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Art Education in Finland and the United States: A Qualitative Inquiry into Teacher Perceptions

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ART EDUCATION IN FINLAND AND THE UNITED STATES:
A QUALITATIVE INQUIRY INTO TEACHER PERCEPTIONS

by

LAUREN KNIGHT

Under the Direction of Melanie Davenport

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to gain insights into the educational system in Finland, where art seem to be valued, and America, where it seems to struggle. I first studied how policies that promote a business-like ideology and standardized testing in schools have impacted art education in the United States. Then I investigated Finland's educational system, which does not rely on standardized testing to monitor student learning and teachers. During my research I noticed that Finland uses a noncompetitive approach to education, which I assumed was connected to the art Folk School that originated in Denmark and moved throughout Europe. Based upon this information, I anticipated that art education was valued more in Finland than in the United States. I also anticipated that Finland's educational success had a connection to its non-competitive system and its inclusion of the arts. In order to explore this idea, I investigated Finland's approach to art education by interviewing Finnish professionals in the art education field.

INDEX WORDS: Art education, Folk schools, No child left behind, Nikolai Frederick Severin Grundtvig, International review board, Program for internal student assessment

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LAUREN KNIGHT

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

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2014

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August 2014

DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my family.

For their endless love, support and encouragement.

I am particularly grateful to my fiancé Josh who has kept exemplary patience and support while I completed my thesis. I am indeed blessed to have him in my life.

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KEY TERMS

1. **No Child Left behind Act 2002 (NCLB)** – An act signed into law on January 8, 2002 by President George Bush, which relies on testing to improve student achievement gap and teacher accountability.
2. **Program for International Student Assessment (PISA)** – An exam in reading, math, and science, given every 3 years since 2000 to approximately 5000 15-year-olds per nation around the world.
3. **Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)** – Provides a forum in which governments around the world can work together to share experiences and pursue solutions to common problems.
4. **Folk School (*folkehojskoler*)** – Focused on critical thinking and vocational skills for the rural population through a non-competitive educational environment of arts and crafts.
5. **Race to the Top (RTTT)**– A law passed in 2009 by President Barack Obama, which relies on test scores to evaluate teachers and education administrators.
6. **Elementary and Secondary Education Act 1965 (ESEA)**– A law passed by President Lyndon B. Johnson, which funds primary and secondary education, while emphasizing equal access to education, high standards, and accountability.
7. **Improving America’s Schools Act 1994 (IASA)**– A reauthorized version of ESEA by President Bill Clinton, which provides extra help to disadvantaged students and holding schools responsible for their results at the same level as other students.
8. **Texas Assessment of Academic Skills** – Was a standardized test which focused on reading, writing and math, used in Texas from 1991 to 2002, then was replaced in 2003 by the TAKS test.

9. **Grundtvigians** – Followers of Nikolai Frederik Severin Grundtvig, that established free schools and Folk School.
10. **Center for International Mobility and Cooperation** – Provides expertise and services to promote international cooperation and mobility with emphasis on education, training, working, life, culture, and young people in the Finnish Society.
11. **Finland’s Ministry of Education and Culture** – An organization within the Finnish government that is responsible for developing educational, science, cultural, sport and youth policies and international cooperation in these fields.
12. **Atlanta Federation of Teachers** – was founded in 1916, and represents Pre-K through 12th grade teachers; paraprofessionals; higher educational faculty and professional staff; state and local government employees; nurses and other healthcare professionals.
13. **The Rand Corporation** – a nonprofit organization that aids in improving policy and decision making through research and analysis.
14. **Open-coding** – Strategies used to reveal common themes and outlying remarks.

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

In the early 21st century, Finland and the United States seem to have dissimilar approaches to education in terms of the value placed upon the skill sets that art education provides. Whereas the United States relies heavily on a business model of schooling with a focus on annual standardized testing which allows success for some but sets up many to fail as it marginalizes the arts, Finland's system has a more decentralized authority and produces more student success in a system that requires less time in school, uses cohort testing sparingly, while valuing and integrating the arts throughout the curriculum.

1.1 Purpose of the Study

I began this study with the perception that art education in Finland is stronger and has a higher status than art education in the United States. To investigate my perceptions, I reviewed below how NCLB came to be and summarize evidence of how it appears to be undermining art education in the United States public schools. I then explore comparisons drawn from my investigation of art in the educational system of Finland, where art seems to be valued, and in America, where it seems to struggle for its very existence in public schools. I look into how Finland's approach to education and art differs in an effort to inform contemplation about how art in American schools might be reprioritized if standardized testing were not central to schooling in the United States as it is not in Finland. Based on this information I collected from Finnish art educators, I perceive certain methods for creating pedagogically sound instruction in the United States that emphasizes the importance of the art education curricula.

I reviewed both quantitative and qualitative studies as a foundation for conducting a set of interviews with educators familiar with the Finnish educational system. The quantitative research I reviewed provides statistics on the results of NCLB and its effects on art education. In

addition, I looked for research showing the positive effects of art education on children and interdisciplinary instruction, especially for children taking standardized tests. The qualitative data I gathered include first-person insights of art educators who have experience with the Finnish educational system, which does not depend heavily upon standardized testing. The personal reflections of practitioners directly involved are invaluable because they reveal their perceptions of how policies impact their students. It concerned me to learn during my investigation that people in power who make policies regarding education, often have no classroom experience. So, I have thought the voices of actual teachers who could perhaps shed light on the impact of testing on art education, in the shadows where policy makers or regulators or administrators tend to have a blind spot. I try to I honor the voices of teachers whose perspectives are typically not included in much of the discourse pertaining to educational policies.

Studies suggested that education in Finland values art experiences. It came as a surprise to me to learn that “Finland has a long term approach to arts in education. Rather than valuing STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) over the arts like many Western countries, Finland considers the arts to be vital and weaves it through their entire education system” (ianchia, 2011). This is the impetus for me to look more closely at art instruction in Finland for my research. However, art education in Finland may not be entirely free of challenges similar to NCLB because there were articles that also suggested that art education in Finland is fighting for survival. My assumptions were that in Finland art was treated as important as other subjects and received the same amount of funding as other subjects as well. However, this assumption proved to be too narrow. One article entitled, *Naked model raises eyebrows; makes statement for art teaching*, described a peaceful demonstration in Finland protesting the

“elimination of teaching art in the country’s second most populous municipality outside of the Helsinki metropolitan area” (*Naked model raises eyebrows; makes statement for art teaching* (2013), p. 1). The demonstration involved a student in the nude posing in the Tampere railway station while her fellow students sketched her figure, as if they were in class. The protest lasted 15 minutes after a security guard politely asked the nude student to step down. The art teacher, Pekka Niskanen, expressed her advocacy of art and her surprise that others would find it unimportant when she explained “that it was peculiar that the country’s second largest city should be ready to draw a line through art teaching, something that is an important part of culture and education” (*Naked model raises eyebrows; makes statement for art teaching* (2013), p. 1). This article made me question if my assumption about Finland maybe was somewhat different from what really is happening in the country. To calibrate my assumptions with reality is why I sought insights from teachers working in Finland. I found this article disturbing because it showed that art education is still being threatened even in a very progressive country.

In a study about teachers of art in Finland, Rasanen (2005) from the University of Turku, found that “a traditional dichotomy between arts and academic subjects was evident. The majority identified arts as either the most pleasant or least useful school subjects” (p. 54). This statement shows that some people in Finland hold similar positions as some testing-focused administrators in the United States in seeing art as an outlier, which may not contribute to the goal of academic instruction. This statement also reflected a conflict about the role of art vs. academic subjects as though art is not academic. That is an assumed ideological difference.

Recognizing the schism between those who embrace art instruction and those who marginalize it, I aimed to interview Finnish teachers or others with first-hand insights who could share what they perceived about the role of art in the Finnish educational system. These people

were of interest because some had taught art in the United States and also in Finland. This gave them unique insights to share into differences and similarities they had seen in both systems. Their accounts reveal personal experience of strategies and policies in Finland that made their educational system successful and attractive as a role model for other countries. Ultimately, I hoped through this study to arrive at an understanding of Finnish approaches that might be useful and applicable in promoting the value of art education in this country.

1.2 Expected Results

By investigating similarities and differences in these educational systems, I may expose flaws in both, I but hope also to uncover transferable approaches and identify creative solutions to some of the problems faced by art teachers in the United States. I hope this paper can make a difference in the field of art education by shining light on the disadvantages of having a standardized test-based society that excludes the arts. Art education in America may benefit from this study if it sheds light on a non-competitive educational system, an ideal in Finnish school that values teachers and the arts. I perceive that non-competitive education may help students develop into more successful adults with enhanced abilities to compete or competently live in common with others in a global world.

In the United States, it seems that art programs are being undermined or destroyed because they are not deemed important enough to afford a secured budgetary line. Affordability of art is not the only issue undermining art education, because it seems that schools are rewarded for focusing on the NCLB agenda while minimizing art. According to Andy Finch (as cited in Ashford, 2004), senior director of government affairs at Americans for the Arts, “NCLB provides a disincentive for schools to invest in the arts unless school officials take the time and trouble to investigate how the arts help them meet their reading and math goals,” (p. 24). The

United States educational system seems more focused on improving test scores than on improving children through different disciplines, including art.

For most of my life I was steeped in the dominant narrative of success that justifies a non-art education with the greatest focus on the competitive outcomes of standardized testing, but I now have learned about different methods in other countries, like Finland, that do not rely on testing and the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) survey, conducted every three years by the Organization for Economics Cooperation and Development (OECD) that their children are successful. This will be explained further in the literature review chapter. I wondered as a younger student if there might be alternatives but for most of my educational career I knew of no other way. My interest in delving into alternatives models solidified during my first semester of Graduate school when I was encouraged by my professor to explore noncompetitive Folk Schools. During the early 20th century, several schools were established in the United States, which followed this model imported from Scandinavia. By looking at these schools, I learned there were other models for art education within these schools, centered on the students, and their personal growth. I couldn't help thinking that I wish American schools were like that now, instead of focusing on test scores. As I did more research I was able to trace the development of non-competitive schools in Europe and in Finland I eventually found a country that seemed to still followed the methods of the Folk School.

As I will discuss again later in this study, Finland happens to have developed one of the most successful educational systems in the world. In the "latest PISA survey, in 2009, Finland placed second in science literacy, third in mathematics and second in reading. The U.S came in 15th in reading, close to the OECD average, which is where most of the U.S.'s results fell," (Levine, 2011, pg. 2). This gap in educational standing maybe due to the fact that Finland

maintains a child-centered approach and values art education as an important aspect of a child's education. The United States on the other hand, is much more focused on standardized testing intended to make students competitive with each other instead of working for the development of the whole child with art being included. Sadly, this competitiveness seems to thrive in the United States educational system.

I have found that art educators are often seen as not important by their own colleagues of other subjects. Other teachers see themselves preparing students for the real world and art is seen as a distraction. This bias against art also flows through students and their parents into the general population. Many times when I have been asked what am I going to school to study and for a career, and when I say "art education" I am greeted with a disappointing look and with disingenuous approval like, "Oh, that's nice." The same people often quickly change the subject and some even ask me why I am not studying something more tangible like technology, medicine, or some other science that could help me to earn a lot of money. A co-worker of mine chuckled about how he got in trouble as a student in art class for expressing to the teacher his disdainful view that art wasn't important. I feel that any kind of thinking that dismisses art instruction is blinding itself to an important discipline in a way that demonstrably is hurting our educational system. This type of thinking reflects a narrative about art that has been communicated to students and to the public, en masse, about the usefulness and wastefulness of art. Standardized tests are said to be the ultimate tests of intelligence and ability, so belief in their value has contributed to this competitive and exclusive culture.

I am interested in investigating Finland's educational system because they seem to genuinely value education. The commitment to education demands that Finnish teachers no longer be able to enter the classroom just with a Bachelor of Arts equivalent. In 1979, reformers

of the Finnish education made it a requirement that all teachers must obtain a 5th year master's degree. "From then on, teachers were effectively granted equal status with doctors and lawyers" (Hancock, 2011, pg. 4). I admire that respect for education and educator in Finland, because in the United States teachers are often less well-educated, are underpaid and they often are treated as the enemy who cannot be trusted, which will be explained further by Sabol (2008) in the literature review. Another main reason I wanted to investigate the educational system in Finland is because art seems to be part of a complete education for students because the arts are interwoven throughout the Finnish curriculum.

Another interesting aspect of the Finnish education is that it is not based on the belief that students and teachers must be in school or studying for most of the day. Finnish students spend less time in class than do American students and yet, they still score much higher on international tests.

Teachers in Finland spend fewer hours at school each day and spend less time in classrooms than American teachers. Teachers use the extra time to build curriculums and assess their students. Children spend far more time playing outside, even in the depths of winter. Homework is minimal. Compulsory schooling does not begin until age 7 (Hancock, 2011, pg. 3)

In addition, there are no yearly-standardized tests in Finland, only one biannual test in high school that determines whether a student should go to a vocational school or a university.

The purpose of the examination is to discover whether pupils have assimilated the knowledge and skills required by the curriculum for the upper secondary school and whether they have reached an adequate level of maturity in line with that school's goals. Passing the Matriculation Examination entitles the

candidate to continue his or her studies at university (Ylioppilastutkinto, 2007, pg.

