

JACE

— VOLUME 6 | NUMBER 1 | 2012 —

Journal Artistic^{of} Creative Education.

VOLUME 6 | NUMBER 1 | 2012

Journal of Artistic ∅ Creative Education.

VOLUME 6 | NUMBER 1 | 2012

The Journal of Artistic and Creative Education (JACE) is an on-line journal that can be accessed at jaceonline.com.au

JACE is a peer-reviewed journal published twice each year that explores issues of artistry and creativity in contemporary research and teaching, and the interface between them. The journal seeks to promote praxis, to provide an evidence-based bridge between arts and artistic practice, creative practices in educational contexts, and learning research and theory in all these areas.

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ISSN: 1832 - 0465

Published in Australia

Publisher: Melbourne Graduate School of Education,
© University of Melbourne 2012

University of Melbourne, Parkville, Victoria 3010.

JACE is peer reviewed as per section 4.3.4 of the HERDC Specifications.

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EDITORIAL:

ADDRESSING THE SUBJECTIVE THROUGH ARTS EDUCATION

Wesley Imms

University of Melbourne

Welcome to the first issue of JACE for 2012. In keeping with an established trend for this journal, articles in this issue present an international conversation about creative approaches to arts and education.

Jacqui Cartlidge from the UK challenges us to reconceptualise how we address adult learning. Cartlidge begins by first framing for us an arts-based methodology, then providing an example of this 'in action'. Central to this work is the recognition that the arts are a mechanism used by not only youth to create, explore and examine personal identity: adults also wish to examine their world and their sense of 'self' through learning. An ideal, and she argues underutilised, approach is to reach such understanding through juxtaposition of biography and auto-biography; and non-fiction and fiction. For those of us who glean personal meaning through literature, poetry and film, Cartlidge's work helps us consider a similar impact when utilised in the adult classroom.

How do we assess the aesthetic? This perennial question for arts educators finds a measure of explanation in Rachael Jacob's nicely crafted article. An Australian educator, Jacobs explores the role of the teacher when assessing secondary student drama performances within that country's curriculum. Embedded in this discussion lies the issue of the importance of the subjective in education. Long derided as having little educative value, Jacobs unpacks a standard drama assessment task to nicely argue the contrary: subjective meaning is a cornerstone of personalised learning, and arts teachers (in this case, a number of drama teachers) model exemplary practice of this technique.

Eva Österlind from Sweden continues Jacob's discussion further. Also a drama educator, and similarly interested in issues of the subjective when working with students in drama, Österlind explores issue of emotion when working with, and assessing, students' aesthetical texts in drama education. The article provides a degree of triangulation on this topic by unpacking three learning strategies, and examining how each accounts for the emotional element in student works that are, by necessity, highly personal. Core to her discussion is the role of the teacher. Not unlike Jacobs, Österlind advocates multiple pedagogies that allow 'holistic, multifaceted' learning to occur. Her article provides welcome evidence of how arts education channels emotional energy into meaningful learning for students.

William Stimson from Taiwan utilises Carlson's Law to argue not only the value of the creative in education generally, but also its use as a mechanism to 'teach' creativity itself. This paper is highly informative; it uses as its core evidence experiences from a university subject where Carlson's Law allows students to develop understanding of 'the self' through dream analysis. Stimson is critical of a perceived established acceptance of educational innovation occurring only from the top down. In contrast, Stimson makes the point that the most meaningful learning an individual might experience comes instead from within, from 'the bottom up'. Dream analysis facilitates such learning, he argues. This approach mirrors classic models of creative practice, and carries profound implications for developing meaning - in a subjective manner.

Ottavia, Enkhbold Chuluunbaatar, Shiann-Far Kung and Ding-Bang Luh, from Taiwan and Mongolia, provide a quite different view of creativity and education. In full contrast to Stimson, the authors focus on how leadership style impacts creative climates in universities. In an age when multi-disciplinary approaches to education, business, and innovation are widely advocated, we are constantly being made aware of seeming chasms of understanding between the disciplines. The authors undertake the challenging but immensely worthwhile task of assessing what these chasms might be in regard to creativity. Their study of how quite disparate silos of knowledge view the notion of creativity is of immense value. However, the principal focus here is on how creativity is facilitated, and in this discussion very useful parallels and contrasts to the previous papers in this issue are found.

Each paper in this issue has, either explicitly or covertly, focused on the individual and the subjective in education. In Cartlidge's work, this was in reference to methods for utilising personal narrative when helping adults understand their world. For Jacobs, it was in terms of exploring how personalised experiences, presented through students' aesthetic texts in secondary drama, are accommodated by teachers. Österlind explored a similar concept, with similar students, but in terms of accounting for and utilising the 'emotional' within the curriculum. Stimson entered the highly personalised world of

dream analysis, and the final paper – in contrast, but with similar results – quantitatively analysed the impact on the individual of leadership style and disciplinary climates in a university. This has proved to be an enlightening issue for JACE, one that broadens our concept of the individual, the subjective, and creativity in education.

UNDERSTANDING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN DISCIPLINARY CULTURES, LEADERSHIP STYLES, AND ‘CREATIVITY CLIMATES’ IN THE UNIVERSITY SETTING

Ottavia

Enkhbold Chuluunbaatar

Shiann-Far Kung

Ding-Bang Luh

*Ottavia, Shiann-Far Kung, and Ding-Bang Luh are affiliated with
National Cheng Kung University, Tainan, Taiwan*

*Enkhbold Chuluunbaatar is affiliated with
Institute of Finance and Economics, Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia*

Ottavia, Ph.D. is a postdoctoral research fellow in the Institute of Creative Industries Design, at the National Cheng Kung University in Taiwan. She is also the managing editor of the International Journal of Cultural and Creative Industries. Her research interests include organizational behavior, service design, capital investment, and creative industries investigation.”Enkhbold Chuluunbaatar is a lecturer in the Institute of Creative Industry Design, National Cheng Kung University (NCKU) in Taiwan. His research interests include entrepreneurship, culture and creativity, and creative industries investigation.

Enkhbold Chuluunbaatar, Ph.D. is Assistant Professor in the Department of Business Administration at the Institute of Finance and Economics in Mongolia. His research interests include entrepreneurship, culture and creativity, and creative industries investigation.

Shiann-Far Kung, Ph.D. is Associate Professor in the Department of Urban Planning at the National Cheng Kung University in Taiwan. His research interests include spatial planning, science park development, and creative industries investigation.”Ding-Bang Luh, Ph.D. is an Associate Professor in the Department of Industrial Design, National Cheng Kung University (NCKU) in Taiwan. His research interests include entrepreneurship, creative industries investigation, service design, and design education.

Ding-Bang Luh is a professor who just completed his term as chairpersons of Department of Industrial Design and Institute of Creative Industries Design, National Cheng Kung University, Taiwan. Currently, he is writing a book on Taiwan design development and serves as consultant for various institutes, including National Science and Technology Museum, Foundation of Historic City Conservation and Regeneration, Industry Bureau and Department of Commerce, Ministry of Economic Affairs, among others. His research interests include design management, industrial investigation, design methodology, and co-creation studies.

ABSTRACT

This quantitative study used the perspective of students from three disciplinary cultures to analyse the influence of leadership style on the creativity climate in learning processes. The results showed the role leadership has in establishing the creativity climate, is proven to vary among different disciplinary cultures, with more dominance found in the engineering discipline than in business and design. Engineering students perceived task-oriented leadership to have a higher influence on the creativity climate than relationship-oriented leadership, while the business and design students perceived otherwise. All disciplinary cultures shared similarities and differences in regard to the importance placed upon the creativity climate elements. All cultures perceived trust, openness and idea support as important, whilst conflict was perceived as a blunder. Engineering students prioritised challenge, involvement, and openness, while business students prioritised risk-taking, challenge, and debate. For design students, humour, flexibility, and debate are vital to the creativity climate. Therefore, this study provides insights for managing multidisciplinary collaborations from a disciplinary culture perspective.

INTRODUCTION

The development of a 'disciplinary culture' concept owes immensely to anthropology, psychology, sociology and organizational study. Just as the rise of Japanese corporations, with their unique cultural entity, triggered organizational culture studies (Harrison & Carroll, 2006; Ouchi, 1981), the scientific revolution made it possible for distinctive disciplines to emerge as new fields of study and claim their disciplinary identities and independency (Koblitz, 2008; Snow, 1964). One of these emerging new fields of study is disciplinary culture. Disciplinary culture posits that every discipline evolves through its own history, and consists of its own distinct characteristics; hence it comprises its own culture. "Studies of academe suggest that each discipline has its own culture with distinctive qualities and characteristics" (Moser, 2007, p. 241). Political theorist James Q. Wilson described the characteristics of organizational culture as "culture to an organization, what personality is to an individual" (Wilson, 1989, p. 91).

If disciplines are the metaphor of organizations which have their own value systems and beliefs, each discipline should possess its own distinctive characteristics; the disciplinary culture. Consequently, members from different disciplinary cultures will have their own ways of being, seeing, interpreting, behaving and thinking; they will perceive and judge their external surroundings based on the cognitive style, attitudes, and internalized values and norms carried from their respective disciplines (Haley & Sidanius, 2005; Kemmelmeier, Danielson, & Basten, 2005; Windolf, 1995). In a situation where a group of people from varying backgrounds, who have similar value systems and characteristics, work together, the working situations are relatively manageable. However, when interdisciplinary collaboration occurs that is said to enhance creativity (Mamykina, Candy, & Edmonds, 2002; Singh & Fleming, 2010), partnerships and teamwork among members from different disciplinary cultures are more likely to form. While interdisciplinary collaboration has been seen as the oasis for creativity, there is an issue concerning how members from various disciplinary cultures with different value systems will be managed to achieve optimal collaboration.

Previous studies have found that leadership (Amabile, Conti, Coon, Lazenby, & Herron, 1996; Schein, 2004; Shalley & Gilson, 2004) and climate (Amabile, 1988; Amabile, et al., 1996; Cummings, 1965; Ekvall, 1999; Isaksen & Ekvall, 2010; Kanter, 1983; Scott, 1965) are the important supporting factors of organizational creativity. Leaders are concerned with how to establish the climate and facilitate members - this is often facilitated by having individuals from diverse disciplinary cultures generate ideas. Group members are concerned with the way they are being led and the climate they are working in (Hemlin, 2009). What kind of climate and leadership styles are applied and whether these align with members' expectations will affect the creativity and innovation of the organization. Therefore, understanding how members from different disciplinary cultures perceive leadership and climate is important to excel the creativity of an organization.

Even though the importance of organizational creativity has been acknowledged and the role that leadership plays in establishing the organizational climate has been widely studied, what has not been explored are the perceptions of members from different disciplinary cultures on leadership and creativity climates. This research intends to fill a gap in such knowledge, by examining how members from different disciplinary cultures perceive leadership and creativity climates. Students from three disciplinary cultures (engineering, design, and business) were taken as participants of this analytical study from a cultural perspective. This study used the perspectives of members from different disciplinary cultures, who possess their own value systems and standards, and investigated their views on how they thought they were being led, including what factors they consider to be crucial in the formation of creativity climates. This study explores disciplinary culture and retrieves insightful interpretations of the hidden meanings, ideas, and values that members of each discipline unconsciously hold.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Engineering, Design, and Business: Three different ‘small worlds’

This study analysed three disciplines – engineering, business, and design. Students from these disciplines differ from one another in terms of the values and norms embedded in their respective disciplinary culture. Through educational socialization and disciplinary trainings, these shared values and norms (culture) are internalized in the students’ minds and actively shape their cognitive style, attitudes, behaviours, and academic skills which are required to survive in their respective disciplines, or “small worlds” (Bourdieu, 1984; Dressen-Hammouda, 2008). These common properties of disciplinary knowledge and practice are then shared, imbued, and transferred to the next generation as the evolving culture of the disciplines.

To further illustrate, students from engineering culture tend to face well-defined problem spaces in their world of engineering. Therefore, the education in engineering trains students to utilize the existing resources, solve problems and think in convergent ways (Dressen-Hammouda, 2008; Williamson, 2010). Efficiency and procedural thinking assist engineering students to face the problem and shortcuts are preferred. They have their own language which often is perceived as technical and confusing by people from other disciplinary cultures (Crawford, 2002). According to Crawford (2002), they need to have the ability to mentally simulate solutions to a problem, predict the possible outcomes, and mitigate the potential risks beforehand. Since the problem and procedures are clear, making mistakes are perceived as failure. Engineering values highly feasibility; which is embedded in their minds as questions like “Is it doable? Is it reliable?” By following the rules and procedures, one is more able to secure their position in this field.

By comparison, designers tend to face ill-defined problems; problems are general and broad with a relatively limited amount of information. Facing these problem characteristics requires designers to think skilfully in divergent ways (Dressen-Hammouda, 2008; Williamson, 2010), to confine the problems and generate as many alternatives to find the matching solutions. Moreover, interpretation and value judgment of the target audience are important parts of the design process (Crawford, 2002). Since the nature of problem itself is not clear in the field of design, trial-and-error is a common practice; making mistakes is acceptable, sometimes even encouraged, in the process. Designers highly value aesthetics and uniqueness; something which has not existed before, even though it might be technologically-challenged (Crawford, 2002). Their tools include inexhaustible imagination and intuition, thus thinking in procedures is seen as following the existing solutions, hence hindering the production of original work. Originality is valued over efficiency (Crawford, 2002); the norm instils designers with questions like “Is it authentic? Is it aesthetic?” Bringing unique values secures positions in this field.

