), and asked to create written responses to art work. As part of the research they will be interviewed, audio recorded, photographed and have their sketches and other art work photographed. They will interact with Lisa Casey throughout the process. They may interact with museum professionals and other visitors to the museum as well. The research will take place at both the Marietta/Cobb Museum of Art, Public spaces near the museum (Marietta Square public park) and Sedalia Park Elementary. Your child would be asked to participate for a total of sixteen hours over a period of eight weeks (twice a week for one hour each session).

III. **Risks:**

In this study, participants will not have any more risks than you would in a normal day of life.

IV. **Benefits:**

Participation in this study may benefit your child personally. Your child will have the opportunity to display their art work in the professional setting of a museum. Additionally your child may increase their understanding of art and art museums. Overall, we hope to gain information about how art museum learning affect students and how they feel about their own artistic value.
V. **Voluntary Participation and Withdrawal:**

Participation in research is voluntary. Your child does not have to be in this study. If you allow your child to participate in the study and change your mind, you have the right to withdraw your child from the study at any time. Your child may stop participating at any time. Whatever you decide, your child’s art experience and art grade at school will not be affected.

VI. **Confidentiality:**

We will keep participant records private to the extent allowed by law. Dr. Milbrandt and Lisa Casey will have access to the information you provide. Information may also be shared with those who make sure the study is done correctly (GSU Institutional Review Board, the Office for Human Research Protection (OHRP) We will use initials rather than any names on study records. The information you provide will be stored in a locked file cabinet. Any electronic data will be stored on a flash drive that is also held in a locked file cabinet. All audio and video recordings will be stored in a lock box. Such recordings will be destroyed at the completion of the research. Participants will be asked not to share any information shared in group discussions and activities however, the researcher does not have complete control of the confidentiality of such data. Names and other facts that might identify participants will not appear when we present this study or publish its results. The findings will be summarized and reported in group form. You will not be identified personally.

VII. **Contact Persons:**

Contact Melody Milbrandt at 404.413.5221, milbrandt@gsu.edu if you have questions, concerns, or complaints about this study. You can also call if you think you have been harmed by the study. Call Susan Vogtner in the Georgia State University Office of Research Integrity at 404-413-3513 or svogtner1@gsu.edu if you want to talk to someone who is not part of the study team. You can talk about questions, concerns, offer input, obtain information, or suggestions about the study. You can also call Susan Vogtner if you have questions or concerns about your rights in this study.

VIII. **Copy of Consent Form to Subject:**

We will give you a copy of this consent form to keep.

If you are willing to volunteer your child for this research, please sign below.

Name of child participating:
Parent or Guardian of Participant  

____________________________________________  

_________________  

_________________  

Date  

Principal Investigator or Researcher Obtain
I. Propósito:

Se le invita a su hijo a participar en un estudio de investigación. El propósito de este estudio es investigar cómo el aprender sobre el museo influye en la percepción del estudiante como artista. Se invita a su hijo a participar, por ser estudiante de primaria del 3er a 5to grado. Un total de 8 participantes serán reclutados para este estudio. Se requieren dieciséis horas de su tiempo durante un período de ocho semanas.

II. Procedimientos:

Si usted permite que su hijo sea parte del estudio, su hijo participará en las actividades de aprendizaje de los museos, el llevará un cuaderno de bocetos y creara su propia obra de arte que se mostrará en el Museo de Arte de Marietta/Cobb. Su hijo participara en discusiones de grupo, juegos de rol del museo (como el ponerse en una pintura), y escribir sobre obras de arte. Como parte del estudio, el será entrevistado, audio grabado, fotografiado al igual que sus bocetos y otras obras de arte. Su hijo tendrá la oportunidad de colaborar con Lisa Casey al igual de profesionales de los museos y otros visitantes del mismo. El estudio será realizado tanto en el Museo de Arte de Marietta / Cobb, como en otros sitios públicos cerca del museo (parque público Marietta Square) y Sedalia Park Elementary. A su niño se le pide que participe en un total de dieciséis horas durante un período de ocho semanas (dos veces por semana durante una hora cada sesión).

III. Riesgos:

El estudio, no le representara ningún riesgo adicional a lo que su hijo haría en un día normal de su vida.

IV. Beneficios:

La participación en este estudio le puede beneficiar a su hijo en lo personal. Su hijo tendrá la oportunidad de mostrar sus obras de arte en el entorno profesional de un museo. Además su niño puede aumentar su comprensión de arte y museos de arte. En general, esperamos obtener...
información acerca de cómo el aprendizaje sobre los museos de arte afecta a los estudiantes y cómo se sienten acerca de su propio valor artístico.

V. Participación Voluntaria y Retiro:

La participación en este estudio es voluntaria. Su hijo no tiene que participar en este estudio, si usted no desea. Si usted permite que su hijo participe en el estudio y cambia de opinión, usted tiene el derecho de retirarlo del estudio en cualquier momento y también puede dejar de participar en cualquier momento. Decida lo que decida, la experiencia técnica y la nota de grado de arte de su hijo en la escuela no se verá afectada.