1)

This seems significant to me because Finland has found success with their educational system without an over-reliance on standardized tests. In the United States, students are tested at least once a year from the very early grades and all through high school and into college. Even if one wants to enter certain professions, additional standardized tests must be passed. I hear the question so often “Why is our educational system failing?” “Why are students scoring low on standardized tests?” The issues are complex, and involve numerous factors, including poverty, malnutrition, and other social contexts, as well as funding cuts and even ineffective pedagogical practices that stem from an ideological investment in standardized testing, which sadly often result in methods of pedagogy and assessment that do not include art.

In this study I looked more closely at education in Finland, particularly art education, to derive implications for American teachers and policy-makers. Although large-scale studies have been conducted, such as international comparisons of test-scores, I gained an insiders’ perspective into what goes on in the schools, through interviewing two art educators familiar with the Finnish educational system. As I investigated these teachers’ views on education in these two countries, I gained insights into successful techniques and was able to reflect upon whether these techniques were inclusive of and applicable to the arts. In order to interview these professionals in art education I protected my human subjects by obtaining Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, which was approved. In the chapters that follow, I review the available literature on education in Finland and described the methodology I intend to use to gather personal insights from knowledgeable professionals.

CHAPTER 2 REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In this chapter, I will examine how education in the United States educational system came to adopt the ideology of businessmen, and how this development affected the current status of art education. In addition, I will investigate the history of Folk School in Europe to understand more fully the context of art education in Finland in contrast to the United States. Based upon this, I framed a space for my study to expand upon the work that had been published by others. I will look at the theme of education-as-business, at the impact of business model of education on arts education, specifically, and at the impact of this model upon schools. In addition, I will discuss how art instruction, may ease and counteract the stress induced by testing in ways that has been observed to improve the performance of students in school. It should be noted that I use the terms of “art” or “arts” as they appear in source materials since discussions about the arts overall could be assumed to have implications for visual art as well.

2.1 The Business Model of Education

The displacement of art instruction by an over-reliance on standardized testing may be related to how schools adopted a corporate model focused on measuring achievement as opposed to a student-centered model of education that nurtured learning in all disciplines, including art. Raymond Callahan (1987)¹ sees American schools being plagued by “the cult of efficiency,” a term he uses to describe the “scientific orientation in school administration that stressed efficiency and economy and created a rigid structure working against educational change and reform,” (cited in Kridel, 2009, p. 164). Callahan notes that by 1910, there was a growth of public suspicion against the “management of all public institutions” (Kridel, 2009, p. 165). When, by 1912, businessmen were being voted into positions the school boards, the schools

¹ Callahan, Raymond E. (1987) Education and the Cult of Efficiency. *Teaching Education* 1(2), pp. 107-109.

became even more subject to criticism. Callahan further notes that, “the actions by educational administrators in utilizing business and industrial practices helped them to maintain themselves and even gain status in a business society” (Kridel, 2009, p. 165). This suggests that the school administration in the United States was influenced by businessmen ideology and that individual administrators sought to advance their own careers cultivating business relations, which seemed to result in schools moving away from being child-centered institutions, toward more business oriented institutions. Callahan examines how these businessmen who came to be in charge of education did not understand the kind of an education that children needed most and were not properly educated or trained to make the kinds of decisions that would benefit the children first and then the schools. These men lost sight of the mission of educating children and approached the management of “education in a business like, mechanical, organizational way” (Kridel, 2009, p. 165).

Decades later, the NCLB Act was yet another product of business ideology being forced into schools. It was created in response to a call for help to fix disappointing results in the school system, which had been accumulating since 1910 as noted by Callahan (Kridel, 2009). People who were disconnected from the real issues that were plaguing the schools answered the plea for help by pushing for the NCLB Act. Following closely on the business model, the NCLB “is based on stronger accountability for results more freedom for states and communities, proven education methods, and more choices [besides public schools] for parents” (Kridel, 2009, p. 180). This policy relies on testing and on the punishment of students and teachers who fail to perform to the expectations imposed by this model and its managerial means of increasing the success of schools. This model like others before it, promotes the concept that a school is a kind of business or factory that produces measures of student achievement as its main product, which

was explained by Callahan (Kridel 2009). The focus of this model is not how best to develop the child's full potential even if that child has other means of demonstrating knowledge rather than by performing well on standardized tests. According to Kridel (2009), the people who make decisions about education need to have the kind of education in the humanities and the social and natural sciences to enable them to understand the great problems of our age, so that they can make intelligent judgments about the kind and quality of education, which our children need (p.167)

An early version of NCLB was authorized in 1965 as the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* (ESEA). The ESEA authorized federally funded education programs that are administered by the states. Then this act was modified in 1994 as the *Improving America's Schools Act* (IASA), which reauthorized the ESEA. The IASA included reforms for the Title1 program, charter schools (to provide options other than public schools), safe and drug-free schools, increases in bilingual education. In 2002, this law was reauthorized again in a form which became known as the NCLB Act. Since President Obama has been in office this law has been changed to *Race to the Top* (RTT). Ravitch (2013) explains that one goal of the program is privatization, that is, to transform failing public schools into business-operated charter schools,

The program contains these key elements: Teachers will be evaluated in relation to their students' test scores. Schools that continue to get low-test scores will be closed or turned into charter schools or handed over to private management. In low performing schools, principals will be fired, and all or half of the staff will be fired. States are encouraged to create many more privately managed charter schools (p. 1)

RTT will be even more devastating for the teaching profession, public schools, and art

education, because the RTT increases standardization, centralization, and test-based accountability in schools. The *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* of 1965 has continuously been reauthorized “under a catchy new banner” (Rudalevige, 2003, pg. 1), but with each successive revision the law has become more and more centered on standardized tests and treating teachers as the enemy, as if they are the sole cause of students scoring poorly on standardized tests.

Wagner (2008), sees a paradigm shift in the global workplace that impacts American schooling in the 21st century. He believes that students obliged to submit to standardized testing are not being taught the critical thinking skills necessary to help them survive in the real world. Wagner (2008) contends that the real reason for “the low level of intellectual work and general lack of curiosity found in classrooms- even in our best high schools- is that our schools were never designed to teach all students how to think,” (Wagner, 2008, p. xxiii). Schools today are more focused on students getting the right answers on their standardized tests instead of using critical thinking skills and creativity. I feel that this deficiency is not related necessarily to poor teaching, but is more directly related to lack of respect and support for the arts. A lack of training in critical thought is detrimental to the students where their creativity is not being nurtured or strengthened, and this will hurt them when they become part of the global workforce where creativity is more in demand than ever. Spohn (2008) argues that individuals will be improperly prepared for the workforce because “reducing arts education also undermines a primary purpose of education” which is to train students for an employment market offering jobs that “demand creative thinking and problem-solving skills” (p. 9).

A myopic focus on standardized testing gears the curriculum to passing tests and de-emphasizes the need for curriculum based on the skills that students most need in the workplace.

This creates a disincentive of NCLB by demotivating the students. For instance, it has caused many students to become uninterested in school because they do not see the connection between what they are learning and their personal lives or futures. This point has been made by Wagner (2008) who learned in “a national survey, of 500 dropouts from around the country, about half of these young people said they left school because their classes were boring and not relevant to their lives or career aspiration” (p. 114). Wagner’s concern illustrates the point that instruction has lost touch with the interest and survival needs of the students because teaching has primarily become focused on test preparation and not on covering subjects that are relevant to students’ lives. In addition, teachers are under pressure to cram information into students so they can increase test scores bend under that demand due to a fear of being punished by the NCLB’s policies. Jasmine Evans (2013), writing for Education.com, argues that federal funding is often reduced in schools producing low-test scores and administrative districts can lose control over such schools. In her own words, Evans (2013) spells this out as follows:

Under the No Child Left Behind Act, test scores impact how much funding a school gets from the government, as well as how much autonomy a school has. Low-performing districts run the risk of state officials taking over operations and leaving them with little freedom to make independent decisions (p. 1)

Additionally, this business-model approach to schooling allocates less time for developing the whole child through extracurricular activities and electives such as art classes. Many taxpayers and opponents of school spending do not want to pay for what they regard as unessential courses and activities and argue that students do not need these costly non-essentials, but inequity rears its head in such claims. The educator and blogger Ken Bernstein (2012) notes

that elite parents are willing to pay huge tuitions for their children to attend private schools offering a multi-faceted curriculum that integrates the core academic subjects, usually measured by testing, into a quality educational program including a wide range of electives and extra-curricular activities. He writes with candid clarity:

If you are very wealthy, you are able to send your child to a school with small classes, with lots of electives, with many varied extracurricular activities. You view all of these as important, which is why you may well spend more than \$30,000 in elite schools such as Phillips Academy Andover (alma mater of George W. Bush), or Sidwell Friends (where the Obama daughters attend) (para. 10)

Bernstein (2012) believes that less advantaged students and disadvantaged students deserve a similar quality of education, or at least whatever holistic approach can be offered in a public school context. Bernstein (2012) challenges educators to stand against such moves, as he wrote: “If we believe, as does ASCD (an international professional organization with 150,000 members in more than 145 countries) that we should be educating the Whole Child, then elimination of electives and extra-curricular activities is an unproductive approach to take,”(para. 9). Wagner (2008) concurs with Bernstein’s contention that the so-called non-essential courses and activities are central to a student’s success in school. One student he talked to transferred schools “because they had eliminated all the arts from her schedule and these classes were the reason she was excited to go to school, to begin with” (Wagner, 2008, p. 113). An educational program that relies on standardized testing creates a tense environment that over-emphasizes test performance and fails to nurture a student’s creative and critical thinking process.

2.2 Impact of the Business Model on Arts Education

Even though the arts are listed as a core academic subject in NCLB, this policy nevertheless creates a disincentive for schools to fund art programs. In a case study conducted in the Ribbon Valley School District of Ohio, Spohn (2008) reports findings about the affects of NCLB on the schools. “Data from this study indicated that arts teachers and non arts teachers believe instructional time and classroom practices have been altered in the district to accommodate NCLB requirements resulting in a loss of both access to and learning in the arts” (p. 5).

By placing most of the attention on testing, the arts are regulated to the bin of the nonessential. For example, in middle school and high school, the art and music classes in this study were cut to make more time for English and math classes since these subjects are included in testing. In addition, this case study showed that at the Ribbon Valley district, focus was centered on “fundraising to support tested subjects over arts education,” (Spohn, 2008, p. 7). The arts programs in this school district used external grants as funding to survive, and those curricular grants proved very difficult to obtain because the materials needed for art and music instruction were not deemed necessary by the granting foundations. Spohn (2008) states,

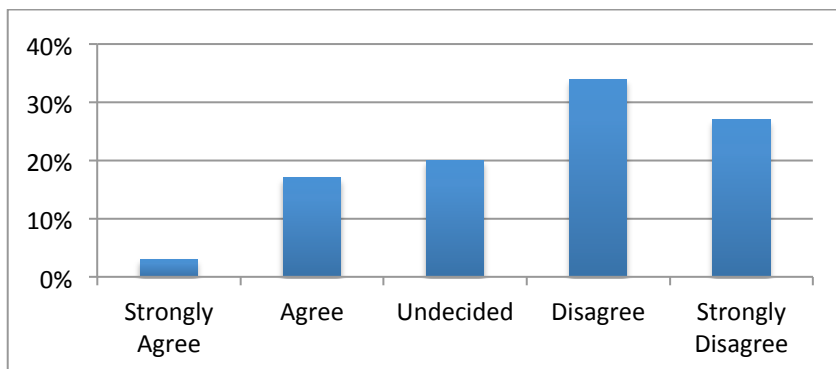
The general consensus among the arts teachers was that it was challenging to get grants to pay for art or music supplies and instrumental materials such as instruments, recorded music, workbooks, sound equipment, and batteries for keyboards because these items do not qualify for grant funds (p. 8)

Spohn’s article shows the inequality of obtaining funding for the arts versus funding available for the tested subjects. By not allowing art programs the opportunity to obtain the proper materials foundations send a message to students that the arts are unimportant. If schools

continue to devalue art programs it will cause students to adopt the same idea that the arts are not important or relevant to their lives or future.