Business is in between engineering and design. The nature of problems varies, and people in this field tend to face both well-defined and ill-defined problems at the same time. There might be ready-made guidelines, however, the applications of solutions are context-dependent. They have to take into account as many situational factors as possible to mitigate the potential risks under uncertainty and vague information but, at the same time, come up with a limited number of workable solutions that are feasible, effective, and efficient yet novel. Solutions should comply with market demand and, simultaneously, satisfy business objectives.

From the illustrations above, the characteristics of the three ‘small worlds’ of engineering, design, and business are represented in their distinctive shared value systems, objectives, ontology, epistemology, and methodology shaping the norm and values of their disciplinary members. Their ways of being, seeing, interpreting, behaving and thinking reflect their unique disciplinary cultures.

Leadership style

The following study employed the leadership style approach (Blake & McCanse, 1991; Blake & Mouton, 1978, 1985; Stogdill, 1963) that has been theorised since the field was established decades ago. In this approach, the followers evaluate their leader and one's leadership qualities through one's actual actions and behaviours in the organizational setting (Northouse, 2007). Unlike other theories which focuses more on leaders, their personality traits and skill inventory, this approach was made based on member's observation on leader's overt behaviour which is more visible to evaluate. A style approach to leadership enables attainment of organizational goals through the combination of the following two dimensions:

1. Task-oriented leadership – leader's behaviours which emphasize production and effectiveness; the leader takes the necessary measures to help organization members to finish their tasks and accomplish their objectives;
2. Relationship-oriented leadership – leader's behaviours which emphasize people and relationship atmosphere; the leader takes the necessary measures to help organization members to feel comfortable with organizational environment, other members, and themselves (Northouse, 2007).

Creativity Climate

Creativity research is most commonly categorized using the “three P's” typology of creativity: Person, Process and Place (Basadur, Beuk, & Monllor, 2010; Runco, 2007b). The interplay of these three driving force is, to a certain extent, dependent on creativity climate. “The climate is a manifestation of the total dynamics of the organization... mental state of the organization” (Elkvall, 1999, p. 412). Climate is seen as a facilitator which affects the psychology in the organization and, consequently, influences the overall performance and well-being of the members in the organization (Burke & Litwin, 1992; Koene, Vogelaar, & Soeters, 2002). Part of managing for creativity

and innovation is creating the appropriate climate so that people can share and build upon each other's ideas and suggestions (Isaksen & Ekvall, 2010).

The early contributions towards the relationship between organizational climate and creativity were made around the 1960's (Cummings, 1965; Scott, 1965). Kanter (1983) applied a qualitative approach using case studies to study innovation. The research results on innovation was culminated in a book titled *The Change Masters* (Kanter, 1983). Contrary to Kanter's work, Amabile and her colleagues assessed the working environment for creativity using a quantitative approach (McLean, 2005). Amabile (1988) identified the factors that promoted creativity by studying a group of 120 innovators working in R&D departments. Furthermore, Amabile and her colleagues have developed and validated an instrument called KEYS in order to assess the Climate for Creativity that was specifically designed for assessing the work environment for creativity (Amabile, et al., 1996). The significant development of creativity climate measurement was by Ekvall, starting from the 1980s (Ekvall, 1996). His work has been extended and developed into a Situational Outlook Questionnaire (SOQ) (Isaksen & Ekvall, 2010; Isaksen & Lauer, 2001, 2002). SOQ defines nine dimensions of creativity climate as "Challenge and involvement", "Freedom", "Trust and openness", "Idea time", "Playfulness and humour", "Conflict", "Idea support", "Debate", "Risk-taking" (Isaksen, 2007; Isaksen & Ekvall, 2010; Isaksen & Lauer, 1999, 2002).

The interplay among leadership, creativity climate, and disciplinary culture

A great number of factors have been found to influence the climate in an organization, among which leadership plays a critical role. The importance of leadership has been seen as crucial in the setting of climate. Leadership takes into account approximately 40%-80% of variance in the formation of organization climate (Ekvall & Ryhammar, 1998). Inefficient leadership will create a consequently non-conducive climate which, at the end, will affect the overall performance in an organization (Ekvall & Ryhammar, 1998; Håkonsson, 2006). Moreover, leaders' behaviours have a big

influence on organization member's perception toward the overall climate of the organization, including creativity climate (Isaksen & Lauer, 2002). Leaders are also the ones who hold the resources and designate the roles and responsibilities of organization members (Redmond, Mumford, & Teach, 1993), therefore the role of leaders is crucial in the establishment of creativity climates.

Different leadership styles, to some degree, may influence the creativity climate. The relationship-orientated group, in which the group's leader actively encourages members to take an innovative approach to develop themselves, was found to outperform the other reward-driven group (task-oriented) in terms of creativity (Jung, 2000-2001; Sosik, Kahai, & Avolio, 1998). However, to some extent, rewards for creative ideas (task-oriented) are still necessary. In 1994, Basadur studied organizations in Japan and found that the manner good ideas are prized and rewarded, fosters an increased creativity climate (Runco, 2007a). These two contradictory findings raised the questions: which leadership style influences its member to perform within the organization and which sets the tone to encourage a creative climate within the organization?

When adding the disciplinary cultures with different cognitive styles, attitudes, and internalized values and norms into the formula, the issue of leadership and creativity climate become more complex. Previous cultural analyses have shown that members of different disciplinary backgrounds have different value systems and expectations within the same organization (Dressen-Hammouda, 2008; Ummenhofer et al., 2001). Following this logic, another question is raised: how do members of different disciplinary cultures perceive leadership styles and creativity climate?

Hence, this study explores the following research questions:

1. How do students from different disciplinary cultures perceive leadership style and its influence on creativity climate? Based on students' varying value systems and standards¹, would students prefer and expect different styles of leadership to establish the creativity climate in class?

2. How do students from different disciplinary cultures perceive the creativity climate itself? What are the most and the least important elements of creativity climates in respect to their disciplinary cultures?

METHODOLOGY

This quantitative study employed questionnaire as its main data collection tools and targeted university students from three different disciplines as participants. All participants were active students in undergraduate or graduate programs, enrolling in engineering, business, or design departments. Participants were approached formally in the classroom with the permission of the lecturers and were asked to evaluate the class-experience they had in that semester. There are three sections with a total of 34 questions in the survey, focusing on creativity climates and the lecturer's leadership behaviours in the classroom. In the first section, there were nine statements to evaluate the creativity climate in the classroom, adapted from SOQ (Ekvall, 1996; Isaksen & Ekvall, 2010; Isaksen & Lauer, 1999, 2002; Isaksen, Lauer, Ekvall, & Britz, 2000-2001). SOQ was used because of its reliability and validity. A Likert scale of 1 – 5 was used to express their level of agreement to each statement; “1” being the lowest (“strongly disagree”) to “5” being the highest (“strongly agree”). The second section consisted of 20 questions adapted from the Leadership Style Questionnaire (Northouse, 2007, p. 82) to assess the leadership style exercised by the lecturer in the class, who participants chose to evaluate. Students' evaluations focused on how often the lecturer of the class engaged in the described behaviour. The evaluation used a Likert scale of 1-5, whereby “1” referred to the least frequent (“Never”) and “5” referred to the highest (“Always”). Students were asked to provide demographic information about their gender, level of education, discipline major and age.

¹ Standards refer to the “value standards” students have, the benchmark of expectations

ANALYSIS

A total of 235 students participated in this survey; 125 female (53.19%) and 110 male (46.81%). 47.23% students were enrolled in undergraduate level and 52.77% were studying in graduate level courses (Master and Doctoral degrees). 27.66% of participants were in the engineering department, 27.23% were in the business department and 45.11% others were in the design department.

Table 1 *The demographic information of research participants*

| No. | Category | N | % |
|-----|------------------------|--------|-------|
| 1 | <i>Gender</i> | | |
| | Female | 125.00 | 53.19 |
| | Male | 110.00 | 46.81 |
| 2 | <i>Education level</i> | | |
| | Undergraduate | 111.00 | 47.23 |
| | Graduate | 124.00 | 52.77 |
| 3 | <i>Major</i> | | |
| | Engineering | 65.00 | 27.66 |
| | Business | 64.00 | 27.23 |
| | Design | 106.00 | 45.11 |
| 4 | <i>Age</i> | | |
| | 16 - 20 | 46.00 | 19.57 |
| | 21 - 25 | 119.00 | 50.64 |
| | 26 - 30 | 42.00 | 17.87 |
| | above 30 | 28.00 | 11.91 |

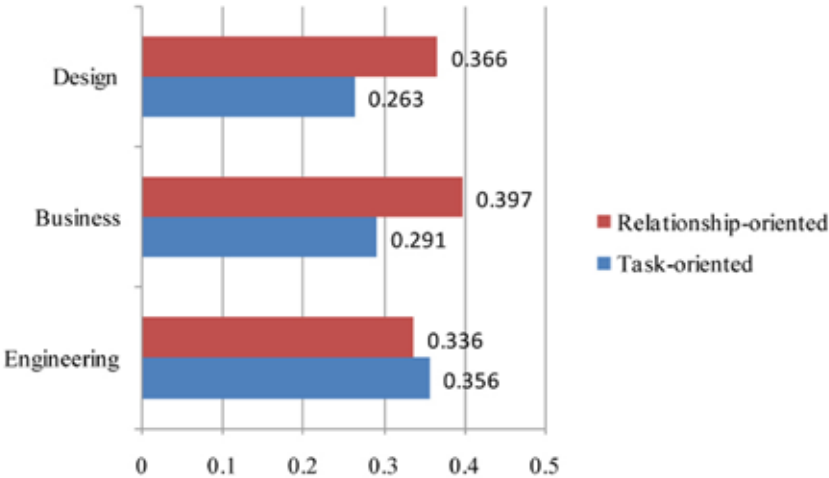
The data was split into three groups of disciplinary cultures (engineering, design, and business) and separate regression analyses were conducted to find the relationship between the leadership style and creativity climate in each disciplinary culture (Table 2). Gender was used as a control variable. It was found that leadership has a strong positive relationship to creativity climate in all disciplinary cultures, marked by the R^2 values greater than 0.1 and P^{value} less than 0.05 in all disciplines. However, the role of leadership in setting the creativity climate in different disciplinary cultures varies. Leadership was found to be more influential in the engineering culture ($R^2 = 0.272$), followed by the business culture ($R^2 = 0.254$) and the design culture ($R^2 = 0.200$).

Table 2 *Regression between leadership style and creativity climate*

| Independent Factors | Dependent Factor | | | | | |
|-----------------------|--------------------|-------|----------|-------|----------|-------|
| | Creativity Climate | | | | | |
| | Engineering | | Business | | Design | |
| | Beta | VIF | Beta | VIF | Beta | VIF |
| Gender | 0.350*** | 1.038 | 0.063 | 1.095 | -0.005 | 1.005 |
| <u>Leadership</u> | | | | | | |
| Task-oriented | 0.356*** | 1.031 | 0.291** | 1.034 | 0.263*** | 1.004 |
| Relationship-oriented | 0.336*** | 1.043 | 0.397*** | 1.079 | 0.366*** | 1.008 |
| R2 | 0.272 | | 0.254 | | 0.200 | |
| Adjusted R2 | 0.236 | | 0.216 | | 0.176 | |
| F value | 7.598*** | | 6.802*** | | 8.477*** | |
| P value | 0.000 | | 0.000 | | 0.000 | |
| D-W | 2.088 | | 2.614 | | 1.582 | |

In the engineering culture, the role of task-oriented leadership is almost equal to relationship-oriented leadership in terms of setting the creativity climate in class; task-oriented leadership ($\beta = 0.356^{***}$) was found to be slightly more influential than relationship-oriented leadership ($\beta = 0.336^{***}$). In the business culture, relationship-oriented leadership was found to be significantly more dominant than task-oriented leadership in terms of setting the creativity climate in the class, shown by the β of 0.397^{***} and 0.291^{**} respectively. The same tendency was found in the design culture, where relationship-oriented leadership ($\beta = 0.366^{***}$) was found to be more influential than task-oriented leadership ($\beta = 0.263^{***}$). Gender alone was not found to be a significant factor to the creativity climate. However, when being analyzed together with leadership factors, gender surprisingly matters in the establishment of a creativity climate ($\beta = 0.350^{***}$) in the engineering culture.

Figure 1. The role of relationship-oriented and task-oriented leadership in three disciplinary cultures



The results above illustrate that students from the engineering discipline have a different perception towards leadership style and its influence on the creativity climate, compared to students from the business and design disciplines. Engineering students tend to perceive task-oriented leadership styles to be more important than relationship-oriented leadership styles in setting the creativity climate in the class, while both business and design students have the tendency to put more importance on the role of relationship-oriented leadership than task-oriented leadership in their relations to the creativity climate. From these results, it can be inferred that engineering students put more importance on productivity and effectiveness while business and design cultures perceive people and relationship-oriented atmospheres to be more important. These findings have provided the evidence for research question 1, regarding how students from different disciplinary cultures perceive leadership style and its influence on the creativity climate.