VI. Confidencialidad:

Vamos a llevar un registro de los participantes privados en la medida permitida por la ley. La Dra. Milbrandt y Lisa Casey tendrán acceso a la información que usted proporcione. La información también puede ser compartida con aquellos que aseguran que el estudio se haga correctamente (la Junta de Revisión Institucional de GSU, la Oficina de Protección de la Investigación Humana (OHRP). Utilizaremos las iniciales en lugar de los nombres en los registros del estudio. La información que usted proporcione será almacenada en un archivo con llave. Los datos electrónicos se almacenaran en una memoria que también estará bajo llave. Todas las grabaciones de audio y video se guardarán en una caja de seguridad. Dichas grabaciones serán destruidas al terminar la investigación. Se le pedirá a los participantes que no divulguen ninguna información compartida en los debates y actividades de grupo sin embargo, el investigador no tiene el control completo de la confidencialidad de estos datos. Los nombres y otros datos que puedan identificar a los participantes no aparecerán cuando presentamos este estudio o publiquemos los resultados. Los resultados serán resumidos en forma de grupo. Su niño no será identificado personalmente.

VII. Personas de contacto:

Puede contactar a Melody Milbrandt al 404.413.5221, milbrandt@gsu.edu si usted tiene preguntas, inquietudes o quejas sobre este estudio. También puede llamar si usted cree que ha sido perjudicado por el estudio. Llame a Susan Vogtner en la Oficina de Integridad de la Investigación de la Universidad Estatal de Georgia al 404-413-3513 o svogtner1@gsu.edu si desea hablar con alguien que no es parte del equipo de este estudio. Se pueden hacer preguntas, preocupaciones, oferta de entrada, obtener información o sugerencias sobre el estudio. También pueden hacer preguntas a Susan Vogtner si tiene preguntas o inquietudes acerca de sus derechos en este estudio.

VIII. Copia del Formulario de Consentimiento para Asunto:

Le daremos una copia de este formulario de consentimiento para guardar.
Si usted está dispuesto que su hijo forme parte de esta investigación, por favor firme abajo.

Nombre del niño participante:

____________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________

Padre o tutor del participante                     Fecha

____________________________________________

Investigador Principal o investigador que obtiene el consentimiento                     Fecha
Appendix E

Letter of Assent-English/Spanish
You are being asked to participate in a research study. The study is being conducted to see how learning in a museum affects how students view themselves as artists. If you participate in the study you will take part in learning activities at the Marietta/Cobb Museum of Art. You would be needed twice a week for eight weeks. You will be asked to talk about art, create art and display art. Your thoughts and opinions will be recorded and your work will be photographed. You can refuse to be a part of the study and your parents or legal guardians cannot force you to take part. If you decide you want to stop being in the study at any point you have the right to withdraw from the study.

If you would like to participate in this study please sign your name below.

Name of Participant (please print):

I volunteer to participate in a research study entitled: Determining the Role of the Art Museum on Student’s Perception of Themselves as an Artist.

Student Signature: Date:
Se le pide participar en un estudio de investigación. El estudio analizara cómo el aprendizaje en un museo influye cómo los estudiantes se ven a sí mismos como artistas. Si usted participa en el estudio, será parte de las actividades de aprendizaje en el Museo de Arte Marietta/Cobb. Usted necesitaría presentarse dos veces por semana durante ocho semanas. Se le pedirá el discutir sobre arte, crear y mostrar su arte. Sus pensamientos y opiniones serán grabados y sus obras serán fotografiadas. Usted puede negarse a ser parte del estudio y sus padres o tutores legales no pueden obligarte a tomar parte. Si usted decide que quiere dejar de estar en el estudio en cualquier momento usted tiene el derecho de retirarse del estudio.

Si usted desea participar en este estudio, por favor firme su nombre a continuación.

Nombre del participante:

________________________________________________________________________

Me ofrezco como voluntario para participar en el estudio de investigación titulado: Determinar el papel del Museo de Arte en la percepción de sí mismos del estudiante como un artista.

________________________________________________________________________  ______________________________________________________________________

Firma del Estudiante:                                   Fecha:
Appendix F

Marietta Cobb Museum of Art Exhibition Brochure
Appendix G

Marietta Cobb Museum of Art Floor Plan
Appendix H

Interview Protocols
Interview Protocol

Researcher-Lisa Casey

Introduction Script

We will be spending time together over the next several weeks learning about art in an art museum. I am trying to find out how people learn outside of school and how that learning makes you feel about yourself as an artist. I will be asking questions throughout the process. Sometimes I will ask you things as part of a group in casual conversations. Other times we will sit together for a formal interview. There are no right or wrong answers, just tell me what you think or how you feel. If I ask you something you are unsure about you do not have to answer or you can come back to a topic at another time. I appreciate your willingness to help me with my research.

Interview Questions

- Can you start by telling me a little about yourself? How old you are, what your hobbies are, how many people are in your family, etc.
- What do you like to do in your free time?
- What are you best at?
- What types of artwork do you like to do?
- Tell me about our exhibit? Who came with you?
- What did your family think of your work at the museum?
- How did it make you feel?
- Do you like to go to art museums?
- If so, what do you like about them?
- Where do you think the museum gets the artwork it displays?
- How are artists that show their work in a museum different than you?
- How are they the same?
- If you had the chance to do this again what would you do differently?
• Can you talk to me about the difference between school art shows and museum art shows?
• Do you think of yourself as an artist?
• Does your family think of your work as real art-like you would see in a museum?
• Why?
• What do you think an “art community” means?
• Would you visit a museum on your own, in your free time?

Group Interview

• What did you all like most about the exhibit?
• If we had left your work in the museum, would visitors know it was not done by professional artists?
• What would you do differently if you had the chance to show your work in a museum again?
• What did you all do with your artwork when you took it home?
• Do your parents treat other things you have made in the same manner?
• How has this experience changed you?
• Do you think of yourselves as artists?