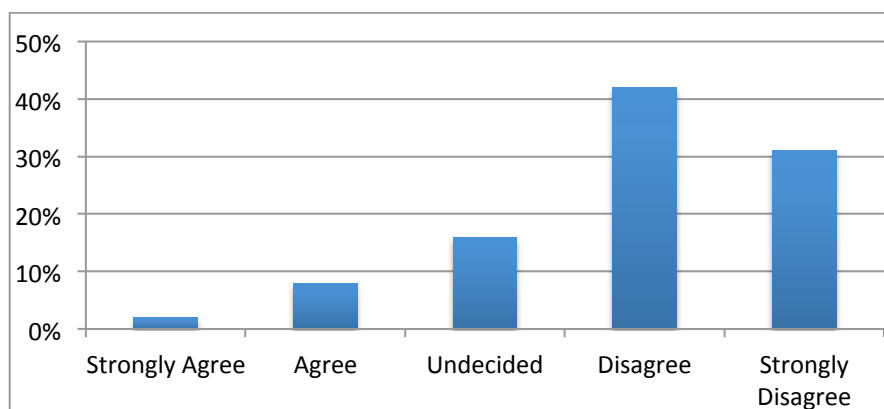
Furthermore, NCLB harms teachers as well as students. In a case study by Sabol (2010), 3,050 randomly selected art teachers around the country were mailed a questionnaire asking how they felt NCLB had affected their jobs and the students. Sabol put the data from these surveys into graphs that I reproduced below. These graphs reveal crucial insights from this study into what teachers, themselves, thought about the impacts of NCLB. The results revealed the frustration of art teachers who felt that NCLB had had a negative impact on their teaching careers. A look at Sabol's charts is most instructive, for example:

Table 1: Question 27: I feel NCLB has made me a better teacher. (Sabol, 2010)



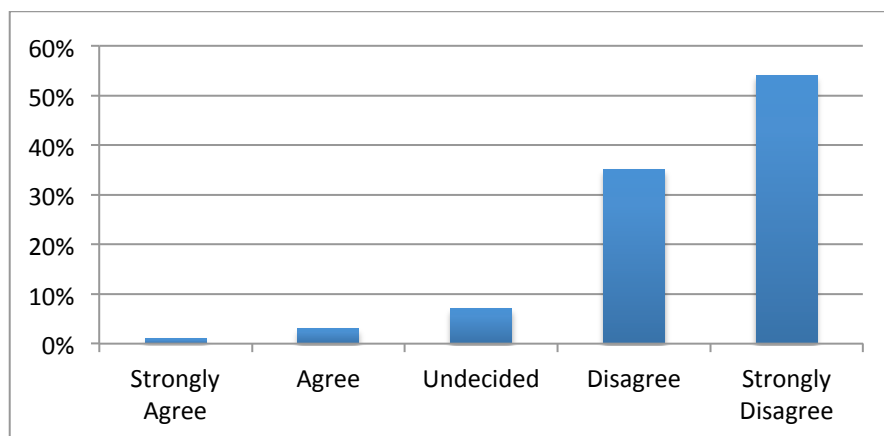
This graph shows that a full 20% of the teacher queried either remained open-minded, or perhaps, feared answering the question. Of the 20% who agreed with the statement, only 3% strongly agreed. A 61% majority of those who disagreed with the statement, and 27% of those teachers strongly disagreed. This means that 7% more, than the teachers who agreed, registered strong disagreement with the idea that NCLB had improved them as a teacher.

Table 2: Question 28: My Attitude about being an art educator has been positively affected by NCLB. (Sabol, 2010)



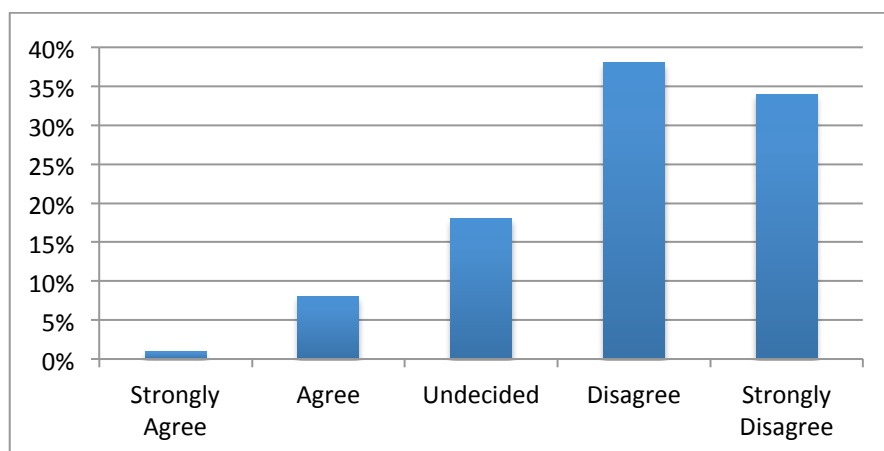
This graph showed that only 30% of the teachers were undecided or agreed. Among them only 7% agreed and 3% strongly agreed. Teachers' disagreement with the statement amounted to 70% and of those, 31% strongly disagreed.

Table 3: Question 34: NCLB has had a positive affect on faculty morale. (Sabol, 2010)



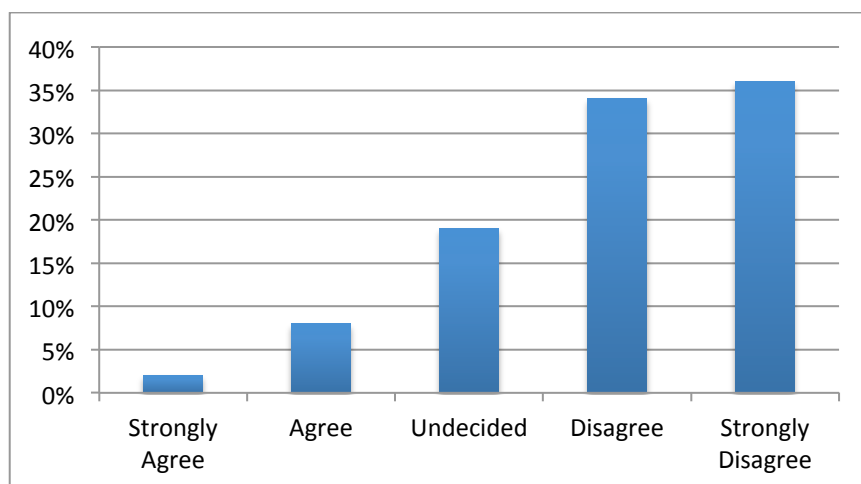
According to this graph, 89% of the teachers report that NCLB has had no positive impact on faculty morale while 4% felt that NCLB had contributed to morale and 7% indicate indecision. Does this mean that NCLB has been ignored by 89% of the teachers or does it mean that the morale of that many teachers has declined with the onset of NCLB?

Table 4: Question 46: Generally, I feel NCLB has had a positive effect on my art education program. (Sabol, 2010)



This graph showed that only 9% agreed with this statement and just 1% strongly agreed. This means that 18% of art teachers were undecided and 72% disagreed with 38% of the art teachers disagreeing and with 34% strongly disagreeing with this statement.

Table 5: Question 26: The status of art education has been improved by NCLB. (Sabol, 2010)



While 2% strongly agree among the 10% who agree, 10% did not declare their stance and 80% disagree with this statement. Among the 80% of teachers who

disagreed, 36 % strongly disagreed, more than in any other question.

For question number 3, the teachers were allowed to write an open-response about other things they wanted to discuss. This section of the study generated a strong emotional response from teachers about how they were affected by NCLB. One teacher wrote...

I am crying as I write this, because after 21 years of successful teaching, NCLB has destroyed my spirit and my love for teaching, damaged my love of art, and crushed my love for working with children and helping them learn about art. By this time you read this, I will have resigned my job and will be seeking work outside the field of education. My career as a dedicated and concerned teacher is a victim of [NCLB]. (Respondent 0302), cited in Sabol, 2010, p. 174)

Another teacher wrote:

The people who made this law are destroying the public education system in our country and the lives of teachers and students who are in it... and I feel as if they really don't care. They just don't get it. Everyone seems down all the time now because of the pressure we are always under. Even the kids feel this way. It's just not right. It's as if we are being punished for the problems they have created. We have become their scapegoats! We keep having charter schools pushed down our throats as if they will solve our problems, but they won't solve our problems either. They can choose who gets in. We can't. They can get rid of poor students or students with handicaps. We can't and don't want to and they are getting our tax money that should be used to help our public schools instead of being used to pay schools that have been created as businesses only interested in making profits. Is

making a profit what education is all about? (Respondent 0669, cited in Sabol, 2010, p. 174-175)

This study revealed that participating teachers felt strongly that NCLB had negatively affected art education programs, as illustrated by the graphs that reflect the answers to these questions and the written responses of teachers.

Given that just a few of the studied art education teacher agreed, or strongly agreed, that NCLB had a positive impact on their teaching or programs, their responses to Sabol's study imply that some arts teachers may have been working in well-to-do schools that permitted them to offer art instruction adjunct to or integrated with instruction in the disciplines that normally are included in standardized testing. At other schools, the art instruction is likely to have been much more marginal to the tested curriculum. At the same time, Sabol's study shows that most arts teachers, now competing with standardized testing, perceive their art programs, morale and quality of teaching conditions to be degraded by the implementation of NCLB. Moreover, in at least two cases, art teachers wrote comments stating that they were driven into depression or out of teaching by NCLB. They seemed to have lost all hope that NCLB would ever be art-friendly and one of them even had come to see the advocates of NCLB as possibly desiring to end public education. Within the open-ended responses, there were many more responses of the art teachers not discussed here. They indicated that the teachers and their art programs were negatively affected by NCLB. They described situations of intense competition between teachers and increased workloads. They also described an increased number of new teachers, which was brought on by other teachers quitting. A lack of support for the arts program that new teachers

experienced more often led them to become so discouraged that they would leave teaching.

2.3 The Stress of NCLB and the De-stressing Effect of Arts Education in Urban Schools

Sabol's (2010) data charts seem to suggest that art programs do not fare well in educational systems based on standardized testing. One reason is because teaching to the test does not emphasize subjects like art that teach critical thinking. What gets the high priority in such system is an obsession with test scores that create a stress in teachers and students' live and have an adverse impact on learning. NCLB also seems to negatively impacts urban schools in particular, those that were already hurting from limited access to arts programing. The National Center for Education (2013) released troubling reports on the decline of the arts in public schools, which demonstrate a number of important facts suggesting that the state of the arts in schools is a dire one:

- Six percent of public elementary schools (serving 1.3 million students) don't offer music, and 17 percent (serving nearly 4 million students) don't offer visual arts.
- Nine percent of public secondary schools (serving 800,000 students) don't offer music, and 11 percent (serving 1.4 million students) don't offer visual arts.
- Ninety-seven percent of public elementary schools (serving 23 million students) don't offer any instruction in dance or theater, 88 percent of public secondary schools (serving 18 million students) don't offer dance, and about 55 percent of public secondary schools (serving 9 million students) don't offer theater. (State of the Arts, 2013, p. 8)

Despite their rejection or their extreme marginalization, art education programs are crucial to urban education. Students in urban cities face learning difficulties because they more often are dealing with stressful conditions in school and in their community. These stressful conditions are not limited to hunger, violence, and homelessness.

Just how stressful can standardized test taking really be? One blog entry by Rachel Levy² in an article written by a DCPS elementary school teacher who later would resign from her position in protest of NCLB. That teacher is Olivia Chapman. She comments on the stress of test-taking time that can seize some schools in a head-lock. In accounting for her observations, she writes of teachers at her school “feverishly reviewing the pages and pages of rules, regulations, and routines”; administrators walking from class to class, “wanting to know how each lesson will contribute to the students’ achievement on the upcoming standardized tests”; how the school sends flyers home with students “describing the stress that will ensue in the following weeks and how we will cover up this anguish with a makeshift ‘spirit week,’ pajama day, crazy sock day, class color day” (Chapman, 2012, para. 1). The teacher does not yet know if she will quit her job when taking stock of the cesspool of stress that school has emerged since she was a student. She exclaims: “I’m not sure what’s worse, the testing itself or the preparation and anxiety built up beforehand”(Chapman, 2012, para. 2). Although her students were just eight years old, this teacher reports on restrictions that she and other teachers at her school, sanctioned for alleged cheating, were expected to observe to get the sanction lifted. They were told that, “allowing students to stand and stretch during testing would absolutely not be tolerated” (para. 4). They also were told, “Absolutely no bathroom breaks during testing unless the child was

² Rachel Levy is an article written by a DCPS elementary school teacher who later would resign from her position in protest of NCLB. Chapman, Olivia. 2012. Ssshhhh, Testing in progress. May 17, 2012. Retrieved from <http://allthingsedu.blogspot.com/2012/05/ssshhhh-testing-in-progress.html>

showing physical signs of distress” (Chapman, 2012, para. 4) The emphasis placed on this rule meant that teachers “needed to prevent multiple bathroom trips by determining how badly each child had to use the restroom” (para 4).Chapman (2012) even reports her fear of reprisal; she already had been “punished for breaching test security...scolded for allowing children to read books after they finished the test, as well as for allowing them to go to the bathroom” (para. 6)

This level of stress causes health problems in humans, especially when it happens repetitively; and for youth, it can cause failure in school and youth delinquency. In addition to anxiety, the Final Report of the Illinois Children’s Mental Health Task Force-2003 “revealed that up to 50% of the city’s urban youth suffer from other emotional illnesses related to the stressors found in their urban environment” (Creedon, 2011, p. 34).

What has been ignored is the idea that art not only rounds out an academic curriculum but, according to Creedon (2011), art education also helps to reduce stress that students experience in their school and home environment, which improves their motivation and success in school. The arts and music have this ability, because on a physiological level they produce endorphins in a child. “Endorphin enables students to manage personal stress and enhances their learning potentials” (Creedon, 2011, p. 34). In addition, the endorphin-enhancing effect of arts can also help raise test scores when implemented among other subjects. He describes, for example, a teacher who, integrated art into 2nd grade students reading program in an attempt to reduce students’ stress:

Using prints of impressionist paintings, her students created word banks out of the characters, settings, themes, colors, situations, and weather in the works of art. Students drew and painted their versions of these words on one side of an index card and their own paintings out of their collections of word cards and used

their word cards to write stories about their paintings (Creedon, 2011, p. 35)

This teacher's efforts to add visual art in her curriculum resulted in the students' success in test scores on the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills. The students writing improved from 38% the year before to 88%, and the reading scores improved 28% to 80%. Based on this case study, it was concluded that, "Integrating arts-based creative processes into teaching and learning will enhance student mastery of critical content while it also supports the emotional and physical needs of our children" (Creedon, 2011, p. 36).