When being asked about the priority of which elements are important in the creativity climate, students from different disciplinary cultures have different priorities in mind. The results are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3 *Disciplinary culture perspectives on creativity climate elements*

| No. | Creativity climate elements | Engineering | | Business | | Design | |
|--------------|-----------------------------|--------------|---------------|--------------|---------------|--------------|---------------|
| | | <i>Freq.</i> | % | <i>Freq.</i> | % | <i>Freq.</i> | % |
| 1 | Challenge & involvement | 17 | 26.15 | 12 | 18.75 | 3 | 2.83 |
| 2 | Freedom | 2 | 3.08 | 4 | 6.25 | 17 | 16.04 |
| 3 | Trust & openness | 16 | 24.62 | 7 | 10.94 | 21 | 19.81 |
| 4 | Idea time | 2 | 3.08 | 2 | 3.13 | 12 | 11.32 |
| 5 | Playfulness & humour | 4 | 6.15 | 4 | 6.25 | 19 | 17.92 |
| 6 | Conflict | 1 | 1.54 | 2 | 3.13 | 2 | 1.89 |
| 7 | Idea support | 16 | 24.62 | 9 | 14.06 | 16 | 15.09 |
| 8 | Debate | 5 | 7.69 | 11 | 17.19 | 13 | 12.26 |
| 9 | Risk-taking | 2 | 3.08 | 13 | 20.31 | 3 | 2.83 |
| Total | | 65 | 100.00 | 64 | 100.00 | 106 | 100.00 |

Students from the engineering culture tend to think that the most important elements in a creativity climate involves “challenge & involvement” (26.15%), “trust and openness” (24.62%), and “idea support” (24.62%).. In other words, in order to boost the creativity climate in this discipline, engineering students want to have a clear understanding of the objectives of the organization and expect direct involvement in daily operations to fulfil the goals and visions. It is also necessary to create a supportive atmosphere where people are free to express and share their thoughts or ideas. The least important elements of creativity climate were perceived to be “conflict” (1.54%), “freedom” (3.08%), “idea time” (3.08%), and “risk-taking” (3.08%).

From the business perspective, “risk-taking” (20.31%), “challenge & involvement” (18.75%), and “debate” (17.19%) are among the top important elements of creativity climate. Students from the business culture perceived the autonomy to take risks and make decisions outside the procedures as the way to set the climate of creativity and innovation. They also placed importance on direct involvement in day-to-day operations to achieve goals and to open discussions with other members for the best solutions in regards to the establishment of the creativity climate. The least important elements were perceived to be “conflict” (3.13%), “idea time” (3.13%), “playfulness & humour” (6.25%), and “freedom” (6.25%).

As for students from the design culture, they perceived “trust & openness” (19.81%), “playfulness & humour” (17.92%), “freedom” (16.04%), “idea support” (15.09%), “debate” (12.26%), and “idea time” as almost of equal importance. Design students placed high importance upon fun, flexible, and friendly atmosphere for discussion, open debate and sharing of ideas to boost creativity. In the design culture, there is the tendency that “conflict” (1.89%), “risk-taking” (2.83%), and “challenge & involvement” (2.83%) are viewed as the least important in setting the creativity climate.

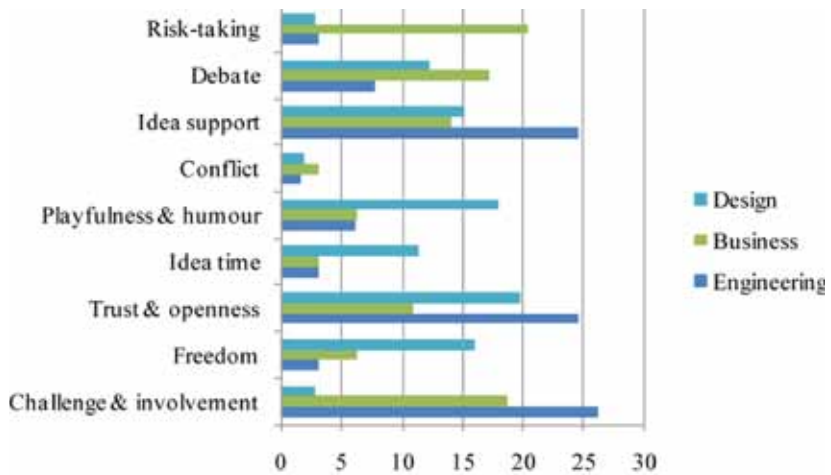


Figure 2. Comparison of creativity elements in three disciplinary cultures

All disciplines shared the perspective that “trust & openness” and “idea support” are important, while “conflict” was the least important with regards to the creativity climate. In contrast to the design culture, the business and engineering cultures share similar perspectives on “idea time” and “playfulness & humour”, perceiving them as not important in the creativity climate. It can be concluded that students from different disciplinary cultures share similarities and differences in perceiving elements of the creativity climate.. These results have demonstrated different preferences regarding the elements of the creativity climate from the perspective of students from different disciplinary cultures.

Most importantly, these preferences represent the nature of each disciplinary culture, reflecting their shared beliefs and fundamental principles which are embedded in the minds of their members. When choosing the most important element of the creativity climate, participants actually made decisions based on their belief and values. Hence, participants’ preferences symbolize the norms and values shared in their respective disciplinary cultures: flexibility, fun, support, and freedom in design culture; competitiveness, risk-taking, and challenge in business culture; consistency, involvement, team-work, and support in engineering culture.

CONCLUSIONS

This study showed that leadership has a strong and positive influence on the creativity climate. This finding added evidence to previous studies which state that leadership has a positive influence on the organizational climate in general (Ekvall & Ryhammar, 1998). When being analyzed into details, the role of leadership in setting the creativity climate varies among different disciplinary cultures, shown by different strengths of relationships between leadership style and the creativity climate in engineering ($R^2 = 0.272$), business ($R^2 = 0.254$), and design disciplines ($R^2 = 0.200$). Moreover, different leadership styles also affect the creativity climate. Task-oriented leadership has a bigger influence on the creativity climate than relationship-oriented leadership in the engineering culture, while in the business and design culture it was found otherwise. The results reflected the strong values of productivity and effectiveness in the engineering culture and the importance of people and relationship-oriented values in design and business cultures. Surprisingly, gender was found to be influential factor to the creativity climate only in the engineering culture, requiring further investigation.

Members of three disciplinary cultures shared similarities and differences when evaluating the importance of the creativity climate elements. In all disciplinary cultures, “trust & openness” and “idea support” are considered among the top priorities, and “conflict” as the least. Engineering students consider “challenge & involvement”, “trust & openness”, and “idea support” as priorities, whilst business students emphasized “risk-taking”, “challenge and involvement” and “debate”. On the other hand, design students place importance on “idea time”, “playfulness and humour” and “freedom”. Their preferences reflect the shared beliefs and basic assumptions in each disciplinary culture. Since participants had the freedom to prioritize creativity climate elements in relation to their disciplines, their judgments act as actual manifestations of their beliefs, norms, and values in their own disciplinary cultures. While the design culture values flexibility, fun, support, and freedom, the business culture recognizes competitiveness, risk-taking, and challenge as important values. The engineering culture perceives reliability, involvement, and support as essential requirements within its culture.

The contributions of this study are three-fold. First, the study has shown that there are differences among disciplines and those differences could represent their respective disciplinary cultures with their own unique values and expectations. Second, in the context of the creativity climate, preferences over leadership style in each disciplinary culture have been identified. There is also ample of evidence that illuminates the relationship between leadership styles and the creativity climate in each disciplinary culture. Evidently, this provides insight for better management of multidisciplinary teamwork situations and interdisciplinary collaboration. Third, this study attempted to apply a cultural perspective to leadership style and its influence on the creativity climate in different disciplines. The characteristics of the disciplinary cultures in engineering, business, and design have been identified in terms of leadership and the creativity climate elements. The preferences shown by members of each discipline reflect the beliefs, values, and hidden meanings of each discipline in symbolic ways. Therefore, this cultural perspective provides systematic ways to facilitate understanding discipline-specific cultures.

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EMOTIONS AESTHETICS EDUCATION

Eva Österlind

Stockholm University

Eva Österlind, drama pedagogue, Ph.D., is Associate Professor in Drama Education at Stockholm University. She has long experience of teaching drama in higher education, mainly teacher education. Her research focus is instructional design – especially form as content – and the potential of drama in education, in relation to students' social backgrounds. She initiated a Bachelor Program in Educational Drama at the University of Gävle, Sweden, and now works at Stockholm University, where she teaches at master level and tutors doctoral students. She is also interested in drama and leadership, Forum Theatre as a tool for active citizenship, and drama methods in teaching for sustainable development.

DILEMMAS RELATED TO STUDENTS' COMMITMENT IN EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

ABSTRACT

Emotions are seen as a driving force in students' learning, but students' involvement can also be problematic from a teaching perspective if the subject matter is upsetting in a negative way. When aesthetics are part of the teaching, it is more likely that emotional aspects are taken into account. Here, the emotional dimension of teaching will be addressed in connection with Education of Sustainable Development and Drama in Education. Three examples – a whole-class teaching event, an individual student's learning process and an example of process drama – are presented in order to discuss how different instructional designs affects the teacher's possibilities to address students' emotions. A conclusion is that emotionally-loaded subjects require an elaborated teaching strategy in order to develop deeper knowledge. When the teaching includes an aesthetic approach, like educational drama, emotions are not seen as a problem but as an integrated part of the whole.

“Somewhere between apathy and wild excitement, there is an optimum level of aroused attention that is ideal for classroom activity” (Bruner, 2003, p. 72). Emotional aspects are important for learning, as all kinds of learning require involvement. Students’ interests are often seen as a way to increase motivation. The way in which the complex matters of students’ interests and emotions are perceived and handled varies depending on the instructional design and forms of teaching. Learning in the aesthetic subjects can be characterised by refining the senses, recognition of the bodily aspects, integration of thoughts and feelings, and a more holistic approach. An assumption – maybe somewhat idealistic – is that arts-based teaching methods are more in touch with, and therefore better prepared to handle, the emotional dimension of teaching.

Now, it is too vague to talk about ‘aesthetics’ and ‘teaching’ without specifying what area of aesthetic expressions and what kind of teaching content. Here, this general teaching dimension will be addressed and exemplified by Drama in Education, especially Process Drama, and Education for Sustainable Development (ESD).¹ ESD has expanded from knowledge about species and ecosystems to include aspects of ethics and justice, and controversial questions with no ‘right answers’. Questions concerning students’ emotions might be extra significant in ESD, as values, dilemmas and potential threats are embedded in the content. “Children are often rather aware of the ecological crisis /.../ a common response to this is psychic numbing, a mild form of cognitive dissociation” (van Boeckel 2009, p. 145).

The less established body of knowledge and partly controversial content of ESD is referred to when arts-based educational methods are advocated. According to van Boeckel (2009), working with arts implicates an open-ended and experiential learning process which encompasses chaos, contradiction and ambiguity but also contributes to refined perception, openness and a sense of wonder. Drama is described as having a unique power to enhance lasting learning by involving the emotions of learners (Heyward 2010), and to potentially facilitate changes in habitual behaviour (E. Österlind, 2008b).

¹ A preliminary version of this paper was given at National Drama International Conference in Durham (E. Österlind, 2008a).

The intention is to exemplify and discuss how ‘the emotional dimension’, in this case students’ involvement in ESD, can become more or less problematic in relation to the instructional design. Three designs will be mentioned; whole-class teaching, individualised work and process drama. Very briefly, whole-class teaching is designed to manage and facilitate a collective learning situation while individualised instruction is designed to develop children’s ability to work separately and reflect on their own learning process (cf. E. Österlind, 1998). Process drama is designed to create a shared space of collective learning including facts, drama fiction and recurrent individual and collective reflection. For a more substantial presentation see for example Heathcote & Bolton (1995). Of course, every instructional design has both advantages and disadvantages depending on the specific aim and context. Also the individual teacher’s training, skills and personality affects the learning situation, but this aspect is not in focus here. Before going into the examples, ESD will be briefly introduced.

Education For Sustainable Development

Environmental education and related research have gone through some changes as regards focus and methods (Lundegård, 2007; Öhman, 2006). Initially, around 1970, the focus was on teaching facts, and positivistic educational research tried to measure the effects of environmental education in terms of correlations between knowledge and attitudes. From 1980 or so the education became normative, students being taught how to act in a proper way according to the environment. Hermeneutic research tried to understand implications and conditions for learning like social background, ethnicity and gender. Since 1990 the concept of environmental education has been challenged. Teaching is concerned about students’ ideas and experiences, and a conflict perspective is or should be present. Multifaceted research takes into account the complexity of knowledge, situated and depending on the context. Sustainability is seen as a political problem to be handled in democratic processes (Sandell, Öhman & Östman, 2003).

In ESD facts and values can hardly be seen as separate entities, and some researchers argue that “we have to attend to the value judgements before we can attend to the facts” (Lundegård & Wickman, 2007, p. 14). Læssøe (2010) points out a paradox in ESD where the ideal of participatory education might lead to a consensus-based perspective focussing on smaller problems and ‘comfortable’ solutions. There is a need to develop ESD towards working with “dilemmas, dissensus and deliberative communication” (Læssøe 2010, p. 54). Van Boeckel discusses how to “facilitate coping with the ecological calamities around us – both those that are manifest and those that are feared for...” (2009, p. 145). This makes ESD extremely unsettled and challenging for both teachers and students, compared to other, more traditional, school subjects.

In Sweden the national curriculum requests varying forms of instruction, and recent research points at the importance of dialogue and play in ESD, at least in primary school (Persson, 2008). An overview by the Swedish National Agency for School Improvement (SNASI 2005), reveals that Swedish students become familiar with social and environmental issues during their education from pre-school to adult education, but social, economic and ecological aspects are seldom linked to each other. Education about environmental issues is more common in pre-school and earlier years than in later years of comprehensive school or secondary education. The conclusion is that the concept of sustainable development is common but that so far it has not achieved great impact in schools.

In the Swedish overview several causes for this are presented. According to the teachers one reason is the growing emphasis on the core subjects, and increasing restlessness among students. Division into subject-specific courses hinders cross-subject teaching and a wider perspective including social and economic aspects. This leads to an emphasis on factual knowledge and reduces questions related to values, which in turn “causes the students to lose interest” (SNASI 2005, p. 16). The teachers also mention problems with progression and a lack of adequate further education. Taken together this can explain why students perceive ESD as repetitive. “[E]nvironment becomes ‘nagging’ and a certain ‘fatigue’ therefore arises in latter school years” (a.a. p. 17).

