

2015

Multiple Purposes of Art in Research Inquiry and Scholarship

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Recommended Citation

Ewa McGrail. (2015). Multiple Purposes of Art in Research Inquiry and Scholarship [Editorial]. *Ubiquity: The Journal of Literature, Literacy, and the Arts, Research Strand*, Vol.2 No.2, Winter 2015, pp. 1-5. <http://ed-ubiquity.gsu.edu/wordpress/mcgrail-editorial-2-2/>.

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Ubiquity: The Journal of Literature, Literacy, and the Arts, Research Strand, Vol.2 No.2, Winter 2015, pp. 1-5

Ubiquity: <http://ed-ubiquity.gsu.edu/wordpress/>

ISSN: 2379-3007

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Ubiquity: The Journal of Literature, Literacy, and the Arts, Research Strand, Vol.2 No.2, Winter 2015

Multiple Purposes of Art in Research Inquiry and Scholarship

Art serves multiple purposes and it teaches us how to perceive, appreciate and process the world around us. The benefits of the arts in literacy, and education in general, have been investigated and acknowledged for some time now (Dewey, 1934; Eisner, 2002; Barton, 2013; Sowden, Clements, Redlich, & Lewis, 2015).

The articles that we present in this issue of the Research strand of *Ubiquity* speak to the multiple and diverse functions and purposes of art. One function that became evident in the contributions to this issue is self-expression. This is when art is used as a means for exploration of one's feelings, thoughts, ideas, and intellectual convictions, including perceptions of one's own self and identity (Ryan, 2014). Accordingly, in Muhammad and Womack's article entitled "*From Pen to Pin: The Multimodality of Black Girls (Re)Writing Their Lives*," we learn about the ways in which the girls employ art production tools such pen and writing (print-text) and image, video, Prezi, and Pinterest (multimodal meaning-making tools) to explore their feelings, convictions, and thoughts about the representations of young Black girls like themselves in the public and popular culture. The authors describe this form of self-exploration as "make[ing] sense of their identities for their personal development."

In an autoethnographic study, "*Negotiating Deaf Identity in an Audist Educational Environment: An Arts-Based Inquiry*," Weber reports on her own journey as a Deaf teacher and the use of her own artwork, which she calls "imagework," to help her both to investigate and to frame analytically the tensions and power struggles that she experienced in her educational milieu. As such, Weber too engages in self-exploration or sense making about her identity as well.

In both pieces we are reminded, however, that the journeys of self-discovery that these researchers present on behalf of the participants they studied or of their own selves are also

meant to be educational for us all. By this we mean the readers of *Ubiquity*, and also for those individuals with whom their study subjects had interacted and socialized in public spaces. It is through this latter function of art as depicted in these studies that we are summoned to look closer, and hopefully from a new perspective, at the representations and interpretations of Black young girls and of the deaf in the world around us, as well as the social issues and the messages that these subjects are trying to communicate through the art in these research reports.

A somewhat different purpose of art is described in the article, “*Using a Visual Onset-Rime Strategy to Teach Rhyming to Preschoolers: Preliminary Findings*,” authored by Crystal Randolph. In it, artwork, in the form of color pictures, is used to help children notice both rhymes and rimes – and the difference between them - and interpret the rime series that are meaningful and those that are not. From a literacy perspective, Randolph’s study demonstrates how art and deliberate pedagogy enable content knowledge learning by young learners. Specifically, art as a visual heuristic is reported to help children isolate phonemic elements for examination and learning about the terms and concepts governing language, especially rhymed forms of language expression.

Alternatively, Rieger and Doepker, in the article, “*Reflection Matters: Preparing Effective Teachers for 21 Century Classrooms*,” remind us of the art of reflection through written language as another creative process, that of learning to think about one’s actions and thinking behind it, and of its importance for teacher candidates’ developing content knowledge and pedagogical expertise, leading ultimately to student success.

Collectively, the articles we present here emphasize the multiple functions and purposes of the art in research inquiry and scholarship on identity and social representation, early literacy development, and teacher education. We hope you will enjoy these explorations.

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