Art education has been proven to make students more successful. According to the Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan (2012), students who are exposed to the arts, "were more than three times as likely to earn a B.A. as low-income students without those experiences ...[and]... low-income high school students who earned few or no arts credits were five times more likely not to graduate from high school than low-income students who earned many arts credits" (as cited in Sauer, 2012, p. 1). Children need art to help them develop into a well-rounded person. The Rand Corporation (2005) found that students who have had art classes available to them were able to acquire a deep connection with people and their community. The students were able to have an open mind and see the world differently.

So far, I have considered the impact of testing on American schools. In Finland, the educational situation is different than in the United States, and this maybe due to the tradition of the Folk School in that county. In the following section, I will explore Finland's approach to education and the arts further, relating it back to my discussion of art education and NCLB in the United States.

2.4 A Successful Model of Standardized Testing in South Korea

It is important to recognize that some countries that have been successful with models of education that rely heavily on standardized testing and strict schedules of schooling. South Korea, an illustrative case of standardized testing and long school days, often is praised for the academic performance of its students. According to the 2006 Program for international Student Assessment (PISA) survey, South Korea was ranked first in reading, third, in math (tied with Hong Kong), and 10th in science (tied with Lichtenstein). South Korea has more than 97% of students graduating from high school, which is the highest in the world. Lastly, around 100,000 South Koreans now attend highly competitive American universities. Nevertheless, it should be noted that despite South Korea's educational success it comes at a costly price. For example, Hank Pellissier, a freelance writer on education and brain development explained that,

Many South Korean kids are alarmingly unready for university work. The *Korea Times* reported that Samuel Kim, a Columbia University scholar, assembled research revealing that 44% of South Korean students at top U.S universities drop out. This figure exceeds the [college] dropout rate for students from the United States (34 %), China (25%), and India (21.5%). A principal reason for the lack of success is that the rote learning [that minimizes individual expression] in Korean schools does not prepare students for the creative, active, and self-motivated form of learning U.S. universities require (p. 3)

Moreover, it has also been found that South Korean students suffer strongly from strong emotional issues due to all of the pressures from school. Students become severely overwhelmed with fears of poor performances on an exam or disappointing their parents. "South Korea's

student suicide rate is among the world's highest, with 17 out of 100,000 students killing themselves-" (Pellissier, 2013, p. 3).

The United States has a similar focus on testing and long school day, but the differences make it seem possibly better than the Korean schools. That could be the case, but I maintain that Korea and the United States have much to learn from the student centered learning curricula and pedagogy based on developing of the whole student in Finland; therefore, loosing at those school systems that produce success with testing are outside the scope of my study.

We so far have considered the impact of testing on American schools and another model of standardized testing in South Korea that has successful scores, but emotional consequences for the students. In Finland, the educational situation is different than in the United States, and this maybe due to the tradition of the *Folk School* in that country.

In the following section, I will explore Finland's approach to education and the arts further, relating it back to my discussion of art education and NCLB.

2.5 The Danish Inception of Folk School

And be we poor and lowly

Yet are we sons of kings

And higher than the eagle

Hope may spread out its wings.

-- Nikolai Frederick Severin Grundtvig (2004)³

In the United State, where the legacy of NCLB still reigns today, there seems to be a loss

³ This verse appears on page 106 of a biography called, Robert K. Greenleaf: A Life of Servant Leadership, a biography by Don M. Frick (2004) who discusses Nikolai Grundtvig having been an important influence Greenleaf.

of memory about an earlier alternative and perhaps better, way to educate children that is more child-centered and inclusive. One country whose educational system focuses on nurturing a student's creative and critical thinking process in a stress free environment is Finland. This country is believed to have one of the most successful educational systems in the world according to the PISA survey. I feel that the educational system in Finland benefits from its foundation upon what is known among historians of education as the *Folk School* system.

2.5.1 National Development By Educating the Folk

The *Folk School*, translated from the Danish word *folkehojskoler* was designed to feature the development critical thinking and vocational skills for the rural Danish population. The main idea of the *Folk School* was that students should be treated equally even if there is a difference in ability or social background, while in the process, utilizing different mediums of art. The *Folk School* played a role in the establishment of the Nordic States because of the political and social conditions that supported their development. During the 19th century, Nordic countries of Denmark, Finland, and Norway were struggling to keep alive their identities while being ruled by other governing countries. “Denmark was threatened by Germany; Finland was then politically a part of Czarist Russia; and Norway had been forced into a political union with Sweden” (*The history and philosophy of the Nordic Folk School movement*, 2004-2012, para. 3). As the population of Denmark tried to establish a national identity, it gave birth to the idea of a *Folk School* system.

The man primarily responsible for creating and advancing the idea of the Folk School that was to spread to many European countries was Nikolai Frederik Severin Grundtvig, a Lutheran pastor, poet, hymn writer, and historian who came to be known as the Father of Denmark. According to Andersen, Mohr, and Bruun (2012), “He was inspired by the ideas that

sparked the revolutions and changes in governing that was happening all over the western world. He recognized that a broad based education of the population was the prerequisite for a healthy democracy” (p. 1). After 1828, Grundtvig resigned from his church and focused his efforts on articulating his ideas of the *Folk School*. His ideas became favorable among a group of people who gave themselves the name *Grundtvigians*. They believed in his ideas about education because they valued “self expression and regarded conversation as recreation” (Keane, Stubblefield, 1994, para. 6). According to Keane and Stubblefield (1994), the Grundtvigians:

Possessed strong egos and had few doubts about their own country and their role in building it. They did not fear innovation and believed in showing people what they could do. On the other hand, they were also dependent on one another, cooperated in common endeavors, and compromised to make the situation work for others (para. 6)

The concept of the *Folk School* developed in Denmark around the 1840s after democratic voting rights were made available to all of the people. Denmark became focused on creating a nationwide school system that would lead its students into becoming well-rounded citizens who would contribute in making their community and Denmark better places. In the article *The history and philosophy of the Nordic Folk School movement* (2004-2012) it was explained that,

As early as 1895, the Danish parliament decided to offer state grants to the *Folk School*. This is an early example of a particular feature of Nordic Political thinking which persists today and influences much social legislation: if an initiative taken by private groups for the benefit of the public interest is considered useful and worthwhile by the state, public authorities will support it, while preserving private responsibility and economic risk. (para. 5)

Years later, Finland seems to have adopted a noncompetitive style similar to *Folk School* that make Finland competitive on a global scale because the Finnish students would become successful through this noncompetitive educational model. Is it possible that the idea of *Folk School* is connected to Finland's non-competitive and child-center educational model?

The main percept undergirding the *Folk School* is the idea that students should be treated equally even if there is a difference in ability or social background. *The Danish Folk School* developed an educational approach that promoted social intelligence and social change, but undertook this work of advancement and innovation through the preservation of culture, history, *Folkways*, and communities. Unfortunately, these *Folk School* in Denmark began to change because the national school system was expanding and including all people, so the *Folk School* (previously ethnically specific to Danes and later Finns) came to be seen as obsolete. Most *Folk School* now no longer are the primary agencies for educating youth and young adults; instead, they now are geared toward attracting seniors and mature adults who are searching for an educational and fun retreat. The classes offered today include art, music appreciation, vocational training and much more. Yet, there is much to be learned from the *Folk School* model, both from its historic and contemporary manifestations.

As noted above *Folk Schools* were at one point in history popular in the United States. Olive Dame Campbell founded the *John C. Campbell Folk School* in 1925 in Brasstown, North Carolina. Fariello (2007) explains that, "While private schools were available to the wealthy, these new publicly funded schools were aimed specifically at the 'folk'- regular working people" (p. 1) The school was dedicated to her late husband, John C. Campbell, who had started the research, which lead to the completion of this school. The Russell Sage Foundation employed John C. Campbell in 1909. This foundation was one of the first to advocate research about the

living conditions of working people. Campbell was very dedicated on the idea of being a humanitarian. Campbell and his wife Olive both believed that life throughout the Appalachia Mountains could be improved through education. They traveled throughout the southern Appalachia Mountains for several years 1909-1913 gathering research and artifacts.

During this time the Campbells' were introduced to concept of Danish Folk School. Fariello (2007) explained that a member of the Southern Education Board and Professor of the Secondary Education at the University of Tennessee, named Philander P. Claxton brought this concept to them. He became the United States Commissioner of Education in 1911. Claxton learned about the Danish Folk High Schools through sending three people to Denmark to study how Folk School could help the United States educational system and economic development in rural America. These three men were Harold W. Fogt, part of the Bureau's specialists in rural education, and L.L. Friend and W.H. Smith, whom were collaborators in the Bureau's Rural Educational Division. Claxton believed that the *Folk School* system could benefit rural education, especially in the Appalachia Mountains. "The 1909 Country Life Commission Report claimed rural education was in crisis, and the 1910 Census data reported widespread illiteracy, particularly in the South" (Keane, Stubblefield, 1994, p. 3). Foght, Friend, and Smith reported that Folk School should be used as a model to help the Southern Highlands. These reports were submitted to Claxton in 1913, and published as U.S. Bureau of Education Bulletins in 1914.

Campbell and Olive were very interested in applying the *Folk School* style into American schools. But before they could visit Denmark World War I began in Europe in 1914. Then in 1919, Campbell died without being able to finish his research on practicing *Danish Folk School*.

After her husband's death Olive spent her time organizing his notes. She was able to imitate his writing style and in 1921 she was able to get the study published as *The Southern*

Highlander and His Homeland under his name. “In it she reflected her husband’s strong belief in the value of Danish-Folk School for the Southern highlands and advocated their establishment” (Keane, Stubblefield, 1994, p. 3). In 1922, Olive obtained a fellowship from the American Scandinavian Foundation, which provided her the funds to travel to Europe and study the Folk School. Her sister Daisy Dame accompanied her, along with a teacher from Pine Mountain Settlement Schools in Kentucky named Marguerite Butler. These 3 women traveled to Denmark, Norway, Sweden, and Finland observing and gathering all information they could. They noticed that the schools were more focused on creating a nurturing relationship between teacher and student, rather than the strict traditional style of learning in the United States. In 1928 Olive divulged her observations from Denmark into a book, *The Danish Folk School: Its Influence in the Life of Denmark and the North*.

When Olive returned to the United States she started searching for the perfect location for her school. It was important to Olive that the school has a sense of community not just with the students that would attend, but with nature as well. “[We are] looking for a natural center... where creeks come together... a section with agricultural possibilities” (as cited in Fariello, 2007, p. 2). In 1925, it had been decided that Brasstown, NC would be the home to the John C. Campbell Folk School. After a year of promoting the schools philosophy and curricula the school began holding classes in regular sessions that began in December and ended in the early spring. Olive made sure that the schedule of the school was accommodating to the farm families because of the farming seasons.

When the school first started the main curriculum included forestry, instruction, travel, history, public health, mechanical drawing, and a large variety of agricultural subjects. Olive gave much credit to Nikolai Frederik Severin Grundtvig the creator of the *Folk School*, for her

views toward the *Folk School*. In her book *The Danish Folk School* she paraphrased Grundtvig saying, “The humble tasks of farm, shop, and home have a cultural value more fundamental than that of books. Education should not discredit such labor but should give meaning breadth and depth. It should link culture of toil and culture of books... It should be enlightened action” (as cited in Fariello, 2007, p. 4).

In 1930, the school became more diverse in the classes offered by including craftwork as part of the curriculum. The summer school program was a 10-day program held every June. In 1932 crafts were officially became part of the schools program. “Drama, song and dances were equally valued” (Fariello, 2007, p. 5). Even though craftwork was not a focus in the beginning, it began to play an important role in the schools success.

Despite the high hopes, the South Highlands were not as open to the Danish-type Folk School. “What Claxton, the Bureau of Education investigators, and Campbell and Olive had believed to be the educational solution for the Appalachian Mountains proved not to be transportable,” (Keane, Stubblefield, 1994, p. 4). This is because of lack of financial support and other educational alternatives that became available for young adults.

My perceptions of the *Folk School* are based on the Nordic countries and not the United States because the idea originated in the Nordic Countries. In what follows, let us consider how Finland’s approach to education and the arts is both similar to and different from American education today.

2.5.2 Contrasts and Comparisons of the U.S. and Finnish Approaches

The decision of the nation to invest in the teaching profession helped to benefit the schools in Finland. In 1971, Finland’s government concluded that in order to strengthen its economy it must improve the schools. Here the notion of school improvement squarely focused

on the concept of holistic youth development. Actualizing this would require better teachers, teachers who had job security and time to invest in their work, and a smaller student/teacher ratio. By 1979, education reformers made it mandatory in Finland for teachers to earn a fifth year Master's degree, increase teachers income and reduce class size. Jarvinen (2007) explains...