The overview gives the impression that ESD is being re-introduced several times during the school years, while students' interest and motivation slowly decreases. On the other hand, the students are described as committed when the teaching incorporates ethical issues and conflict perspectives, and the teachers are described as willing to develop progression and working methods suitable for collaboration between school subjects.

Emotional aspects in ESD – three examples

Research on learning and conceptual changes takes for granted that the student is motivated to learn, while research on student motivation and interests has been directed towards what it is that increases student involvement and activity (K. Österlind, 2005). Whether the student experiences the content as interesting and important or not have an impact on the student's attention, efforts and interpretation of the task. Students can lose their interest if the content seems to lack personal or social relevance. Emotional aspects like interest are supposed to increase the students' willingness to understand, and not just memorise, the content. Emotions are seen as a driving force in students' learning, but students' interests and involvement can also be problematic according to K. Österlind. Personal interests can narrow students' attention so that only some part of the content is taken into account, or draw attention away from the intended subject matter, and emotions like resistance can make students neglect a specific content or subject. A subject matter that catches students' attention can either lead to positive learning activities or lead to rejection if the subject matter is upsetting in a negative way (K. Österlind, 2006a).

In other words, emotional involvement is not always related to improved learning, as shown in two of the following three examples of different instructional designs in ESD.² The examples are chosen to illustrate the dimension between 'apathy and excitement' that

² 'Emotion' is a complex notion. Here I refer mainly to students' quite intense emotional expressions, considered as rather unusual in a classroom context.

Bruner identified, and allow a discussion of how the instructional design affects potential problems and solutions. All examples are from Swedish compulsory school, grade 6/7, 6 and 9, but still not truly comparable or matching, as for example the degree of teacher planning varies from more spontaneous teaching events to carefully designed projects as part of educational research. Two of the three examples are more problematic, while the third one, based on process drama, is more successful. Of course this does not mean that process drama always leads to success, or that it is impossible to find good examples of whole-class teaching events and individualized instruction. The following examples are chosen to emphasize a central dimension of teaching and learning which often has been neglected or even suppressed. I also want to shed light on the instructional design, one of the tools a teacher has access to, and how it interacts with the emotional dimension and the specific subject matter.

The first example, which is related to whole-class teaching of ESD, was presented on Swedish National Radio. A teacher in grade 6 and 7 tells the listeners how he and his colleagues noted that only some children were aware of climate change and other environmental problems while most of the students seemed ignorant or uninterested. In order to raise the students' consciousness the teachers made them see a film about the greenhouse effect.

'We brought up the environmental threat but the students didn't seem to care. So we gave all we got, explaining the severity of the situation. Afterwards, we realised that they had got the message a bit too well. Several students became very upset and rather quite scared about their future. How would they be able to survive? Would they ever grow old, would they ever have children? So we decided to change the direction of the project in order to have a more optimistic and practical approach – this is not written in stone, we are able to make a difference.' (Swedish National Radio, 2008-02-11, author's translation.)

Lessons about, for example, recycling made the children hopeful again says the teacher, who requests reliable guidelines on how to handle children's fear and anxiety related to environmental alarms.

This example illustrates that ESD can be challenging to both teachers and students. The teachers wanted to do something to get the students involved in questions about their future, which in fact is also the teachers' future. In order to do so they managed 'too well', the students got scared. Now, the teachers instead had to calm and reassure the students that the situation was not that serious. To do so the teachers turned to every day solutions like recycling. In a whole-class teaching situation like this, emotional reactions that occur can be fuelled by the fact that the whole class is together, and the group dynamics reinforces the individual responses. Another problem in this case is that the teachers intentionally aimed at provoking the students. The problem then is that the students did not have a choice, the message of the movie was so to speak thrown at them. And instead of going into the emerging fears and dilemmas the teachers put forward uncontroversial solutions, which is understandable but at the same time could be seen as 'oversimplifying' and a matter of regaining classroom control.

The second example is based on a case study about emotions related to ESD, conducted by K. Österlind (2006b). The explicit teaching design is labelled 'interdisciplinary group work', but as the students seem to work basically on their own and the teachers seem to be withdrawn, it is used here as an example of individualized work. In grade 9, a project about environmental issues to do with the Baltic Sea is going on for six weeks. The content is thematic, and the students are told to start with a question, seek information to answer it and come to a conclusion. They are supposed to discuss economic aspects, political aspects and the consequences of different solutions to the problem. A hard-working girl is described. She is one of a group of three students investigating effects on marine wildlife and what politicians do to reduce pollution and protect the animals. The student works on environmental effects on fish in the Baltic Sea. As she goes deeper into the subject her question changes. When she reads a text from a non-governmental organisation she becomes emotionally upset and her emerging question is 'Why don't politicians act up?' (K. Österlind, 2006b, p. 13, author's translation). Abandoning her work plan, the student makes a phone call to a

politician in order to gain more information but also to 'put him against the wall' (p. 16). This shift of focus is problematic, according to K. Österlind, as the student's learning about the original content is interrupted and her new question remains unanswered, while the student claims she 'almost got to him' (p. 15). The teachers seem unaware of what is going on. In this case, the researcher considers the students' involvement as problematic, because she does not learn the facts properly. From another perspective the main problem is that the students' strong reactions and arousing consciousness is not taken care of or 'cultivated' so that she can use her energy to continue the learning process and reflect on how to act. The student seems to be rather alone in this case, and without guidance her intense involvement may well lead to passivity and an 'I don't care'-attitude later on. This can be related to the instructional design, which leaves the students to work on their own (even though it was supposed to be a group task). Individualised work is often connected to 'low-level' tasks, like collecting facts about species, as opposed to higher-order tasks which are more demanding. To make the individualised work run smoothly the tasks need to be fairly un-complicated and possible to manage without guidance for most of the students. Open-ended tasks, problem-solving, debates et cetera are not suitable here, and a slightly distanced, intellectual approach seems to be expected. When some challenge occurs the student has neither peers nor the teacher to turn to.

The third example of ESD concerns process drama. McNaughton (2006) describes an action research project going on for a period of twelve weeks in two classes of Primary 7. Process drama about people living in a rainforest challenged by deforestation is integrated with 'ordinary' schoolwork on the same topic. Emotional aspects, reflections, acting and seeking knowledge are interwoven and framed by the fictional story. By role-playing, rituals and other drama techniques values and facts are integrated and the procedure offers closeness and distance. According to the teachers/observers, there is a high level of engagement and creativity. The children emphasise that they enjoyed working together. They became very involved in the story and in the end, when each student, in role, had to make the choice of leaving or staying in the rainforest, 'the

mood was electric' (a.a. p. 34). McNaughton concludes that drama activities give opportunities for children to develop cooperation and communication, to state and listen to opinions, and also to use higher-order skills like synthesis of ideas and information. In earlier work, McNaughton (2004) found drama useful to explore values, to develop sympathy and empathy, and to provide a meaningful context for learning in ESD. Here the use of aesthetic tools can be seen as allowing for exploring complex issues and facing dilemmas – without any given outcome or right answer. The shift between seeking factual knowledge and trying to understand from within by fictional experience provides a combination of closeness and distance that might be necessary to stay open in front of complicated problems and dilemmas. Process drama as such includes a variety of designs, from individual writing tasks to working in pairs or small groups, to whole-class debates, decision making and action. This variety in itself implicates that the leader has to reflect continuously during the process on which design to choose. Also, the students are consciously involved and emotions are seen as an integrated part, although, and this is important, the emotions are not 'given' but evolve, and the individual students are free and encouraged to express their personal response. Please note that this is the case when process drama is at its best. Many problems can occur, and do so in practice, but the design is flexible and includes the emotional dimension.

What can we learn from these examples? Lack of involvement can be a problem, as in the first case. When students' interest and motivation for an important question about the future seems to decrease, the teachers try to counteract this by arousing students' emotions, driven by a strong wish to 'do something about it'. This is an understandable reaction but it doesn't always work out well. Here, the feelings ran high as the students became frightened and pessimistic about the future – after being intentionally scared by their teachers. Intense involvement, as observed in the second case, can also be a problem. It doesn't necessarily increase the students' knowledge beyond a certain point. Another observation is that teachers' active presence is essential to guide and support students throughout their work process and ensure progress. It seems crucial that the students' can find ways to transform their involvement – going from reaction to action. Otherwise their initial commitment might turn into passivity or even despair. Creating tension is part of a conscious teaching strategy in

process drama, although in order to reach any deeper knowledge the students must be free to respond as they like. In the third case it seems obvious that the children were 'protected into emotion' (cf. Bolton, 1979) by a present teacher in a flexible position, a careful design and by the fictional context.

Students' anxiety and fear, increased by media or even by the teachers, can be a serious problem in connection with ESD. If problems and threats are in focus and solutions are not put forward, this could be a reason why students become passive or negative towards ESD. Strong emotional reactions as a response to new and frightening information can also hinder students from expanding their knowledge and reaching a deeper understanding, especially if the students are working without guidance. The three examples show that (a) incautious 'use' of students' emotions is an ethical problem, close to manipulation (b) in relation to climate threat and other alarming environmental problems many children get anxious, and perceived 'lack of interest' might be a psychological defence (c) emotionally-loaded subjects, like ESD, require a continuous exchange between teacher and students in order to contain worries, develop deeper knowledge and help students transform their commitment in ways that are positive and meaningful for them.

Aesthetic aspects of teaching – form as content

Subject content and how this content is organised and taught are often seen as two separate categories, but they can also be seen as two aspects of one phenomenon. The explicit content of the subject matter and the implicit content embedded in the instructional design are sometimes well matched but sometimes they seem to lack connection or are in contradiction with each other (cf. Jackson, 1968). This is a consequence of the fact that subject content and forms of teaching are not always considered simultaneously – which is a serious mistake according to Dewey (1999), who advocates a conscious choice of form, as well as content, to obtain better results from teaching.³

There is a need for content specific research on how different designs work in classroom practice, how they match the characteristics of the content and how they influence the students' learning. How is

the content moulded by the instructional design? Which experiences are offered to the students and which competencies are requested depending on the design? What do students, with varying experiences and social backgrounds, actually learn in relation to how a specific content is taught?

A meta-synthesis study of student achievement shows that the most influential factors are related to instructional designs (Sipe & Curlette, 1997). Marton and Morris (2002) state that what pupils can do is a result of their learning experiences, and that pupils' achievements are affected by what they actually experience or have the opportunity to experience.

‘When the teacher-pupil and the pupil-pupil interaction contribute to a rich shared space of variation, the pupils learn not only from the feedback related to what they say or do, but also from the feedback related to what other pupils say or do.’

(Marton & Morris, 2002 p. 140)

As teachers use several instructional designs, one could assume that all designs have both advantages and disadvantages depending on the situation, specific content, contextual factors – and on the teacher's previous education (cf. Berggraf Sæbø, 2009). Whole-class teaching has lost its dominance in favour of individualised learning, while educational drama and especially process drama is still very unusual in Swedish schools (see Österlind, 2008c). In this context educational drama is interesting because of its ‘democratic potential’ (cf. Sternudd, 2000), and its possibility to create ‘a rich shared space of variation’.

It is not uncommon to study and make statements about one specific instructional design. Earlier, such studies were often without references to specific subject content, to alternative designs or to contextual aspects of teaching. Individual instruction aims to develop children's ability to reflect on their own learning process, while whole-class teaching is based on a collective learning situation.

³ There is reason to believe that drama teachers possess certain awareness of content and form as interacting (un-separable) parts, which might improve the teaching process. Still, this needs to be investigated.

Process drama can provide both collective learning and individual reflection. Thus it would be interesting to study what process drama, compared to other designs, offer children through a work-process structure and to investigate the various implications related to each design, or in other words – to examine form as content (Österlind & Sternudd-Groth, 2005).

Implications for ESD – research and teaching

According to SNASI (2005) ‘working methods should be characterised by evaluation of which effects the choice of pedagogical methods and organisational forms have on the development of the learners’ (p. 20). So how can we, in this case, match the complex content and the emotional, value-loaded dimensions of ESD with appropriate forms of teaching – avoiding perception of the subject as repetitive and boring and avoiding frightening students by emphasising threats to the planet?

In individualised schoolwork emotional expressions are usually minimised, as the limited interplay takes place between the teacher and the individual student. This form of instruction often creates a quiet classroom, where students work on separate subjects and tasks in an office-like atmosphere. Emotional expressions are rare and facts usually come first. The teacher’s position is withdrawn. In traditional whole-class teaching the interplay can be more intense, strong reactions can occur in public discussions about burning issues and in a group facing unusual challenges, facts don’t always come first (cf. Emanuelsson & Sahlström, 2008). The teacher’s position is at the centre. In process drama everybody, including the teacher, explores something together. Conflicts, values, problem-solving and learning facts can be interwoven. It is a rhythmic interplay between exploring issues from inside, in role, and reflecting upon them from outside, out of role, and emotional expressions are not seen as a problem. Everyone works together within a common frame, and the teacher’s position varies. Still, the teacher is ‘in charge’ and responsible for the process.

It seems likely that a combination, with process drama linked to whole-class teaching and some individualised work, would have the best chance to match the challenging content of ESD – although this is an empirical question. Consequently, the theory and practice of process drama, appear particularly central (see Bolton, 1979 & 1992; O'Neill, 1995; O'Toole, 1992; Owens & Barber 2000). Taylor (1998) describes action research where students through process drama transform their learning process with positive results. Timms (1995) reports that process drama has the potential to develop children's meta-cognitive skills, while Stinson and Freebody (2006) refer to higher-order thinking processes. Studies also show that process drama makes the participants develop a rich understanding of the subject (Lindqvist, 1995; Warner & Andersen, 2004), and contributes to deeper learning (McNaughton 2004, 2006).