The basis of the Finnish success story lies in good, highly qualified, motivated highly qualified and autonomous teachers. Teacher profession is very popular and valued in Finland. All Finnish teachers have academic degree; they are highly qualified and valued in their profession (p. 6)

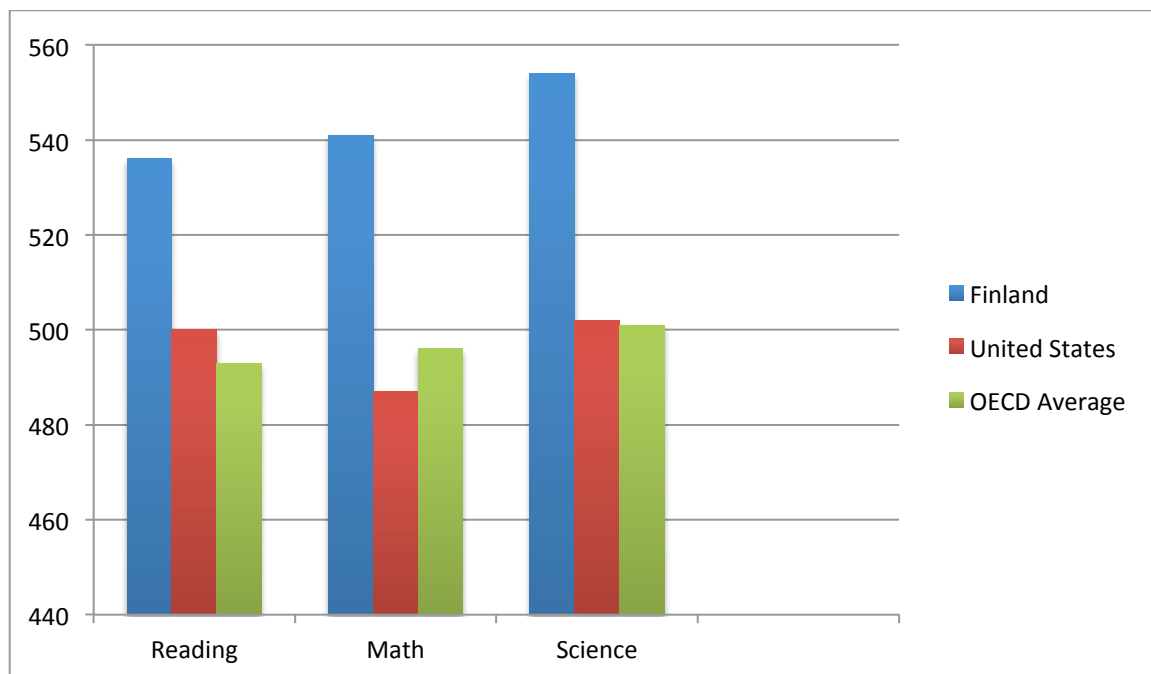
Earning the fifth year degree and increasing teacher wages gave them a professional status that was equal to Finnish doctors and lawyers. The requirement to obtain the fifth year degree shows that policy makers as well as the Finnish public in Finland were willing to change their ideology about education. In the end, the government relinquished some of the control over schools when town councils in Finland were given power over setting certain school policies. This permits parents and local neighborhoods to have input into the educational process. As a result, Finland has no mandated standardized tests, except for one exam that high school seniors take at the end of the year. Contrary to the case in the United States where schools compete in many ways academic and athletic, here are no comparison rankings or competition between regions, schools, or students.

The United States school system is seen as unattractive to Finnish educators. For instance, Pasi Sahlberg (Tung, 2012), an expert on education and the Director of the Center for International Mobility and Cooperation in Finland's Ministry of Education and Culture does not agree with the reliance on Standardized tests in America. He believes he sees the downside very clearly: "The way it's done here [the United States] is simply leading to so many negative

consequences, in the form of narrowing curricula and reshaping the way teachers and schools are working” (as cited in Tung, 2012, p. 3). The negative consequences Sahlberg cites already can be noticed in the United States as evidence by the overwhelming cuts in the arts and strict policies on teachers that are meant to increase students’ scores on standardized tests.

In contrast, consider Finland’s rejection of standardized testing and its embrace of a higher quality and more community-controlled system of education; it is an educational strategy that has resulted in success. The claim that Finland is educating better than the United States is no spurious claim. According to the 2009 results of the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA), “an exam in reading, math and science given every three years since 2000 to approximately 5,000 15-year-olds per nation around the world, revealed that, for the fourth consecutive time, Finnish students posted stellar scores. The United States, meanwhile, lagged in the middle of the pack” (Abrams, 2011, para. 2).

Table 6: Finland vs. United States 2009 PISA Results (Dalporto, 2013)



As of now the United States educational system only values a STEM (science,

technology, engineering and mathematics) curriculum over STEAM (science, technology, engineering, art and mathematics). In Finland, the arts are interwoven through their entire education system and hold the same value as other subjects. In the United States the status of art education, “has been slipping for more than three decades, the result of tight budgets, an ever growing list of state mandates that have crammed the classroom curriculum, and a public sense that the arts are lovely but not essential” (Smith, 2012, p. 1). NCLB has all but killed art education throughout the country, because it only focuses on standardized test scores and not on the enhancement of the whole child. On the contrary, it has not been recognized in America that art education helps to improve other subject areas. In addition, NCLB also has put pressure on teachers to produce high-test scores from their students with little to no additional financial support. According to Tung (2012)

While the U.S. public schools are locally funded, usually from property taxes and rewarded based on high performance through programs such as the U.S. Department of Education’s Race to the Top grants, Finnish schools are nationally funded based on the number of students. Schools are provided additional funding if they have a higher proportion of immigrants or students whose parents are uneducated or unemployed (p. 2)

Locally funded but not locally controlled United States schools funded by property taxes makes wealth a factor in determining school quality, and funded by federal grants based on high performance sets up the school to betray teachers and students who might be able to perform well under other conditions. Finnish schools invest in students per capita and invest more when there are educational obstacles in the situation of immigrant, unemployed or uneducated parents. If the Finnish system could be described as having a caring approach, then the effect of the

United States may be described as uncaring, at least in its impact. The pressures they face have caused American teachers of public schools to become desperate and lose focus on teaching students for the enjoyment of learning. To meet the unrealistic goals of the NCLB that must be met to keep their jobs, some teachers have turned to cheating. In 2010, Georgia Republican Gov. Nathan Deal released a report that accused an estimated 178 schools in Atlanta of cheating to raise test scores, lest they would lose funding or even lose their jobs (Franklin, 2011). “‘Cheating was caused by a number of factors but primarily by the pressure to meet targets in the data driven environment,’ Deal’s office said, adding that ‘a culture of fear, intimidation and retaliation’ permeated the school district” (as cited in Franklin, 2011, p. 2). Verdaillia Turner, the president of the 2,200-member Atlanta Federation of Teachers also claims that standardized tests cannot accurately measure what a student knows. Turner also stated that, “Schools have become testing factories. We’re teaching to the test, not educating the individual child” (as cited in Franklin, 2011, p. 2-3). Learning should not be about passing a test. It should be about improving oneself as an individual.

2.5.3 Finland’s Homogenous Population vs. United States Diverse Population

This study acknowledges that, “some critics have dismissed Finland’s success,” by attributing it to “their homogenous population.” However the question of size and homogeneity should not give Americans reason to dismiss the Finnish example. It is easy to say that homogeneity is the reason “why they can pull off such fantastic results,” but the claim that education policy was designed simply to serve Finns is not entirely honest. It plays into the hands of those American educators and opponents of elective and extracurricular activities who dismiss art as nonessential by lending credence to their claim that American education is worse because of immigrants. The fact is that “immigrant populations in Finland have grown steadily

over the past decade and [yet] their schools have remained stellar” (Dalporto, 2013, p. 2). The approach they take actively integrate immigrants into the same quality of educational system that is made available to other Finns. Like the United States, Finland accepts immigrants. A small amount of immigrants to Finland come Estonia and Russia as compared to a large of these populations in other Western European or Scandinavian countries. Finland also accepts United Nations refugees from Somalia, Iran, Iraq, Kosovo, Albania, Syria and etc. Finland does not have large and long-standing immigrant populations and had no formerly enslaved or nearly decimated indigenous population as does the United States. It therefore could be said that Finland is more recently and less intensely diverse than is the United States where ethnic differences are more deeply imagined and have had a long-term affiliation with the American educational system.

On another note, Samuel Abrams a scholar at Columbia University’s Teachers College, believes that educational policy is more important to a country’s educational success rather than the nation’s size or ethnic makeup. Abrams (Partanen, 2011) addressed that...

The effects of size and homogeneity on a nation’s education performance by comparing Finland with another Nordic Country: Norway. Like Finland, Norway is small and not especially diverse overall, but unlike Finland it has taken an approach to education that is more American than Finnish. The result? Mediocre performance in the PISA survey (p. 5)

The study of the educational differences in homogenous countries versus diverse countries is an important question, but it is beyond the scope of this study.

2.6 Implications of the Literature Review about the U.S. and Finnish Educational Models

Even though art education is suffering in America the good news is that the problems can be fixed. Valuing art education will help students succeed in school and life. Art education

helps to improve tests scores. “Notably, students who took four years of arts coursework outperformed their peers who had on half-year or less of arts coursework by 58 points on the verbal portion and 38 points on the math portion of the SAT” (Ruppert, 2006, p. 9). This shows that even if America sticks with standardized testing in schools, it is important that the arts be promoted (and certainly not taken for granted) because the lack of arts in a students’ lives have negative effects on test scores. “Dewey believed that arts education was a foundational part of curriculum because it developed creativity, self-expression, and an appreciation of expression of others” (Heilig, Cole, Aguilar, 2010, p. 136). Art education is major piece in a student’s education, and must be supported as other subjects are supported.

Some efforts are being made to incorporate art education programs in some of the worst performing schools. President Barack Obama’s administration who was involved in creating RTT has worked with the Department of Education to institute “a waiver system whereby states could apply to obtain relief from some of the act’s mandates in return for instituting substantial school reforms” (Eyring, 2012, p. 6). According to News reports in July of 2012, 32 schools were approved for the waiver, but this option will disappear when NCLB is reauthorized. In addition, President Obama’s administration created a new program called the Turn Around Arts Initiative, which has chosen eight high poverty, low-performing schools to accept \$14.7 million over three years to integrate art, music, dance and theater into their curricula. These efforts to add art education into the schools’ curriculum are good but too limited; efforts need to be made on a national scale. In addition, these programs won’t mean anything when Obama’s RTT policy starts to affect the teaching staff adversely, because RTT will cause the same stress on teachers that NCLB did to increase test scores or their positions are compromised.

Wagner (2008) observed schools that he believed were special because they did not follow the structure of traditional schools. One of these schools was High Tech High in San Diego, California. This school refuses the federal mandate to focus their curriculum and pedagogy on standardized testing. "All students take the required California high school exit exam and STAR tests-the state accountability tests. But we don't prepare them for these. We just teach our classes" (Wagner, 2008, p. 221). The teachers have the freedom to use any teaching style they want as long as it helps students to learn the material. HTH wants students to "be able to think, to work in groups, and to work independently" (Wagner, 2008, p. 214). Wagner saw that students and teachers were able to build relationships (without the intervention of business experts) that allowed teachers to guide the students to push themselves to be better. In addition, the art teachers are seen to be just as important as the reading and math teachers. At HTH "every teacher works in a team with one other teacher and together they are responsible for fifty students" (Wagner, 2008, p. 224). The art teacher combines lesson plans with other teachers such as the physics and engineer teachers so that students can have an artistic understanding of how to create experiments. HTH is a very successful school because it does not hinder the curriculum, students, and teachers with an enforced standardized curriculum. Creativity, individuality, and critical thinking are genuinely valued and the end results are astounding. "Since graduating its first class in 2003, 100 percent of High Tech High students have been accepted to college, 80 percent to four-year colleges, including Johns Hopkins University, MIT, Stanford, Howard, University of Southern California at Berkeley, NYU, and Northwestern" (Wagner, 2008, p. 207). The majority of the students are first-generation college students who also are able to adapt well to college life. This exemplary school shows that creating schools to be successful and to value

art is possible. It just takes genuine effort from people who truly understand the equal importance of all subjects in a student's education.

Given how closely the HTH school aligns with some of the values of the Finnish schools, the educators and politicians in the United States should stop making standardized testing the main focus of education. The data indicates that standardized testing does not improve our schools; in fact, in some cases, standardized testing, with no arts, has impeded student learning. Julie Westerlund (2013), a professor at Texas state University explained that during her 16 years of teaching in high school and university science classrooms her noted that "student skill levels have declined in critical thinking, problem solving, reading and writing. This decline reflects overemphasis on preparation for high-stakes testing, as for the TAKS or STARR Tests, at the cost of learning" (2013, p. 1). Schools in America need to become more focused on child-centered techniques to obtain successful results.

CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY

Insert body text here... In this chapter, I explain my data collection methods. To get a well-rounded perspective of both the Finnish and American educational systems, I not only studied an overview of the education systems as a whole, but I also captured interview data from individual teachers familiar with both systems. I was interested in learning the personal perspectives of art educators in Finland, wishing to compare how they feel about their education system. From the viewpoint of an outsider the Finnish system seemed commendable, but rather than to rush to this conclusion, I wanted to see what real teachers had to say in their personal accounts. Would their responses explain how policies directly impact the classroom and student learning? Would these interviews disprove my hypothesis that the Finnish system might be

better? What did the two systems have in common that might be useful to know, and how can their differences inform us? I largely was interested to learn how the Finnish educators evaluated the United States system based on knowledge of their own system. Aside from the preliminary questions already stated, there were two main research questions that guided my study are as follows...