Normally, schools subjects consist of a well-established body of knowledge. ESD is odd in that it concerns a mixture of facts and fiction, unknown aspects of a close future. ESD content can be frightening, and some children are worried about the environment even before the teaching starts. For others, who become really upset by the new information, their involvement can be an obstacle to learning. Yet for others, questions of ESD can become an unexciting part of everyday routine. The students' emotional involvement has an impact on how they interpret their tasks and what they learn (K. Österlind, 2005). A strong involvement can draw students' attention from the intended content or make them scared about their future. On the other hand, the consequences of weak involvement can be that no learning takes place and the students get bored. This is a teaching dilemma. Education for sustainable development can lead to feelings of anxiety, hopelessness or rejection. The first two examples show a range of reactions on the 'emotional dimension' from passivity and un-involvement to anger and fear, seemingly related to some limitations connected to the instructional design.

Still, when students do become involved, they have more 'fun', are more motivated and learn more – as long as their emotional energy is transformed in meaningful ways. Arts-based methods seems

to have an advantage in ESD (van Boeckel 2009). According to Heyward (2010), drama can strengthen learning through emotional involvement. In process drama the work is carried out as interplay between drama fiction, recurrent reflection and ordinary school work. Process drama is designed to work on challenging topics, it has developed techniques to 'protect into emotion' and the drama teacher is normally aware of the impact of educational design and has a variety to choose from.

The risk of negative manipulation, like arousing feelings for their own sake, may be greater in ESD, as the subject worries even teachers. Education is seen as having the potential of making a substantial contribution to sustainable development, which puts teachers under some pressure. But as adults we are never allowed to throw our problems onto the children. Consciously to arrange the teaching in order to 'awake' or make use of the students' feelings can be discussed in terms of 'exploitation' – even if the children are protected into emotion, as in drama. Heyward warns that "when emotions are externally imposed by the leader, the resulting drama can be superficial and melodramatic" (Heyward, 2010, p. 199, w. reference to Somers 1994). On the other hand, there is a risk that ESD is carried out as un-problematic and consensus-oriented, which is described as a "societal strategy of societal self-deception" (Læssøe, 2010, p. 51, referring to Blühdorn 2004). This has to be considered by environmental educators according to Læssøe, who puts forward what he calls three missing qualities in ESD; dilemmas, dissensus and deliberation. ESD has to adapt and turn "from straight answers to complex questions" (Björneloo, 2004, p. 1).

This has to be taken into account in how the teaching is planned and carried out, even though it is a delicate balance. In relation to ESD, as well as other content, a wide range of teaching methods can be useful. According to McNaughton, 'the power of the drama is not that it teaches facts about sustainability but that the underlying issues are explored in a more holistic multifaceted way' (2006 p. 40). In my view, teaching and learning is a complex and challenging mission, facilitated by addressing the 'whole' persons and by making use of the energy source embedded in social interaction. Educational

drama is a teaching tool built on those qualities, but it must be well-known by the teachers in order to reach its potential (cf. Dunn & Stinson, 2011). To me it is also important that we as adults don't make the next generation, children of today, responsible for problems that were created before they were born. We are responsible for giving them education for sustainable development in an 'empowering way', for example, by 'realistic narratives of hope' (Huckle 2002, in McNaughton, 2006), and we should never be afraid to let emotions be part of the teaching, as long as they are handled with care.

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CARLSON'S LAW AND EDUCATION

William R. Stimson

English Corner, National Chi Nan University, Taiwan

A research biologist by training, William R. Stimson had a change of heart during the Vietnamese war when he discovered the U.S. military was considering using research like his to destroy the rice crop of Vietnamese peasants. He came to see how much more important than research it was to find a way to develop in ourselves the artistry to put to better use the knowledge we have. He left academia to write, and ended up working with dreams, which led him to Montague Ullman, the originator of the experiential dream group method. He now leads dream groups in Taiwan.

USING DREAMS TO TEACH THE NEXT GENERATION

ABSTRACT

Carlson's Law (Innovation from the bottom up is chaotic but smart; while innovation from the top down is orderly but dumb) suggests that the "sweet spot" for introducing creativity into education can be found by moving down, closer to the unconscious sources of innovative thinking expressed in dreams. In Taiwan, the Ullman experiential dream group has been introduced into schools and universities as a course offering. This method of enabling students to make sense of their own dreams is not psychotherapy but was developed specifically as an educational tool. Its stages parallel those of the creative process, making it an excellent tool to teach creativity. It doesn't use student's dreams to look for what's wrong with them, but to familiarize them with what's right about themselves – the unconscious intuition common to all as well as the specific creative styles unique to each.

The Way Creative Breakthrough Happens

Sho-Shui is a teacher and counselor at a junior high in a small farming town in the far south of Taiwan. A few days before the school's graduation ceremony, at which she and her colleague Jing Hui were to preside as masters-of-ceremony, she had a dream. The dream began with her and Jing Hui taking their seats not up on stage, where they would expect to sit, but down amongst the students in the audience.

For some reason the dream stayed with her and some ten days or so after the week of the dream and the graduation ceremony, she told it at the Ullman dream group she and I started down in that part of Taiwan. As she worked with the dream in the group, Sho-Shui came to realize it dealt with an issue much on her mind of late: why she should blindly follow the rules at her job, when instead she sometimes wanted to do what she felt was more right for her students. The one thing she couldn't understand, though, was why the dream would open with the image of her and her colleague, the presiding masters-of-ceremony, taking their seats down amongst the audience and not up on stage.

Neither could anyone in the group figure that image out. Before proceeding further, we took a bathroom break. When we reassembled, Sho-Shui told us excitedly that on her way down the hall to the ladies room, it suddenly struck her how the image made sense: Year after year she'd noticed how dry and boring the graduation ceremony was for the students, as one invited government official after another took the stage to deliver long tiresome harangues. That her dream put her and Jing Hui down amongst the student audience expressed a feeling that had been arising in her of late that she could do a better job as master-of-ceremonies at the graduation ceremony, and also teaching and counseling the students, if she could manage somehow to bring herself down closer to the students' level.

The way she came to this realization strikes at the heart of how a creative new insight is born. We struggle with a problem. We can't find the answer. The moment we turn aside to do something else, the solution pops out at us. Creative thinking requires incubation (Wallas, 1926). We need to let go of the problem, take our mind off

it, for something completely new to arise spontaneously from the unconscious. Otherwise, our mind grinds doggedly along in its habitual ruts and gets nowhere.

A Problem of Education

The mental muscle our formal education labors for so many years to endow us with only gets in the way when it comes to the mysterious ability to think innovatively. Yet innovative thinking is an ability sorely needed in today's fast-changing world. It will be even more needed in tomorrow's, for what we see changing all around us at an ever-increasing pace is not just our technology, but everything else as well. Our ideas even, and our most basic knowledge about ourselves and the world we live in – our scientific concept of reality, our religious beliefs and moral precepts – are all transforming themselves beyond recognition and at a pace that many in the world already cannot keep up with. The senseless violence and terrorism of those who would turn this all around and direct things back to the way they were in some distant, supposedly idyllic, past, when reality seemed to better accord with the out-dated dogmas and simplistic myths they persist in clinging to, poses an ever bigger problem worldwide. The United States treats this as a military problem. It is a problem of education.

Education systems not just in America but worldwide fail to train the populace how to reinvent the world, how to reinvent themselves, and how to re-invent today's myths and dogmas so that the deeper truths in these can emerge in new and more modern ways and make themselves felt in the world as a positive force. Meanwhile, a tiny creative minority pulls the world ever more rapidly forward. It is a formula for disaster; and we see today, all around us, the beginnings of that disaster.

The problem, of course, is this: schools train the rational intellect; but creative innovation arises from elsewhere than the rational intellect. We don't know from exactly where it arises, but this isn't the problem. Everybody can recognize a Steve Jobs, who transforms and vitalizes every industry he touches. But how to impart the traits of a Steve Jobs to the populace as a whole when today school systems worldwide specifically train students to not be like Steve Jobs? That's the question. Is there a way to train the young to be creative and intuitive?

Carlson's Law, Education, & Dreams

Sho-Shui's dream image of being a master-of-ceremony seated in the audience suggested to her that she can better serve the junior high school students in that farming village by coming down closer to their level. This is an interesting insight for an educator because it flies in the face of the presumption that a teacher's job is to raise the students up to her own higher level, and not to go down with them to some lower level.

This paradox kept running through my mind in the days after the group worked with Sho-Shui's dream. Then I stumbled across an op-ed piece in the on-line New York Times where columnist Thomas L. Friedman (Friedman, 2011) introduced the world to Carlson's Law.

"Carlson's Law," posited by Curtis Carlson, the C.E.O. of SRI International, in Silicon Valley, ... states that: "In a world where so many people now have access to education and cheap tools of innovation, innovation that happens from the bottom up tends to be chaotic but smart. Innovation that happens from the top down tends to be orderly but dumb." As a result, says Carlson, the sweet spot for innovation today is "moving down," closer to the people, not up, because all the people together are smarter than anyone alone and all the people now have the tools to invent and collaborate.

Could it be that the "sweet spot" for education today, is also "moving down" closer, not just to the students, like Sho-Shui discovers from her dream, but closer also to the unconscious wellsprings of intuition and creativity that we connect with by working with our dreams? Witness how Sho-Shui couldn't make sense of the dream's image until she quit trying to figure it out. There's something at work in our intelligence deeper than we know – and this something forms the greater part of intelligence. It's this that we have to find a way to teach students to access in themselves and bring into play in whatever they do; and it's this we have to find a way to access in ourselves so that we can come up with more innovative and effective ways of teaching and graduating them.

Carlson's Law makes good sense when applied to education. There can be no doubt that unconsciously assimilated impressions – which constitute the vast bulk of learning – are so much more capable of coming up with something smart and new than is the conscious mind, so crammed full of everything it thinks it knows, and imagines it has been taught, that it is at pains to look at anything anymore in a totally new way.

Our students' own unconscious resources – not least their undiscovered talents and enthusiasms – can certainly guide them through life as well as anything we might teach them. The most egregious mistake we can make is not to teach them how to access these and deploy them in everything they undertake. As educators, we currently make this mistake in a big way.

As writer Michael Ellsberg observed of himself, I type these words on a computer designed by Apple, co-founded by the college dropout Steve Jobs. I use a program created by Microsoft, started by the college dropouts Bill Gates and Paul Allen. When the writing is finished, I may share it with friends via Twitter, co-founded by the college dropouts Jack Dorsey, Evan Williams and Biz Stone, or via Facebook – invented, among others, by the college dropouts Mark Zuckerberg and Dustin Moskovitz, and nurtured by the degreeless Sean Parker. Increasingly it begins to seem to anyone who wants to become a creative person that today's drop-outs are the ones who stay in school, not the ones who leave it. Something's wrong with education today.

As Ken Robinson points out (Robinson 2001), we're so absorbed with our high standards that we forget – the future our students shall face will not likely resemble anything we ourselves have ever known. Already, in the world all around, we see the beginnings of this different future. One or two social networking sites are suddenly changing political realities all across the Middle East. Even small innovations can have big unexpected effects. And the rate at which these small innovations are coming at us increases by the minute. The one thing today's students do need, that will really be useful to them in a world where the ground increasingly shifts under their feet, is a way to access and hone their innate intuitive and creative traits.

Dreams, and working with their own and each other's dreams, is the perfect way to teach them this. Freud was right. Dreams are *the royal road*, only not for us, today, like for our grandparents, so much a road *into the unconscious*, to figure out repressions and neurosis – as a road *out of the unconscious*, to conduct our vast palette of subliminal creative and intuitive aptitudes up out from under all the rules and teachings education straightjackets us with, so these unsuspected resources can be put to work in our endeavors and in our lives.

The only question is, how to do this safely and effectively in the classroom? For those who don't know much about dreams, who don't grasp the fundamental artistic function at work in their metaphorical imagery, or who haven't heard of the Montague Ullman experiential dream group, there's no satisfactory answer. To most educators, dreams would seem to be the opposite of what education should be about. "Pay attention!" the teacher yells at the student who sits in class gazing absently out the window, dreaming away. But the educator is wrong here, and the dreaming student may just be on to something.

The Ullman Experiential Dream Group

The unrecognized genius of the experiential group method that Montague Ullman devised for working with dreams (Ullman, 1996) is that it turns dreams from a narrowly-applicable psychotherapeutic tool into a broadly-applicable educational one. The reasons are legion why the ways psychoanalysts work with dreams would be out of the question in a classroom setting between a teacher and her students. But the Ullman dream group is not psychoanalysis and it is eminently applicable in the classroom. In Taiwan, under the apt guidance of Montague Ullman in his final years, I have myself used it successfully with graduate students, undergraduates, and also with junior high school students. In my dream group at the university, one of the professors brought her elementary school daughter, who turned out to be better at dreams than her mother. While not psychotherapy, the method is healing – in the sense that all self-knowledge is, and all true education is. And, as Ullman suggested early on (Ullman & Zimmerman, 1979), it is healing not just for the individual, but also for the society and the planet. This is a method whose time has come. Where it belongs is in our universities and even in our public school systems.

Ullman did not devise his way of working with dreams for the mentally ill, but for healthy vibrantly developing individuals. It is really not at all about trying to figure out what's wrong with someone, but rather with discovering what is right. Its stages closely parallel those of the creative process (Table 1); and it serves as a marvelous and exciting way to introduce students to their own unconscious intuitive and creative powers – and to liberate these into action. It is an educational tool that enables us to introduce them, as well as ourselves, to what most needs to be learned today, but cannot be taught.