1. How does Finland's approach to art education differ from the approach to art education taken in the United States system based on the perception of educators from Finland?
2. Would Finnish teachers with experience in art education in Finland suggest any insights that might be useful to the more effective implementation of art education in the United States?

The opportunity to conduct the study in Finland relied mainly on the connections that my professor, Dr. Melanie Davenport, had developed over the years with educators in Finland. She put me in contact with the people in Finland with whom I would work. Lacking the funds to make a research visit, I developed the strategy of conducting interviews using the electronic media. I used email for communication and for sending interview questions. I intended to follow-up via video-conference or telephone call, but it worked out best to rely on email. I contacted 8 potential participants and was able to interview 2 who responded to my request.

I decided that the best strategy for this study was to conduct interviews using questionnaires sent through emails to each participant, and to follow up questionnaires with probing questions in order to build on any issues that needed more clarification. The decision regarding the number of participants depended upon availability and consent. I contacted 8 art educators with invitations to participate, but only 2 participants agreed. This study was focused

on interviews that were conducted through emails so the probability of risk was close to none. The participants did not endure any physical or mental harm during or because of the interviews. In addition, the information that was acquired through the two interviews I was able to conduct was handled with the utmost care. First, the identity of the participants was not revealed before or after the study. Second, the data and interviews that were recorded only were used for this study and were kept locked away. The only people that had access to the data collected in this study were my thesis advisor Dr. Davenport, and myself. The questionnaires can be found in the section Appendices.

After obtaining the answers to follow-up questionnaires, I worked assiduously to complete the thesis writing. I reviewed the data and transcribed them to analyze using through open-coding strategies, looking for common themes and outlying remarks. My timetable for completing this study was to gain preliminary approval of these chapters in early December 2013 and then gain IRB approval in March 2014. I conducted the interviews in late March and April 2014. The last two chapters, describing my process, findings and suggesting implications were completed in the summer of 2014.

This study contained limitations that must be addressed. The first limitation of this study was that I focused on particular American policies and chose not to cover broadly all educational policies historically or culturally. It is important to acknowledge this limitation because while NCLB has negatively impacted art, other initiatives in art education may indicate that the situation is not completely dismal in every location around the United States. A limitation of this study was that I was not able to travel to Finland to conduct my research. Another limitation for this study was the demographic differences between the populations of Finland and the United States, and how that impacts art education in each country. A further limitation of this research

was that there are some countries that have used intense standardized testing successfully to improve education, but it is out of the scope of this study. Lastly, a final limitation in this study was language difference. There were challenging times when reading the responses of Finnish teachers because of the errors made by the participants who was speaking to across a language barrier. In addition, I understand that sometimes there are meanings can become lost when translating from one language to another, so even where Finnish teachers spoke English there possibly was some sense of meaning lost in their efforts to translate their responses to me in English.

One of the major issues at the center of the educational challenges in the United States is the lack of teacher involvement in the decision-making process at the local, state, and national levels. Politicians who make the changes to United States educational policies do not solicit, listen, or hear the opinions of the teachers. My data focuses solely on what the Finnish teachers had to say about the struggles or benefits they experience in teaching art and how it differs from the experiences of teachers in the United States. I wanted teachers' opinions of whether they felt that Finnish students were more successful because of the inclusion of art in education or if they considered other factors as being more important in student success. I wondered if they thought that Finnish students could be as successful in American schools or if they thought that American students would have a hard time adjust to Finnish schools. I was most curious to hear the responses of teachers in Finland about their perceptions of art education and its role in schooling there. Their responses will be discussed in the following chapter.

In conducting this study, I gained great insight into the Human Subject Review (IRB) process, as well as insights into the art educational system in Finland. As an ethical researcher, I

will share the results of this study with art educators in Finland as well as here in the U.S and elsewhere through whatever means possible.

CHAPTER 4 ANALYSIS

4.1 Data Analysis and Findings

In this chapter, I will discuss the process of obtaining my data and the results that I obtained. The data were collected and explored in response to the problems posed in Chapter 1. My goal was to discover how Finland's approach to art education differs from the United States system as viewed from the perspective of Finnish educators. As noted in the earlier chapters, I expected to find that the value of art instruction in the Finnish system would serve as a model from which educators in the United States can learn. The findings presented in this chapter, however, contradicted my expectations in that they reveal Finnish art education is not necessarily more valued than art education in the United States art education. In fact, it became apparent that Finland must overcome similar trials that threatened to decrease hours for art, and there even is a chance for art to be cut from Finnish schools.

4.2 Respondent Data

To serve as research participants, respondents or informants, I attempted to recruit to this study, eight professional art educators with knowledge and experience in the Finnish educational system. Out of the eight possible candidates, five of them replied to my email and from the five that responded, only two of the candidates signed the consent form and answered the questionnaire. The other three candidates declined to participate, stating their belief that my study was not in their field of expertise, but offering to pass my questionnaire to their colleagues. In the end, I made the best of having just 2 participants in my study. Only these two participants

responded to the questionnaire I designed. While I cannot make strong generalizations based on just a two-person sample, this study is relevant, nevertheless, because the insights they provided shed light on topics explored in my literature review.

4.3 Participant 1

The first participant of my study was a Ph. D student of Museum Studies with a research concentration in art education and cultural heritage education. Participant 1 also explained that she had a strong professional background in textile conservation and museum studies. She described herself as an avid participant in the art education world and remained current on the theory, pedagogy and educational issues by attending International Conferences such as the InSEA Europe regional Conference 2012, WAAE Summit 2012, Holo Institutes Symposiums in Finland by subscribing to *International Journal of Education through Art*.

The first set of questions aimed to determine the perceptions and concerns of these Finnish art educators and compare their answers to the research literature I had read on Finland and on the United States educational systems (See Appendix B, Questionnaire 1). The answers provided by the research participants mostly confirmed by the findings of my literature review. For example, Participant 1 responded to the first question⁴ about the differences between the United States and Finland by explaining her personal views on factors like funding, testing, vocational value and competitiveness. For instance, she agreed with the idea that the United States was more focused on testing and ranking pupils more than Finland was. She explained that Finnish children get an extra year to be children before school because they do not attend school until the age of 7 whereas American children start school a year earlier, at age 6. A letter signed

⁴ (See in Appendix B, p. 73) Please share your perceptions of how art education in the US and Finland differs on issues such as funding, testing, status, vocational value, and competitiveness.

by 130 early child education experts, that was published in the *Daily Telegraph* (11 Sept. 2013), explained the importance for children not to start school too young because they could develop stress and a fear for learning. Dr. David Whitebeard, a professor at the University of Cambridge who also participated in writing the letter to the *Daily Telegraph*, also researched the importance of play in a child's life. In addition, Participant 1 shared a conversation with her sister in which they both had "sometimes [felt] a bit worried about if there is room for children's individual differences in their growing in this testing" (Participant 1, personal communication, 2014).

Respondent 1 did not respond to question 2. For question 3⁵, I asked what perceptions she and other art educators had about the Finnish Folk School, and wondered if they had had any influence on the Finnish educational system. Surprisingly, Respondent 1 explained that she felt education in Finland had become more competitive. She stated, "There is [sic] more comparisons, competitions between regions, schools and students in today's Finland than there was when I was a child in the 1980's and 1990's Finland" (Participant 1, personal communication, 2014). She attributed this shift away from the Folk School model to Finland's economical struggles, which affected social differences between families. "The social differences between families have increased also during the last 20 years and not all of the families have possibilities to provide their children [sic] places in private art school as a hobby" (Participant 1, personal communication, 2014). Participant 1 did not comment on Finland's non-competitive strategy, such as not testing, and the relation of that policy decision to Folk School.

In question 4⁶ the survey queried participants about the idea that when art education is included and valued in the curriculum, that it could aid Finnish students in achieving academic

⁵ (See in Appendix B, p. 74) Pasi Sahlberg states that there are no comparisons, rankings or competition between regions, schools or students. This can be connected to the idea of Folk School. What are your perceptions of Folk School and their affect on the current educational systems non-competitive strategy?

⁶ (See in Appendix B, p. 74) According to research, the arts are interwoven through the entire

success better than students do in other countries. Participant 1 believed that this could be possible, but did not believe that there was enough research to prove this theory. She explained her view that the main reasons for Finland's global educational success comes from the requirement that teachers earn a Master's degree. Unfortunately, she felt that tough "economic times have made [Finland into an] uncivilized place for arts, culture, art training, and arts education" (Participant 1, personal communication, 2014). Participant 1 further explained that art education programs in schools are frequently being threatened with cuts to the hours available for art instruction, and this was even more the case in the museum and theater sector. "I think that this is the result of Euro-crises in Finland when the public sector has to make cuts in Finland [and] culture seems to be always the first place to cut from...-" (Participant 1, personal communication, 2014).

For question 5⁷, Participant 1, restated the claim that hard economic times threatened the art education with cuts. This question produced an answer that shed light on the peaceful demonstration against cutting hours and art programs. She explained that because of strong protests from teachers and art societies, protesters were able to fight the cuts and educate the public on the cuts being proposed to the art programs. Participant 1 states, "Situation is hard. Rough cuts are not just being made to school because they have also been targeted at our museum and theater sector. The primary objective in Finland is to stop our public sectors indebtedness and in order to maintain our nations AAA credibility, we have to make cuts-" (personal communication, 2014). Here, she seemed clear that the prior focus on the arts may

Finnish education system and hold the same value as other subjects. In your opinion, has the inclusion of the arts in school-helped contribute to Finland's global educational success?

⁷ (See in Appendix B, p. 74) According to an article in Yle (2013), there was a peaceful demonstration in Finland protesting the "elimination of teaching art in the country's second most populous municipality outside of the Helsinki metropolitan area" (Naked model raises eyebrows; makes statement for art teaching, 2013, p. 1). What was the outcome?

have been central to Finnish society and to the Folk School model, but that was before the current period of economic austerity which now threatens to degrade Finland's credit status in the global economic system and subjects the former investment in art instruction to budgetary triage.

My follow up questions sought to better understand the demographics and political forces that impact education and art education in Finland. By asking question F1⁸, I sought to learn why Respondent 1 felt that Finland was moving away from a folk model and towards an educational system of Western Europe and United States when their non-competitive style of education was working as evident in Finland's global ranking on its PISA test scores. Respondent 1 explained that, "...the reasons for cultural change in Finnish educational system has much to do with globalization, [with the] global evaluation of education (PISA), [with fewer] economical resources of [available to the] public sector (Euro-crisis) and [a] need to rise [the] cost efficiency of education" (Participant 1, personal communication, 2014). In addition, she added that there was a "dark side" of the non-competitive style of education. There has been much criticism that gifted children could not fully develop their skills further beyond the student norm because everyone in school is treated the same. This idea perhaps says less about the non-competitive system and more about the desire of ambitious Finnish students to matriculate in an educational system that makes it easier for them to distinguish themselves in the global market. The response ignores the fact that a non-competitive system does not necessarily mean that there must be no room for such differentiation.

⁸ (See in Appendix C, p. 74) Why do you think Finland "has changed towards the educational system of West Europe and the U.S., when facts show that the non-competitive style of education is working, especially when you compare the PISA test scores globally?

For the next question⁹, I asked about the heritage of the immigrants in Finland because Respondent 1 briefly had spoken about a racial divide in Finland. She noted that the racial divide¹⁰ is not entirely about the European immigrants who are moving to Finland. The racial divide she referred to was a synonym for western cultural imperialism; it was about the will of Finnish people to keep fighting the incursion of western culture while protecting their indigenous Finnish culture. The term racial here refers to a desire to preserve the race of Finns and not have them be homogenized into Euro culture by the same system of education. She explained that through the years Finland has been fighting for economic stability after it had survived multiple economic depressions in the 1990's, 2000's and now during what is known as the current euro-crisis. Despite these hard times Respondent 1, believes that “the Finnish Ministry of Culture and Education has [sic] strong understanding for art education’s position in our country“ (Participant 1, personal communication, 2014). Its position posits the idea that a connection is being made between health and culture. This led into the next question 4¹¹, which showed that in the Ministry that was taking this stance, there was resistance against western culture. For instance, there have been plans in Finland for a Guggenheim Helsinki museum, which is seen as a western incursion that has been met with hostility. According to Participant 1 the fact of Finnish resistance to western incursion relates more to their cultural chauvinism. There is the idea that a foreign museum would pollute the cultural identity of the Finns and shape their society by a practice of “American Imperialism”. It was also explained that the induction of the museum would commercialize the Finnish cultural sector in an attempt to extract more money from Finnish state taxpayers. Furthermore, this concept of a racial divide in Finland also

⁹ (See in Appendix C, p. 74) Where do the immigrants seem to originate?

¹⁰ (See in Appendix C, p. 75) Can you explain the causes for the racial divide in Finland and how it is affecting art education?

¹¹ (See in Appendix C, p. 75) You explained that some “people see the Guggenheim project as a threat for Finnish culture”. What type of art is being shown to cause this uproar?

has produced resistance among some youth who have vandalized historical buildings and museums with graffiti and sometimes have committed arson while protesting westernization, according to Participant 1. The violent escalation of protest among some youth apparently happens so frequently that it has been managed with the installation of alarm systems, but Participant 1's doctoral research is focused on finding ways to prevent this type of destruction through changing people and creating positive interaction between different ethnic groups and across cultural differences.

4.5 Participant 2

The second research participant was a University Art Education Instructor who had experienced living in Finland and in the United States. She also had taught in the United States public school system. Participant 2 stated that her main academic goal is to help to write the new national core curriculum for Art education that will be implemented in Finland in the year 2016. Explaining the differences between Finland and the United States, she also emphasized that Finland requires all teachers to obtain a Master's degree whereas in the United States only a Bachelor's degree is required. This is important to understand, she thought, because among teachers who have higher-level credentials the teaching quality is high and the teachers are trusted to teach without overbearing rules and work from the government. Participant 2 saw the national core curricula as being more like "guidelines and describes the learning outcomes and content areas on a very general level" (Participant 2, see personal communication, 2014).

Participant 2 responded to question 1¹², by affirming my research findings about the differences between the United States and Finland. For instance, she did not see globalization as adversely impacting arts education and she explained that funding in Finnish schools is not, in

¹² (See in Appendix D, p. 77) Please share your perceptions of how art education in the US and Finland differs on issues such as funding, testing, status, vocational value, and competitiveness.

her view, dependent on anything, like the Euro-crisis. Apparently contradicting Participant 1, she stated, “There are hardly ever complaints about lack of materials or equipment” (Participant 2, personal communication, 2014). Furthermore, she said there is an unequal valuation of art as it does not have the same educational status or vocational value such as science, but “the status in Finland is not bad at all, and in my understanding art teacher’s professional identity is very good” (Participant 2, personal communication, 2014). Participant 2 explained that in the Finnish culture there has been a big emphasis on collaborating with artists for national and global success on projects addressing the future of creativity and for a creative economy. But even with this goal in mind art education in schools is still threatened with cuts in hours dedicated to art. “There has [sic] been threats of cuts in hours every two years when these things are discussed and decided, but luckily the value and status of art has still been taken rather seriously (perhaps just because of the creative economy)” (Participant 2, personal communication, 2014). This is also connected to question 2¹³ which asked about a time that she felt proud of the art education in Finland was when she felt proud of the art education profession in Finland when teachers took a strong public objection toward cuts in hours that were being planned for art in 2010. There was such a strong opposition to these plans among educators that the Finnish government stopped planning altogether for the cuts. This anecdote of a successful protest among art teachers is a testament to the support that Finland still has for the arts, unlike in the United States.

For question 3¹⁴, Participant 2, had stated that she had never heard of Pasi Sahlberg, an expert on education and the Director of the Center for International Mobility and

¹³ (See in Appendix D, p. 77), Think about a time when you felt proud of the art education profession in Finland.

¹⁴ (See in Appendix D, p. 77), Pasi Sahlberg states that there are no comparisons, rankings or competition between regions, schools or students. This can be connected to the idea of Folk School. What are your perceptions of Folk School and their affect on the current educational systems non-competitive strategy?

Cooperation in Finland's Ministry of Education and Culture, and did not agree with the claim that the non-competitive strategy of the current educational system was connected to Folk School.

In answering question 4¹⁵, Participant 2, states her view that the idea of the inclusion of the arts playing a role in Finland's global success in education needs more research. She said that the arts are widely used and supported in school, but there are some drawbacks. For example, she explains, in most elementary schools students do not receive separate art classes. Students don't receive art classes until middle school and high school. "From the perspective of teaching art, the situation is not very good, as art teachers only get to teach middle school and high school" (Participant 2, personal communication, 2014). Early childhood art education by art professionals thereby is neglected at the elementary level.

Participant 2 rejected the stance that art was more valued in Finland than in the United States because, "when students apply to high school their school prosperity is assessed based on the academic subjects grade (not art, sports and so on)" (Participant 2, personal communication, 2014). However, she did say that students interested in art could receive a diploma in art, which would be granted by the International Bachelorette program.

Unfortunately, Participant 2 commented on the last question about the *Naked model raises eyebrows; makes statement for art teaching* (2013), article and the peaceful demonstration in Finland, by sharing her view that this article did not apply to my study. She stated that the article was about, "cutting down professional art teaching in colleges of applied sciences. So, this is about educating professional artists, not about art education in schools" (Participant 2, personal communication, 2014). Participant 2 did not respond to the follow up questions.

¹⁵ (See in Appendix D, p. 78) According to research, the arts are interwoven through the entire Finnish education system and hold the same value as other subjects. In your opinion, has the inclusion of the arts in school-helped contribute to Finland's global educational success?

4.6 Evaluation of Data

Comparing the answers of the two participants provided useful insight into art education in Finland. When I compared their responses I found several similarities in their answers. For example, both informants believed that it was possible that the inclusion of art in school may have given a boost to Finland's educational success, but they both mentioned that this question needs more research. They both attributed Finland's educational success to the high quality of certification standards that teachers were required to meet. This included obtaining a Master's Degree. Since the teachers had to obtain the 5-year degree this meant that teachers were trusted to do their jobs. Another similar response given by the participants was that in the Finnish educational system the arts programs do become threatened with cuts. However, the cuts do not seem to be aimed at eradicating the actual program themselves, but rather, the cuts are aimed at trimming the hours spent in art class. Moreover, both participants noted that even though there are threats to cut the hours in art, there is also an overwhelming support for the arts by the teachers and the public, which makes cutting programs instead of hours more difficult. According to the participants, the plans to cut hours are usually stopped because of this broad based support, coming from youth and educators.

It is not possible to sharply state that Finland's education is more art focused. It is necessary to recognize the impact of globalization on the trend in both countries towards pushing the sciences while cutting the arts. Yet, these responses demonstrate two important factors that create positive conditions for successful student centered teaching. When the teaching profession generally is treated with respect, and future educators are trained in five-year programs, the

country's educational system may become more successful. More research on this question and the role of the arts in particular needs to be done.

Second, it seems clear that art education in Finland is not necessarily valued more than in the United States. While it seems that Finnish art programs have some challenges as the country grapples with the demands of globalization, it seems clear that the public has not lost its commitment to art and seems determined to keep the art programs in the Finnish schools. It seems that the public has more say about the survival of art in Finland than in the United States. When cuts happen in Finland there is more popular and institutional support to stop the cuts than there is in the United States. This is apparent in the largely uncontested or quietly contested cuts that were made to numerous art programs throughout the United States so that students could focus more on producing result on standardized testing, as discussed in Ch. 2. Stakeholders in Finland were discussed as being more engaged and vocal about the cuts to the arts.

Furthermore, I found it interesting that neither of the participants knew anything about the Folk School. Participant 1 did not mention Folk School at all while participant 2 rejected the notion that Finland's non-competitive educational system was not linked to Folk School. Looking at their description of this Finnish system as an outsider I saw a possible connection between the noncompetitive style and the rejection of testing in current Finnish schools and the *Folk School* that preceded them. But as stated before, the actual historical connections between the Finnish schools of today and the Folk School of yesterday would require more research.

Respondent 1 talked a lot about how the economy of Finland was affecting art education. Her view of Finland's support for the art was surprisingly pessimistic. She believed that Finland's culture and art was being threatened by the Euro-crisis and by cultural racism. According to Participant 1, the struggling economy was causing cuts in art programs and

museums. The cultural racism was illustrated by the planning to bring the Guggenheim Helsinki museum to Finland. This respondent exposed the resistance of Finns who do not wish to conform to American culture. Participant 1 explained that after Finland obtained independence from the Soviet Union, the country was able to become its own nation and build its own heritage. Currently, people who resist the move of branch of the Guggenheim museum to Finland fear that such a museum will threaten their Finnish culture and that the investments to fund it will be cut from their own social welfare. This is not the first time the Guggenheim museum has been rejected by a country. When there were plans to build a Guggenheim museum in Bilbao, Spain there also was much controversy. “Funded entirely by the host country but masterminded from New York, many Basque commentators, including the now banned separatist party *Herri Batasuna*, saw the museum as a sign of cultural imperialism, an economically motivated attempt to purge the region of its history” (Olterman and Bell, 2007). The resistance toward the museum was so strong in Spain that a week before the opening a police officer was killed by the *Euskadi Ta Askatasuna* (ETA), a nationalist and separatist organization of the Basque National Liberation Movement, disguised as gardeners. The police officer interrupted them while they were trying to plant grenades in the Jeff Koons sculpture outside of the museum. So, it is revealing of the wider European resistance to American cultural imperialism that Finland also would put up resistance toward the building of an art museum when it seemed to have support for the arts in general and especially in education.

Participant 2 made an interesting point in noting out that elementary art was taught by elementary teachers, and not by art teachers. In most cases students do not receive art classes until middle school¹⁶. Informant 2 held the view that this situation could be good or bad. It is

¹⁶ Elementary school includes grades 1-6 and middle school includes grades 7-9

good if elementary teachers choose to acquire training in art or it could be bad if teachers chose not to acquire training in art. I agree with Participant 2, could be right in suggesting that art being taught by elementary teachers may be beneficial to students, but this lack of art instruction by professional art teachers at the elementary level is a hindrance to art teachers who also are therefore unable to teach to children in their most formative years at the elementary level. Why would elementary students in the Finnish educational system not be given an art teacher since so many studies show that art can help to benefit a student's motor skills at such a young age with other advantages as well? Furthermore, this claim raises questions about how art is being approached by the elementary teacher who is not trained in art instruction. Would the elementary teacher who is not an art instructor teach and regard art in the same way as would an art instructor? Is art made to matter as much as other subjects in the minds of elementary school children? Dobbs (1998) found that when art is taught by general teachers "The art lesson was often seen as outside the pale of the curriculum that mattered, a nonacademic activity in which no real 'learning' took place, or at least none worth serious assessment" (p. 7). Could the Finnish case prove this hypothesis to be true? Unfortunately, answering this question would require more in depth research, specifically into how art education is approached by art teachers versus general teachers in Finland and in the United States.

Although I was only able to gain information from two participants, this exercise was instructive and I gained important insights. Interview data seemed to call into question my initial perception of art education being more valued in Finland. It now is apparent to me that art is secondary to science in both countries, but it does seem that the value of art education in Finland is still higher than in the United States, where it feels nearly depleted. The reason may have more

to do with marketing and consumerism than purely with school economics or policy, but additional research is required to make a firm determination. In the following chapter I discuss further the implications of my findings.

CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSION

*I am submitting the hypothesis that art,
or the arts, adequately taught, are perhaps
in our day the most central and
important means of education.*

--Irwin Edman

Art Education Today (1951)

Art education, in my opinion, is suffering in America. A standardized test-based curriculum was installed in American schools by No Child Left Behind (NCLB) that either has undercut the legitimacy of art instruction; or in many in cases, has eliminated art education altogether. The subsequent loss of access to art instruction experienced by too many students in public schools is an outcome of NCLB; it's impact has had a dire impact on millions of students in American education. Yet, few recognize that NCLB discounts arts instruction by granting it little or no educational priority. Wherever educational budgets informed by NCLB prioritize art far beneath the higher ranks given to math, science, reading and writing, there is a failure to recognize the critical role of art in education. The problem is that not only are school administrators placed in a position of having to discount education about art, but they also disregard for the important role that art plays in teaching other subjects. In this study it was important to explore general education as a whole because art education has been impacted by

general education policies. Given the need for art instruction and for the instructional uses of art, I argue in this chapter for the re-evaluation of art in the curriculum. I suggest that no educational program like NCLB should place standardized testing over art instruction. I make this claim based on what I have learned from the literature review and by conducting a comparative study of education in Finland where the imperatives of standardized education that govern education in the United States are not an instructional priority. I hope that this study will help the reader to see art instruction as a form of learning that should not be eclipsed by any effort to prioritize standardized testing because it is valuable. I argue that given its value, art instruction should play a central role in any quality educational program.

The purpose of this study was to investigate differences between the educational system in Finland, where it seemed to be valued, and America, where it seems to struggle. I first studied how policies that promote business ideology in schools and standardized testing have hurt art education in the United States. Then I investigated Finland's educational system because it does not rely on standardized testing to monitor student learning and teachers. A major point of note was that the Finnish educational system uses a noncompetitive style, which I assumed was connected to the art *Folk School* model that originated in Denmark and moved throughout Europe, as I explained in the literature review. Based on what I learned, I anticipated that art education was valued more in Finland than in the United States. I also anticipated that Finland's educational success had a connection to its non-competitive system and its inclusion of the arts. In order to gain more insights, I explored Finland's approach to art education by interviewing Finnish professionals in the art education field.

The main questions that were guiding this study were...

1. How does Finland's approach to art education differ from the United States system from the perception of educators from Finland?
2. Would teachers with experience in art education in Finland suggest any insights that might be useful to art education in the United States?

My study revealed that there were several major differences between art education in Finland and in the United States in art education. The first difference was that in most Finland schools, art is interwoven into elementary schools and taught by elementary teachers, not by art teachers. In the United States, it is considered important for elementary art classes to be taught by professional art teachers, though this is not always the case. The second difference I discovered was that in Finland, when art education is being threatened, the public and teachers have such strong support for it that politicians must listen to them. I learned that teachers in Finland, who generally support art education, develop relationships with politicians for protection of the whole curriculum. In the United States it appears that when art programs are targeted, efforts to stop the cuts arise but are limited and are not usually successful. The third major difference was that art programs are well funded in Finland. Participant 2 explained that all teachers never worry about not having enough supplies because all schools are nationally funded. This is not the case in the United States; the United uses a different funding model based on a mix of federal funding which merely supplements tax base revenue. Art teachers in the United States are constantly scrambling for supplies especially if the schools are in low-income areas. For example, I was offered a position at a middle school and the principal could not give me a number for the budget. So I spoke to the former art teacher and he said the budget was very, very small. At another school where I interviewed to work, the principal confessed that he did not know where the art budget was coming from. This is an example of the random funding

supplied to art teachers in this country. Lastly, the main difference is that the education profession is a highly respected field in Finland, on a par with other professions such as law medicine, because the teachers must have higher degrees. It seems that in the United States, training to be an educator is geared primary toward undergraduates seeking a job and it therefore has lower status. Being a teacher in the United States does not command the same respect or attain the same status as it does in Finland.