Table 1. The stages of the Montague Ullman experiential dream group closely parallel those of the creative process.

| Stages of the Creative Process | Stages of the Ullman Dream Group |
|---|--|
| 1. Preparation: The time for research, fact gathering, assembling materials, gathering needed information before the creative act. | 1. Bring forth and clarify the dream and its meaning: The dreamer tells her dream and then answers questions to clarify it to the group. Each member of the group, pretending the dream is her own and projecting freely from her own life, explores the dream for (a) feelings and (b) metaphors. Afterwards, the dreamer shares all the new insights this awakens in her. |
| 2. Incubation: This is the period of gestation, of letting go so that the mind, the unconscious, intuition, and emotion can mull over the information and put it into its own original perspective. | 2. Set the dream aside and look at the dreamer's recent life: Laying the dream aside, the group and dreamer explores the dreamer's life situation prior to the dream – starting with the thoughts and feelings the dreamer had before dozing off to sleep the night before and working back through the day, or even further back, to explore the emotional context out of which the dream arose. |

| | |
|---|--|
| <p>3. Inspiration:</p> <p>The “Aha!” when the solution, illumination, or discovery either emerges or forces itself through into a coalesced form.</p> | <p>3. Return to the dream now and hold it up, piece by piece, to the dreamer:</p> <p>Having explored the dream and its imagery, and then having looked into the details of her life in the period immediately prior to the dream, the dreamer now has everything she needs to grasp, image by image, what the dream is saying. In this stage the dreamer is illuminated from within herself with the meaning of her own dream and pours out in amazement to the group, image by image and scene by scene, as the dream is read back to her, what the dream reveals about her life.</p> |
| <p>4. Evaluation and confirmation:</p> <p>This is the time to ask, will it work, does it hold up next to other theories, does it logically fit with the original stimulus?</p> | <p>4. One by one, members of the group tell the dreamer what they think:</p> <p>After the dreamer has finished discovering the meaning of her own dream, one by one the other members of the group speak up and give their views. This stage is like the blind men with the elephant. Each group member can only see in the dream what they themselves are, but the group as a whole serves to powerfully validate and confirm the dreamer’s view of the whole dream so that she knows she’s been heard, and she hears, often for the first time, what she herself discovered, when it’s mirrored back to her by the group in this way. The dreamer always has the final word. Usually all she says is, “Thank you so much!” In the days and weeks subsequent to the dream group, further insights occur to the dreamer, which she may report back to the group if she wishes</p> |

A bubbly effervescence spreads through the group as insights come flashing so quickly through the minds of its members, and again as some of these are confirmed and elaborated by the dreamer, who then provides the background story which usually turns out to be as fascinating as it is unexpected. A felt deepening of consciousness

is palpable in the group as members witness how powerfully the process impacts the dreamer, who bursts into tears at one moment, and breaks out with enlightened laughter the next. This is an education that is deep. The students learn from within themselves about inherent traits they all have, which enable them to know and understand in new ways – and to re-envision and re-create their world and themselves.

This is the way Socrates taught, and Lao Tzu. Few teachers today can hope to be of the caliber of those great masters of old. But even the worst teachers have dreams, and their dreams, as well as those of even the worst students, are definitely of that caliber. Since the most ancient times, few of the world's greatest thinkers have doubted that dreams arise from the deepest, truest, and wisest part of ourselves. Anyone can easily confirm this simply by working in an Ullman dream group with one of their own dreams. It's invariably startling for students, when working with their own dreams, to discover coming from within themselves an intelligence and wisdom that commands their deepest respect and awe. For students to work with dreams is to wake up to their real intelligence, and find a self-respect and a sense of self-worth they can't get in any other way.

A Dream Course

The Ullman group process converts seamlessly into a university course. Each three-hour class is a dream group. I prefer three-hour classes so the students have plenty of time to express their feelings and ideas. No lectures are needed. The dreams themselves do the teaching. The students learn how to learn without being taught – which is the only thing a good teacher wants to teach them anyway.

Neither is a textbook required. The students themselves write down any dreams they wish to record, and bring in to class any that they care to work with in the group. These dreams are the text, recorded in a mysterious language of metaphorical images. By looking into the dreamer's recent experiences, we get another text in a different language, saying the same thing. Everybody else in the group also has their own life experiences and unique takes on the images. So we have three texts in three different languages. We have a Rosetta stone. What more do we need?

It's not so hard, if the Ullman method is followed faithfully (See Appendix for important details that render the method safe for classroom use), if the dreamer rather than the teacher controls the session, if the full method is used including the all-important playback stage (not one of the popularized "if it were my dream" over-simplifications), and if the students are given only a smattering of practice and guidance – for them to be able themselves to make wonderful sense of whatever dream arises. They love it; and they love the freedom of being given a chance to do it. Their dreams abound in material that intrinsically fascinates and engages them. Dreams arise from a source that is closer than the students themselves are to their own most immediate and significant experiences; they arise from a source closer than any teacher could ever possibly be to what the students really need to learn, and they arise from a source closer than anybody might guess to the most mysterious roots and deepest wisdom of human culture and religion. In a word, the dreams of the students are relevant. No book can be so up-to-date, so situation-specific, to their current needs. This is why working with their own dreams is so much fun for students. It's fun for the teacher too. No teacher can find a class more profoundly creative, a venue in which the students are so attentive and engaged, or a situation from which she herself stands to learn so much about, and get so close to, her students and herself.

Grades? It's a different kind of class. The students here are co-operating, not competing. I am content to grade the class as a whole on how well it does its job. I don't penalize individual students when they make mistakes. The dream group is all about making lots of mistakes. That's how we learn. But I do find it important to be a stickler for attendance, and I do penalize for missed classes. The group really is a unit and all members need to be present, consistently.

In the time I've been doing this, I've seen it change the lives and careers of a great many students. I can't say this of any other course that I've ever taught or taken. I think the reason the dream course is so important to the students is because it attends to the limiting factor in their formal education. Schools and universities the world over tend increasingly to bypass subjectivity, and in so doing they

rob the students of a chance to discover in themselves and their own immediate experiences the sources of creativity, intuition, and wisdom. The dream course focuses specifically on the students themselves, and so provides what other courses in the curriculum can't and don't. For this reason, it empowers the students to make better use of their other courses. In introducing students to who they really are, the Ullman dream group doesn't just deliver them their own intuitive and creative powers, but their human greatness – the unique and particular genius that each has to bring to bear on anything they undertake.

Some students, to be sure, are better at working with dreams than others. But what all students most need a chance to experience is that there resides in them a genius that, to an amazing degree, we all share. It is in the genome of *Homo sapiens*. Educators can get so preoccupied ranking students according to minor differences in intellectual ability that they forget we all have more shared abilities than we know, and all students need to be trained to surface these buried talents and capabilities and put them to work in their lives. The Ullman dream group's main strength is that it does this.

From my own experience in Taiwan these past years, I am convinced the Ullman dream group can change the future of education. But I'm also convinced that I'm not going to persuade too many educators of this. An incoming departmental chairman who was of the opinion that dreams are nonsense has now eliminated my dream course from the curriculum. I still do the dream group at the university, but in its English Corner program. It's no longer a course, but an extra-curricular activity. And it's been crammed into a two-hour time slot. Into this English Corner dream group walked Sho-Shui one day. In spite of how challenged she was to express herself in English, she showed a gift when it came to working with dreams. She had completed all the course requirements in the Master's Degree program of the Department of Social Policy and Social Work but had gotten stuck on her thesis. Each proposal she came up with, her advisor rejected out of hand. Finally she gave up, left school without her degree, and returned to her job as a junior high school teacher in the small farming town.

Some months later she e-mailed me that she had it in mind to introduce the dream group at her junior high and devise a research project that would explore the role of the Ullman dream group in junior high school education. This way she could complete her degree while working. Impressed by the skills and aptitudes the dreams she brought to the English Corner groups showed her to have, I encouraged her in her idea, and suggested she get the needed experience with the Ullman dream group by inviting a group of friends and starting up her own dream group. She felt she was unprepared to lead a dream group. I told her that if she could get together an interesting group of friends, who weren't afraid of English, I would go down every month and lead an all-day dream group until she felt ready to take over. That's how the dream group began in which we did her dream about the graduation ceremony. And that's why I sense, in the dream's image of her sitting with the student audience at the graduation ceremony, a suggestion of the relation between Carlson's Law and education today – because Sho-Shui really is trying to bring education not just down closer to the students, but closer to the students' dreams, where it belongs.

An Important Step Forward for Education

Should it surprise anyone that unknown to the world at large, or to educators in specific, at a school in a little known farming community in the remote south of Taiwan, junior high education is about to take this important step forward? It's likely that changing the way young people are educated to face a future that we know precious little about can only be done in forgotten out-of-the-way places like that where the right thing is free to spontaneously happen, for its own proper reasons. Closer to the mainstream, if my own unfortunate experience in the Department of Social Policy and Social Work at Taiwan's Chi Nan University is any indication, such important educational innovation faces the steadfast opposition of an entrenched and determined backward-looking establishment so locked into the learned ruts of its by-gone era that it won't let happen what needs to happen for schools to start training students not for the world we have made, but for the very different one they will make.

How apt it is that this young teacher is doing what she is. Of course, it's inevitable that in these innovation-charged times, education, historically imposed essentially from above, and oftentimes sadly dumb; like Carlson's Law predicts, should somewhere in the world start to get smart and move down closer to the unconscious powerhouses of learning, closer to the age-old source of wisdom, enlightenment, and creativity, closer to the dream; and not merely up, higher into the realm of secondary process, the rational intellect, and acquired concepts – because it's down in the dream, in what to us looks like a meaningless chaos of personal images, that new sense is continually being fashioned out of the unconscious impressions, insights, and talents we all abound in and that the younger generation will need access to more than ever if they are to succeed in this re-invention of everything that we already see happening at such a breakneck pace all around us.

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APPENDIX

The Ullman Experiential Dream Group

The following outline details, step by step, the Ullman dream group process for any college professor or high school teacher who wants to try out the process in her own classroom.¹

The skills necessary in the Experiential Dream Group.

There are two skills involved:

1. **Listening:** The main challenge for most people is to put all of their own brilliant ideas to one side, disregard them utterly, and listen purely and simply to what the dreamer is saying. This is not easy for people in general and it is not easy for people who have been trained in the helping professions. Frequent mistakes beginners make include

- (a) *cutting a dreamer off when she is speaking to introduce an idea of their own.*

It is hard for people to realize their own ideas don't matter and that nothing is more important than what the dreamer herself has to say.

- (b) *offering supposedly helpful suggestions when a dreamer struggles to find a way to express herself.*

Putting words in the dreamer's mouth isn't helpful. When the dreamer opens her mouth and is silent, what we want to hear isn't what someone else in the group supposes she is about to say next. We want to hear the words that come when the dreamer finally does find a way to express herself. In the experiential dream group we put up with silence for longer, sometimes, than many people are comfortable with. It's the same with tears and laughter. More often than not they signal that something has gone right – not wrong. We don't try to rush forward and comfort the dreamer unless we are invited to do so. The group functions instead to open the dreamer up to self-expression and to allow that expression.

¹ I would be happy to answer any questions, or hear from anyone who has used the process with students. I can be reached at bstimson@gmail.com.

- (c) *disregarding what the dreamer says because they feel they know better than the dreamer what the dream is about.*

Usually the dreamer knows much more than she realizes she knows. The highest skill is to listen to what the dreamer says but does not hear herself say and then share with her what you have heard. In other words, each of us in the group is called upon to listen to the dreamer even more closely than she listens to herself. This is a tall order. Most people simply can't get away from their own brilliant ideas long enough to really hear what the dreamer is saying.

2. **Knowing how to ask a question:** In this kind of dream group we do not allow any group member to take control away from the dreamer. The dreamer alone determines the extent to which she wishes to open up to the group, what information she is willing to offer to the group, and in what direction she chooses to take the process. Consequently:

- (a) **No information demanding questions are allowed.** "What were your feelings when your parents died?" is an "**information-demanding question**" – a question that demands the dreamer provide an answer. This kind of question intrudes into the dreamer's private domain and is not permitted. Instead, we ask "**information-eliciting questions**". "Is there anything more you would care to say about how you felt during this period?" is a proper question. It demands nothing of the dreamer but is an invitation for her to say anything else that comes to mind. Thus, it functions to elicit information. An open-ended question like this gives the dreamer the freedom to follow her own inner promptings. She stays in control and leads the process.
- (b) **No "leading questions" are allowed.** "Don't you think that little old lady in the dream was your mother?" is a leading question. A leading question is a hypothesis introduced under the guise of a question. It takes control of the process away from the dreamer and subjects the inquiry into the dream to the preconceptions of a group member. Such questions will be stopped immediately.

- (c) **No questions are allowed about areas of her life not already introduced by the dreamer.** The dreamer may have a boyfriend but she said nothing about him at all. No one may ask about the boyfriend or any other piece of information unless the dreamer introduces it first. The very crux of this process is that the dreamer alone controls the level of sharing. Of course if she shares almost nothing at all, she will get very little of value out of the process. It is in the nature of the group work that there is an inevitable tradeoff between **the safety factor and the discovery factor**. A dreamer who makes herself completely safe might discover very little. On the other hand a dreamer who discovers a lot might not feel entirely safe. Only the dreamer can decide what balance to strike.

The Stages of the Process

The creative process, whether it be the opening of a flower, the growth of a child or the writing of a novel, happens in discrete stages. At each stage something needs to happen in order for the next stage to kick in successfully. The Experiential Dream Group is a succession of very different stages that serve to keep the dream and the dreamer opening more and more fully to each other throughout the entire process. The group has no other agenda.

Obtaining a dream: No one in the group is obliged to offer a dream. The group leader invites anyone who wishes to share their dream with the group to come forward. If two or three people volunteer, then the leader sits back while those individuals decide among themselves which one feels a more pressing need to do their dream. In the case where more than one individual wants to do their dream, a coin is tossed.

“When did you have this dream?” the leader asks before the dreamer tells her dream. To know when the dream occurred is necessary for a future stage in the process.

Stage I: The dreamer tells the dream slowly as members of the group write it down. Members of the group may then ask clarifying questions. Common questions are “What were the feelings in the dream?” “Were there any colors in the dream?” “Were you your present age?” “Were any of the people in the dream real people?” The questioning should not go on too long. It is important that the group have an accurate picture of the dream in their minds. But to try to get too precise is a waste of time. Dreams, by their very nature, are vague and hard to pin down exactly.

Stage II: The leader invites the dreamer to sit back, listen and take notes. He instructs the group to ignore the dreamer, not to make eye contact or speak to her. The group starts playing “the game.” Each member pretends the dream is her own.

There are two parts to this stage: feelings and metaphor.

- (1) **Feelings:** Any member of the group who wishes to, speaks up and expresses the feeling that she has during a certain scene in the dream or because of a particular image. “The dark cloud makes me afraid,” one group member may say. Another might follow, “The dark cloud makes me laugh because it looks so stupid.” A third member might say, “The dark cloud makes me angry.” These are all only projections. Nobody but the dreamer can know what the dark cloud ultimately means.

This stage functions to offer the dreamer a multitude of possibilities. Often the dreamer will have no clue at all why the dark cloud was in her dream. It may be something a group member says that’s completely wrong that finally gives her the clue. “No. I was not afraid. That’s the thing. I realize it now. I felt in the dream the dark cloud wasn’t real. I didn’t believe it.”

- (2) **Metaphors:** After the feelings in the dream have been sufficiently fleshed out the leader asks the group to shift gears and begin looking at the images of the dream as metaphors. “I feel the dark cloud is a metaphor for camouflage, like a squid’s ink,” one group member may say. “It’s hiding something.” Another member may say, “I feel the dark cloud is a metaphor for me finally showing my feelings – revealing out in the open what was there all along.” These also, like the feelings, are only projections. They’re very useful because they open up the dreamer’s own imagination. The dreamer might decide, “The dark cloud that was blowing past was a powerful metaphor for everything in the situation that has nothing whatsoever to do with me. I just stood there and it went right by. I didn’t need to get involved. And that’s the attitude I need to take with this impossible situation I’ve described at work.”

Stage III: When the dream images have been sufficiently fleshed out, the leader thanks the group for its help and invites the dreamer to come forward and comment on the dream in light of all the different possibilities that surfaced during the “game”.

- (1) **Dreamer’s Response:** This is a time when the dreamer can say anything she wants about anything. She can talk for as long as she wishes and can remain quiet and think for as long as she wants before starting to speak again. The only thing she has to do is tell the group when she’s finished, when she’s said everything she has to say.

The leader asks the dreamer, “Would you like to go on to the next stage?” The dreamer is in control of the process and can stop it at any point if she feels threatened or unsafe. If the dreamer does feel safe within this process then she will opt to go forward with the exploration of the dream.

- (2) **The Dialogue between the dreamer and the group:**
At each previous stage of the process either the dreamer or the group has been active. During the dialogue the group and the dreamer interact.

- (a) **Search for Context:** The group now questions the dreamer about the real-life events leading up to the dream (Open-ended questions only! No leading questions! No questions on material the dreamer has not already introduced!) “Could you say anything about what was going through your mind as you were going to sleep that night?” is a good start. From there the group stretches the timeframe slowly back to include the evening and then the entire day. It is sometimes helpful to stretch the timeframe back further to include the past several days, the entire week, the month, or even “this general period of your life.”
- (b) **The Playback:** When enough of the context has been fleshed out, then the leader asks the dreamer if she wishes to continue with the work on the dream and go to the next stage. If the dreamer says yes, then someone in the group reads the dream, scene by scene, back to the dreamer in the second person (“You saw a big black cloud on the horizon, etc.”). The dreamer is asked to relax and view each successive scene of the dream as if it were a film on a screen. The purpose here is to put a distance between the dreamer and her dream so she can sit back and, in light of everything that has been said so far about the dream images and about her recent life, look at the dream in a fresh way. The dreamer can interrupt at any moment to offer any new insights or connections that arise. Also the group members can bring to the dreamer’s attention any discrepancies between the waking feelings and the imagery of the dream. Or, the dreamer may be invited to look deeper into the dream imagery or deeper into the events of the day. The dreamer may simply be asked to notice some peculiarity of an image in the dream that comes to light now. “You say the dark cloud in your dream was

not black. It was purple,” some member of the group might say, holding the image up to the dreamer. “Yes,” the dreamer might suddenly say, “At work my boss always wears purple.”

The playback is a powerful stage. The imagery of the dream has been explored, the recent emotional experience of the dreamer has come to light. In the playback these two come naturally together, like two tributaries, to make a mighty river. The dreamer, the group, and the leader all play active roles in this stage. This is the time when the dreamer and her dream often open to each other and connect.

- (c) **The Orchestration:** The leader asks the dreamer if she wishes to continue working on the dream. If she says yes, the leader invites any members of the group who wish to come forward now and offer the dreamer their view of what the dream is saying. This affords each member of the group the only chance they’ll have to tell the dreamer what they think the dream means. Now they can say something like “I think your dream of the dark cloud means that your boss has made such a big stink over this situation that everybody in the company sees what she is now. She’s not going to stay in that position for long. The dream suggests your best bet is not to do anything. You are safe.”

The “interpretations” the various group members come up with are called “**orchestrating projections**” because they attempt to “orchestrate” or bring together in a harmonious way all the disparate and discordant bits of information that have come forward during the process and because they are only projections. Nobody can know what somebody else’s dream means. The dreamer, by this stage, often pretty well knows what her dream means, and so it might be useful to her to see what other people think.

- (d) **The dreamer has the final word:** Symbolically and

factually, it's important that in this process the dreamer has the final word. The leader invites the dreamer to say anything more she cares to say. Almost always the dreamer says something like, "I just want to thank all of you so much!" or "I never imagined that such a simple little dream could mean so much and be so important to me!"

The real dream work doesn't actually go on in the group but in the dreamer's own privacy after she leaves the group. The images, ideas and events raised in the group keep working together, like the ingredients in a cake that is slowly baking. The insight as to the deepest import of the dream might spark in the shower the next morning, or on the way to work two days later. And so, in an ongoing group, there is one final stage to the process.

- (e) **At the next group meeting, the dreamer is invited to share any further ideas or insights about the dream.** It sometimes comes out that the dream was about something completely different than everybody thought and that some little thing that happened later caused the dreamer to realize its true meaning. This is an opportunity for the dreamer to share this with the group.

ASSESSING THE AESTHETIC:

Rachael Jacobs

Australian Catholic University

Rachael Jacobs is an Australian arts educator, who has worked in the fields of Dance, Drama and Music in primary, secondary and tertiary settings. She has developed a range of projects in the fields of assessment and arts education. Rachael has previously completed research into arts practices in pre-service Education courses and has received recognition for her contributions to teachers' professional development in the arts. She has previously made contributions to the arts as an actor, dancer and musician. She is currently completing her PhD research that investigates the assessment of drama performances in senior school settings.

NARRATIVES FROM DRAMA EDUCATION

ABSTRACT

Performance is an integral part of drama education and through it students are able to create aesthetic texts. However, the assessment of aesthetic learning presents numerous challenges. Aesthetic works are seen as intricate, and associated with personal taste, often resulting in individual subjective responses. Nevertheless, the contemporary demands of curricular deem that transparent assessment and reporting procedures accompany all areas of study. Therefore drama educators must enquire as to how aesthetic values can be successfully reflected within the drama assessment processes. This paper reports on a narrative inquiry study involving six Australian secondary drama teachers. The study examines their practices when assessing aesthetic texts and the role of the assessor in a performance context. Pathways towards future development of assessment practices in aesthetic fields are also considered.

Introduction

The aesthetic dimensions of drama education have long been established. O'Toole (1997) writes "Drama is an art which by its very nature explores the metaphysical construction of alternative realities in aesthetic configurations" (p. 186). Courtney (1990) adds that at the core of drama education is the ability to engage the imagination and to connect emotionally. It is this constant search for deeper meanings that increases the vividness of students' performance work. But outside of this vividness, students have a desire to achieve well. In drama, that involves commendation from their audiences, and in the context of schooling, achieving favourable results. For secondary drama performances the assessor must make judgements about a product that is largely aesthetic, and that achievement is recorded using criteria, grades or marks.

This paper explores drama performance assessment tasks through the medium of the teacher assessor. The nature of performance as an aesthetic text is examined, which leads to a discussion on the merits of assessing aesthetic learning and the role of the assessor in aesthetic fields. This paper uses narrative research to explore drama teachers' practices when assessing performances. Teachers discuss the methods used to make judgements about aesthetic texts and their experiences of being both an art consumer and assessor. Participants also make reference to their successes, challenges and limitations in addressing aesthetic learning through drama performance work.

Drama and the aesthetic curriculum

According to Fowler (1996), studying in aesthetic fields teaches many things: the relationship of each part in the whole; improvisation and flexibility; the ability to express ideas through multiple mediums; the ability to manipulate materials to express meaning; how to productively use imagination; to look for new perspectives; aesthetic understanding and appreciation; the ability to transform a personal experience to a shared one; that there is more than one answer to problems; that how something happens is as important as what happens; the importance of non-measurable accomplishments;

multiple forms of communication; and the need to enjoy the process. Specifically for school-aged children it helps them discover their own resources, develop their own attributes, and realise their own personal potential. Fowler also pointedly adds, “Education generally does not do this” (p. 57).

Fowler’s (1996) statement is alluding to aesthetic modes of thinking being somewhat at odds with the structure of our modern conception of schooling. Rational and functional intelligence styles are more commonly privileged in western education systems and aesthetic values are often absent from discussions of learning and curriculum. Sadly, aesthetic appreciation carries common perceptions of highly ethereal qualities that are abstract in nature or often associated with high culture (Ross, Randor, Mitchell, & Bierton, 1993). The importance of aesthetic literacy in the curriculum is further diminished when the aesthetic response is perceived as a private reaction, full of personal feeling. For the reasons listed above, O’Toole & O’Mara (2007) make the profound assertion, that “Drama and formal curriculum have always had a relationship of mutual suspicion in Western society” (p. 203). The spaces, processes, pedagogies and measurement instruments associated with drama present a myriad of challenges to policy writers and administrators. But the fact that drama is included in contemporary curricula means that the relationship, while suspicious, must be somewhat workable. Along with other aesthetic domains, drama’s presence in schools means that the aesthetic dimensions of learning are being addressed, albeit to varying degrees in different contexts.

Aside from the political dimensions of including aesthetic learning in the curriculum, there are several other challenges. Wright & Gerber (2004) argue that the aesthetic dimensions of drama makes the field more intricate, providing more difficulties for assessment and certification. Nevertheless, the contemporary demands of education deem that assessment and reporting procedures accompany all areas of study. Therefore it is timely to enquire as to how “accessing the aesthetic” (Jacobs, 2009) can be successfully reflected within the drama assessment processes.

Assessment in aesthetic fields

Traditional assessment practices mostly conform to the reductive tendency of non-aesthetic engagement, by pre-determining the knowledge of which the pupil shall show evidence. The student selects responses from their experience in order to fit the function of the question that they are asked (Ross et al., 1993). In contrast, an aesthetic exercise such as a drama performance, is multi-faceted, with many interlocking variables (Thomas & Millard, 2006). Performance assessment requires students to demonstrate not only what they know, but also what they can do (Bergen, 1993). This suits the typical drama student well as most have chosen drama due to a love of performing or engaging in practical tasks. They simply love to “do” (Lovesy, 2002, p. 85). Performance tasks emphasise originality, creativity and innovation, as students are not only required to replicate theatrical traditions before them, but synthesise their own ideas with theatrical conventions and showcase their performance skill, all whilst accessing the aesthetic as appropriate to the task. Attributes of flair, imagination and originality, in fitting with the style concerned, feature strongly in criteria used to assess performance works. This is evident in documents such as the HSC Drama Marking Guidelines (NSW Board of Studies) and the ACT’s Performing Arts Framework (ACT Board of Senior Secondary Studies, 2004).

However, Taylor (2006) declares that even in the aesthetic field drama, most performance tasks fail to take the aesthetic dimension into account. This is a result of drama educators being made to be overly concerned with technical skills, due to the ‘outcomes’ orientation of most schools. Taylor’s criticism reminds us that the formal assessment of dramatic performances is a complex phenomenon in itself. Cockett (1998) argues that it is more difficult to individualise drama performance assessments as compared to other art forms, as the processes used are highly dependent on a wide range of interrelated contributions. It has also been argued that the promotion of innovation, experimental ideas and autonomy can create incomparable measures of success. Macgregor, Lemerise, Potts and Roberts (1994) explain that “there is tension between the need to demonstrate skill mastery and the desire to embrace autonomy

and incomparability” (p. 3). It can also be argued that the formal and widespread assessment of performance arts can lead to a stifling of individual expression, imagination, creativity and originality, whilst not allowing for the fresh pursuit of ideas (Hanley, 2003). A wide range of responses are plausible to a particular task, therefore the assessor is required to use judgment in relation to the task and criteria.

The concept ‘judgement’ in the arts conjures the notion of ‘subjectivity’ which can be off-putting in an educational climate, which is generally objectivity-focussed, or at the very least, objectivity-seeking. This, of course, runs contrary to the nature of education, as O’Toole, Stinson & Moore (2009) remind us; “Knowledge and learning are of course never objective nor value-neutral, much though ultraconservative groups and politicians might wish them to be seen as such” (p. 108). Misson (1996) addresses these concerns by embracing drama as a site for constructing subjectivity, which he argues operates at the nexus of intelligence and emotion. “Thought is charged with feeling, while feeling is refined and strengthened by thought” (p. 11). It has long been argued that drama teaches empathy (Trinder, 1977) and Bolton (1984) adds that drama is a process of ‘unselfing’, which makes the subjective objective.