Some thoughts gleaned from this study that could benefit art education in the United States include that the teaching profession as a whole needs to be respected and made just as valuable as is the profession of a doctor or lawyer. This might be achieved by requiring teachers to complete a Masters degree, which might ultimately also raise the overall salaries of teachers. Before art teachers can be respected, all teachers must be, so that the arts, music, and physical education can gain respect too. This may be facilitated by adopting Finland's approach to how future teachers are educated; or it could be attained by developing some other model that relieves educational funding from being a political football. Making it mandatory for teachers to obtain a Masters degree could increase the performance level of teachers, which may mean better instruction for the students. If not, then perhaps teacher training needs to be reassessed with the aim of building curricula that gives art instruction a valuable role. In addition, there needs to be a national budget for all schools in the United States instead of state and local budgets, which will help support art programs in schools. It is important that the government, both state and national protect education from cuts. As national and state education budgets are cut, studies show programs like art and music are the first to be eliminated, as I explained in my literature review. Furthermore, this study supports the importance of art advocacy. Art educators in the United States must always have a strong advocacy plan that can help fight against cuts to their

programs. Art educators must also form relationships with their local and state politicians, because politicians can help to vote down policies that harm the arts or to vote for policies that can help the arts.

Interviewing art educators from Finland was, for me, a complex but ultimately enlightening experience. For example, I gained knowledge about the procedures of conducting human-based research. By participating in the IRB process, I was able to learn the intense process of creating consent a form, passing the IRB course, and obtaining approval from the IRB committee. Even more, I learned about the ethics of conducting human-based research. Experiencing this process will help me be more familiar with this process in future Human-based research.

Overall, I wanted to see if educators in Finland, which does not rely on standardized testing, perceived a difference in the way art education is valued. My interviews revealed that this is not necessarily the case. My study has shown that even in a unique educational system like Finland's, the arts will always need strong advocates to fight for it because the arts will always be threatened with cuts whether it be to hours, funding or cutting full programs. Art educators have much more respect in Finland than in the United States, but there is also room for improvement as well. In addition, this study has shown that a country does not have to rely on standardized testing and on the practice of treating schools like businesses to be successful globally. It is important to treat teachers with the respect that they deserve, possibly by to increasing their education to a Master's degree before they can be qualified to obtain a teaching position. Unfortunately, this study did not reveal whether the inclusion of the arts in Finland's educational system has played a role in the global success of the Finnish educational system. It will require more in depth research to establish that connection.

I entered this project with the perception that the *Folk School* tradition may have shaped the nature of schooling in Finland, based upon the similar noncompetitive methods used in *Folk Schools* and in Finland, but I found that this line of inquiry is not part of the common discourse among art educators there. It is not apparent why these respondents did not see a connection between *Folk School* and Finland's noncompetitive strategy to education. They shared no information to discredit this idea, so this question would merit further research in the future. Overall, this study answered important questions. Had there been more participation from Finnish art educators, the results might have been different or maybe not. Still, there was something to learn from the informants who did choose to participate.

This study reinforced my idea that the expert voices of general teachers and art educators must be integrated into the decision making process if there are to be real changes to the United States educational system. In Tom Anderson's (2000) *Real lives: Art Teachers and the Culture of School*, there are realistic descriptions of six art teachers in the United States. Anderson investigates their triumphs and struggles in the world of education. For example, Gayla Buyukas, an art teacher at David Douglas High School in Portland, Oregon shared has several aspects of her job that are appealing and other aspects that make her job difficult. An appealing aspect of her job was that her class size was small and her school had multiple art teachers, which allowed her to teach other classes such as jewelry and graphic design. She explained that a downside to her job "is that reading, writing, and arithmetic are still considered the core classes. To keep the art classes alive, she must design her art lessons to support these core classes" (Stokrocki, 2005, p. 382).

Research such as this, can help others to see the struggles of art teachers from their own perspective. Furthermore, this study has taught me the importance of corresponding with other

art teachers. One venue that I want to acknowledge that helped me achieve this study and contact other art educator abroad was InSEA. Through this valuable resource I was able to engage in a dialogue with international art educators on their perceptions.

Through this research I have discovered more topics and questions I hope to investigate further in the future. For example, I am interested in the topic of Homogeneous populations versus diverse populations and how that affects education. I also want to pursue further the connection between *Folk School* and the Finnish noncompetitive style of education. I would also like to investigate the difference between having a general teacher that teaches art versus an art teacher. It is important to do more research into the successful countries that rely on standardized testing, but also have emotional consequences for students. Looking further into these topics will benefit the educational system in the United States and around the world.

I am passionate about the research I have done for this thesis because I believe in educating the whole student; I believe in educating the mind and heart of the students. I also believe in access to equitable education. I truly believe that schools which value the arts develop strong, independent, and critically thinking students who will be responsible global citizens. All students in America deserve the type of education that students in Finland are getting, which is a noncompetitive inclusive education that values the arts. I feel that if the non-competitive method used by Finland could be adopted in the United States there would be a beneficial outcome. Even adopting a difference in attitude toward education and the arts could result in younger generations developing would develop for the better. Lastly, this study has helped reveal to me, as a researcher, that dichotomies at the beginning of research are not as valid once the issue is investigated. At the beginning of my research I had obtained strong opinions about art education in Finland, believing it was superior to art education in the United States. In the end, my study

found that my opinion about the art education in Finland was not valid once it was examined. Both educational systems have aspects of educational policies and methods that affect art education positively and negatively.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Consent Form

Georgia State University

Department of Art Education

Informed Consent

Title: Art Education in Finland and United States: A Qualitative inquiry into Teacher Perceptions

Principal Investigator: Melanie Davenport (Advisor)

Lauren Knight (Student)

I. Purpose:

You are invited to participate in a research study. The purpose of the study is to investigate how standardized testing affects art education. In addition it will compare the United States educational system to the Finnish educational system. You are invited to participate because you are living in Finland and have knowledge of Finland's educational system. A total of 2 participants will be recruited for this study. Participation will require two hours of your time over two months of March and April.

II. Procedures:

If you decide to participate, you will participate in interviews via email and phone. The only person you will talk to is with me. The interviews will take place at the convenience of interviewee. I will only need one telephone interview. The subject will only have to spend a maximum of 20 to 30 minutes responding to emails or 1 hour for an interview.

III. Risks:

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

IV. Benefits:

Participation in this study may benefit you personally, because it will highlight some of the accomplishments of the Finnish school system and offer comparisons to art education in the United States, which you could share with others or investigate further. Overall, we hope to gain insights into art education in the United States and offer implications derived from this comparative study.

V. Voluntary Participation and Withdrawal:

Participation in research is voluntary. You do not have to be in this study. If you decide to be in the study and change your mind, you have the right to drop out at any time. You may skip questions or stop participating at any time. Whatever you decide, you will not lose any benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

VI. Confidentiality:

We will keep your records private to the extent allowed by law. Melanie Davenport and Lauren Knight 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 your Initials rather than your name on study records. The information you provide will be tape-recorded and transcribed for coding.

Afterwards, the tapes will be destroyed. All data will be stored in a locked drawer. Your name and other facts that might point to you will not appear when we present this study or publish its results without your consent. You will not be identified personally, without your consent.

VII. Contact Persons:

Contact Melanie Davenport and Lauren Knight at 562-413-0605 or lknight707@yahoo.com 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 for this research and be audio recorded, please sign below.

Participant

Date

Principal Investigator or Researcher Obtaining Consent

Date

Appendix B*Participant 1: Questionnaire 1*

Name: _____

(Names of participants will only be revealed with prior permission, otherwise pseudonyms will be used. Your name is requested only for purposes of my record-keeping)

Please indicate your current or most recent professional status: (check all that apply)

- Early Childhood Art Teacher
 - Elementary Art Teacher
 - Middle Years Art Teacher
 - High School Art Teacher
 - University Studio Instructor
 - University Art Education Instructor
 - Teacher Certification Administrator
 - Graduate Student in Art Education
 - Graduate of Finnish Public School Art Program
 - Museum or Community-based Art Educator
 - School Administrator
 - Other:
-

Please indicate number of years involved in the field of Art Education:

- 0 - 3 4 - 8 8 - 15 15 - 25 more than 25

Please indicate which circumstances may have provided you the opportunity to become familiar with Art Education in the United States?

- Study Abroad Program (Please indicate duration): _____
- Lived in US as a child who experienced art instruction in school (Please indicate duration): _____
- Lived in the US as an adult with children who experienced art instruction in public schools (Please indicate duration): _____
- Taught in US public schools: ____Elementary ____ Middle ____High (Please indicate duration): _____
- Studied Art Education in US post-secondary institution. Where?

- Taught Art Education in US post-secondary institution. Where?

- Attend US or International conferences and/or subscribe to professional journals (indicate which?): _____
- Conducted research into Art Education in the US
- Other: _____

Please share your perceptions of how art education in the US and Finland differs on issues such as funding, testing, and competitiveness.

Think about a time when you felt proud of the art education profession in Finland.

Pasi Sahlberg states that there are no comparisons, rankings or competition between regions, schools or students. This can be connected to the idea of folk schools. What are your perceptions of folk schools and their affect on the current educational systems non-competitive strategy?

According to research, the arts are interwoven through the entire Finnish education system and hold the same value as other subjects. In your opinion, has the inclusion of the arts in school-helped contribute to Finland's global educational success?

According to an article in Yle, there was a peaceful demonstration in Finland protesting the "elimination of teaching art in the country's second most populous municipality outside of the Helsinki metropolitan area" (Yle, 2013, p. 1). What was the outcome? Have there been any other challenges that have been a hindrance to art education in Finland?

May I follow up with you via telephone or Internet?

Appendix C

Participant 1: Questionnaire 2

Why do you think Finland “has changed towards the educational system of West Europe and the U.S., when facts show that the non-competitive style of education is working, especially when you compare the PISA test scores globally?

Where do the immigrants seem to originate?

Can you explain the causes for the racial divide in Finland and how it is affecting art education?

You explained that some “people see the Guggenheim project as a threat for Finnish culture”. What type of art is being shown to cause this uproar?

Are these racial issues being exposed in schools, in an effort to stop the vandalism of the museum? What efforts have been used to prevent the vandalism of the art museum?

Please explain art advocacy efforts in Finland? Is art education being linked (which you explained as being the key words of today) to innovations, new industry and increasing production, and new jobs for people in Finland?

Where do the cuts happen in the museums?

Do museums form relationships with the schools to promote art education?

Appendix D

Participant 2: Questionnaire 1

Name: _____

(Names of participants will only be revealed with prior permission, otherwise pseudonyms will be used. Your name is requested only for purposes of my record-keeping)

Please indicate your current or most recent professional status: (check all that apply)

- Early Childhood Art Teacher
 - Elementary Art Teacher
 - Middle Years Art Teacher
 - High School Art Teacher
 - University Studio Instructor
 - University Art Education Instructor
 - Teacher Certification Administrator
 - Graduate Student in Art Education
 - Graduate of Finnish Public School Art Program
 - Museum or Community-based Art Educator
 - School Administrator
 - Other:
-

Please indicate number of years involved in the field of Art Education:

- 0 - 3 4 - 8 8 - 15 15 - 25 more than 25

Please indicate which circumstances may have provided you the opportunity to become familiar with Art Education in the United States?

- Study Abroad Program (Please indicate duration): _____
- Lived in US as a child who experienced art instruction in school (Please indicate duration): _____
- Lived in the US as an adult with children who experienced art instruction in public schools (Please indicate duration): _____
- Taught in US public schools: ___Elementary ___Middle ___High (Please indicate duration): _____
- Studied Art Education in US post-secondary institution. Where?

- Taught Art Education in US post-secondary institution. Where?

- Attend US or International conferences and/or subscribe to professional journals (indicate which?): _____
- Conducted research into Art Education in the US
- Other: _____

Please share your perceptions of how art education in the US and Finland differs on issues such as funding, testing, and competitiveness.

Think about a time when you felt proud of the art education profession in Finland.

Pasi Sahlberg states that there are no comparisons, rankings or competition between regions, schools or students. This can be connected to the idea of folk schools. What are your perceptions of folk schools and their affect on the current educational systems non-competitive strategy?

According to research, the arts are interwoven through the entire Finnish education system and hold the same value as other subjects. In your opinion, has the inclusion of the arts in school-helped contribute to Finland's global educational success?

According to an article in Yle, there was a peaceful demonstration in Finland protesting the "elimination of teaching art in the country's second most populous municipality outside of the Helsinki metropolitan area" (Yle, 2013, p. 1). What was the outcome? Have there been any other challenges that have been a hindrance to art education in Finland?

May I follow up with you via telephone or Internet?