Taylor (2006) celebrates these complexities as the “hallmark of an artistic-aesthetic curriculum.” (p. xxi), but in other literature a myriad of views are presented. Jackson, Oliver, Shaw & Wisdom (2006) argue that, “...it should be possible to separate subjective judgements of creativity from judgements of technical goodness and from judgements of aesthetic appeal” (p.169). Harris (2008) is similarly objectivity-focused in her recommendations. However, Tomlinson (2001) argues for a “healthy balance” between subjective and objective types of performance assessment to provide the most “individually sensitive, accurate, and comprehensive evidence” of student learning (p. 15). Willoughby, Feifs, Baenen and Grimes (1995) suggest that assessment is part of the solution to these challenges; due to the often subjective nature of the subject, assessment helps to objectively share the benefits of aesthetic programs with others.

In fact, there is much literature that points out the benefits of assessment in aesthetic fields and attests to artistic work being able

to be assessed with a high degree of integrity (Colwell, 2003; Hanley, 2003; Pistone, 2000; Willoughby, et.al., 1995). Hanley (2003) explains that aesthetic assessment is highly appropriate, as artistic creation involves the demonstration of skills and craftsmanship. Students are required to synthesise their knowledge of theatrical works and performance techniques in order to create a product that can be successfully presented. Aside from this, a study by Seidel, Tishman, Winner, Hetland and Palmer (2009) found that arts teachers cited good quality assessment as one factor that gives the arts subjects equality among academic disciplines. They also agreed that, as in all subjects, assessment helps teachers adjust their teaching for better learning outcomes. Of course this is dependent on having quality assessment practices and effective assessor behaviours, which is necessary to gain these valuable insights into student learning.

Judgement in aesthetic fields: Role of the assessor

The relationship between teacher and student takes on an interesting dynamic in the drama performance process, which Bird (2006) describes as “intense” (p. 80). At times teachers are directing their students; at times they actively assist in the editing process; and at times they challenge the artistic content of the student pieces. Kempe (2000) believes that the success of student devised work relies on the teacher having developed independence in their students so that students are able to collaborate with each other in performance making, without direct leadership by the teacher. Warren (2003) adds that it’s the place of the drama teacher to allow independent work but then intervene, asking “good and significant questions” (p. 33), as is necessary to enhance an environment of aesthetic awareness, risk-taking and creativity.

Kempe (2000) also asks a pertinent question: Are drama teachers as personally involved in their students’ work? In the context of this paper, we must ponder what the consequences of this issue are with regard to assessment. Harris (2008) adds that care must be taken in this regard; if the work is a product of the teacher’s influence, then the ingenuity and aesthetic merit is marked, not just the execution of ideas under guidance.

In this light the drama teacher's dual role as the facilitator of learning experiences and assessor is significant. Ultimately the student is aware that their performance is made for 'judgement' by both the audience and the assessor. In wider society performances are frequently subject to judgment and criticism by professional critics and audiences alike. However, an arts consumer and an arts assessor have different roles. The presence of the assessor changes the context of the performance, as the assessor's evaluation becomes the primary focus of the performance effort. The performance has been crafted for the purposes of assessment and this can impact on the art that is produced. In the performance space the student is the 'theatre maker' (Aitken, 2007) who will dictate the terms of the performance to the audience through their choices as performers. However, the teacher (who is usually also the assessor) must maintain some degree of control over the performance environment. They will probably have initially dictated the boundaries within which the theatre makers are to work, such as the theatrical style or subject matter being addressed. The teacher assessor can also halt a performance which is deemed to be inappropriate or unsafe.

The assessor is also more active than an audience member. Drama is unique in that much of the work is both ephemeral and fragile. Therefore the ability of the assessor to capture their thoughts on the quality of work as it occurs is vital to the integrity of the assessment process (Dunn, 2005). During a performance the assessor is required to make judgments about the quality of the work and physically notate their thoughts in relation to the given criteria. While an audience member is permitted to make subjective judgments about the piece, the assessor aims to make informed judgments, which may result in marks or grades being recorded. This is where the duality of objective and subjective constructs comes into play. Haynes (2008) and Ross et al. (1993) describe traditional assessment as being 'objectivity-focused' (p. 9) whereby assessors are expected to discard their own feelings in favour of strictly set criteria where interpretations are not required. Drama teachers, however, have to develop expertise in assessing the outcome of the aesthetic process or the manifestation of the individual aesthetic experience. The product is viewed from a number of perspectives and informed judgments are made by the

‘expert’ assessor based on the set criteria and the quality of what was produced. A sense of objectivity is present in that a teacher’s tastes and preferences must not unduly influence the final assessment of a piece of work. However, subjective judgments can never be divorced from the assessment of dramatic works. In fact, personal responses from both the assessor and the student invariably widen the possibilities for interpretation. Both parties should be aware that personal taste and preference are a natural response, as they are rooted in “culturally authorized criteria” for the judgment of the level of achievement (Ross et al. p. 164).

The study

This study interviewed six high school drama teachers with view to exploring their practices when assessing drama performances. The investigation used narrative inquiry methods (Gall, Gall and Borg, 2005; Clandinin and Connelly, 2000; Clandinin and Connelly, 1996; Connelly and Clandinin, 1997; Keesee, 1997) as this style of research is highly linked to the context and allows for suitably complex issues to be explored in a manner that can provide paths towards outcomes and informed recommendations. Six drama educators from three different states/territories in Australia were interviewed in individual semi-structured interviews.

The participant selection took place as part of a wider doctoral study on drama assessment in Australian states and territories, hence the range of geographical locations (shown below). The participants fulfilled the study’s criteria for ‘experienced’ secondary drama teachers who had been teaching drama to a senior level for more than five years. The sample of participants aimed to include teachers from state, independent and Catholic systemic schools; regional and metropolitan areas; and males and females. Having said this, these teachers are not intended to be representatives of any demographic. Rather, they are able to bring to light their contextual experiences to the research in a narrative tradition

The following participants were interviewed:

Participant 1 **Glenda**

Regional Queensland/Co-educational State school/female

Participant 2: **Jane**

Metropolitan Queensland/Boys Catholic systemic school/female

Participant 3 **Tania**

Metropolitan New South Wales/Girl's Independent school/female

Participant 4: **Christine**

Metropolitan New South Wales/Co-educational Catholic systemic school/female

Participant 5: **John**

Australian Capital Territory/Co-educational Independent school/male

Participant 6: **Megan**

Australian Capital Territory/Co-educational State college/female

The data collection analysis of interviews took place through a modified use of Chinyowa's (2006) methodological process, which is highly suitable for research in drama education. The process involved the following phases: framing; capturing; bracketing; crystallising and interpreting. Finally, a reflexive element of analysis was employed; participants were contacted intermittently to clarify issues and elaborate on their responses concerning matters that emerged through data interpretation. It must be noted that interpretation of the data is not limited to a literal representation, given the many perspectives and contexts contained in the data. Rather, a faithful representation emerges, as the 'story-truth' (O'Brien, 1990) is examined.

Aesthetic dimensions of students work

Participants were invited to discuss recent performance tasks from their classrooms, with particular reference to senior work. Participants' comments when describing the aims of the tasks soon led to reflections on the aesthetic dimensions of performance work.

“It’s not about getting them to perform Shakespeare or Brecht or what have you. Yes, that’s the vehicle, but you really want them to develop empathy, have another way of seeing things and also witness that in each other.” *Megan*

“I don’t just want them to see the transformative nature of theatre, I want them to feel it for themselves. That way they can challenge their own perspectives or know what it is to experience something great.” *John*

However, John adds, that not every performance will have addressed the aesthetic dimensions of the art.

“Of course, not all students will achieve that. Theatre is not transformative for those just wanting to achieve the bare minimum. To really get to the essence of theatre the actor has to really work hard to feel. And when I say feel, I’m not talking Stanislavski, I’m talking being changed by the experience, or understanding why humans react the way they do.”

John’s comment raises the important issue of how an assessor knows that aesthetic learning has taken place? Is there, or should there be, criteria for judging aesthetic realisation? According to Dewey (1934), the three main components that constitute having an aesthetic experience are emotion, expression, and consummation, and all three are critical components of a drama performance. Misson & Morgan (2006) suggest that we can tell the aesthetic has been activated if there is a sense that ‘composition’ has taken place. If the work has been purposefully constructed for the context, it is able to become a definable ‘aesthetic text’ (p. 36). These definitions are reflected in the narratives as Glenda speaks, unprompted, about the importance of composition to aesthetic learning:

“It doesn’t happen by accident, you know. It’s not like a student can just be performing and suddenly this amazing thing happens. They have to really consider the character, situation, plot, narrative, space and everything and think...what is the beauty here? Without that work... and it really is hard work...they’ll never get to the aesthetics of the art.”

Gale (2005) describes what we can hope to see from students who are engaging aesthetically: analysis of aesthetic elements; development of personal and critical response through judgement and evaluative tools; appreciation of different cultures, values and contexts; understanding of disciplinary perspectives that inform the aesthetic; an active pursuit of aesthetic engagement; and an ability to articulate aesthetic processes. Several of the narratives allude to these outcomes being addressed in task criteria or the feedback they give to students. Another narrative describes how hard students strive to address the aesthetic dimensions of performance in their assessment tasks, but often seem unable to achieve any of Gale's outcomes.

"In my experience the students do really want to make the audience feel. They try really hard at it. And I think, the lower ability ones who perhaps haven't committed themselves to as much study misunderstand what this is about. I see students all the time presenting ridiculous psychodramas, screaming and crying, trying to get the audience to cry with them. It can get a bit ludicrous." *Tania*

Glenda describes a similar experience, but also points to the learning process that takes place even when students' efforts are misdirected.

"When students start drama they think that it's all about conflict. And they're always fighting and screaming in their performances, improvisations and stuff. But after a while they learn the art of restraint, accepting offers and getting to the true feeling of drama, not just putting it on. I think students learn from their mistakes. It takes some maturity to get to that point I think."

The discussion of students' learning processes leads us to an examination of how aesthetic learning is taught. Although Gale's (2005) outcomes listed above have clear learning processes embedded there are still perceptions that aesthetic learning cannot be taught (as explored in the literature). The participants in this study were all of the firm opinion that the aesthetics of performance work is able to be taught, but had hesitations in describing how. Many said that it takes "a long time" or occurs by a process of osmosis.

“Ooh! That’s a toughie. (laughs). I won’t say I don’t know, but I need to think about it.” *Jane*

“When you teach the history, conventions and what is considered good practice in theatre, and combine that with the character empathy....well, the magic is up to the individual actor to create.” *Christine*

“I’m not sure if teachers should even have a big hand in this. We can only teach what is valued in a drama performance. To a certain extent we have to pull back at some stage and we can’t do the students’ work for them. And at the end we need to assess to what extent the student achieved those skills.” *John*

Roles of the drama teacher assessor

John’s comment echoes Kempe’s (2000) earlier concern about the extent of involvement that drama teachers have in their students’ performance work. Jane’s narrative sheds light on the dual role that all drama teachers need to play.

“You set them work, then there certainly is a level of guidance that you’re expected to give. But you’re not a director. The students have to self-direct and you have to remind them of that. But still, some feedback before marking day is essential.”

The need of students to self-direct and make effective artistic choices is crucial to the success of a drama piece. The narratives reveal that students at different developmental stages have different expectations in regards to guidance on these choices.

“Sometimes they say ‘what should we do now’ or ‘how should we finish it?’, but it’s important to leave those decisions to the group. You can’t have them being totally dependent on the teacher, especially when I have to mark their dramatic decisions.” *Tania*

“As a teacher you need to be so careful. There can be cases where you give advice but they don’t execute it properly. Then when they get their marks they say ‘but you told me to do it like this’.” *Megan*

John has similar concerns, but addresses them when he speaks of the way that feedback is given.

“The issue happens when students don’t understand your feedback. If you use too many jargon words or as I call it ‘drama teacher talk’ then of course they’re going to think you just didn’t like their piece. But it’s not about that. You have to explain a few times what the criteria includes, in plain English. And I think the feedback needs to come in verbal as well as written form.”

Megan concurs, offering students her comments in audio form.

“I find audio feedback, like taping my comments, much more effective for a performance. There’s tone, inflection, and you can say so, so much more in a little recorded session.”

The need for feedback to be understood is present in all disciplines, but perhaps takes on particular significance in drama. Students receive feedback from their audience in many forms, including interaction at the time of performance, applause reactions at the conclusion and sometimes, verbal comments after the event. Some participants reflected that it can be a challenge for students to understand that the response of the audience and assessor can differ.

“It’s hard for them to understand. But the audience isn’t sitting there with the criteria sheet. Sometimes they say ‘but my mum loved it.’” *Christine*

“I find the most valuable feedback they get is the judgments of their peers or their audience. But that feedback is entirely subjective, based on how they reacted to the piece. It’s also coloured by their feelings for the student, how they’re feeling at the time etc. We are in a different position and might have seen fifteen performances that week.” *Glenda*

As explored in the literature, the assessor has a different role, and therefore may arrive at different conclusions to the audience member. All narratives made mention of criterion referenced assessment procedures which they found to be largely helpful in explaining the students’ results or even justifying their judgments when needed.

Subjective and objective judgments

Glenda's use of the word 'subjective' is interesting. The statement implies that the assessor's role should be divorced from the subjective context where only objective judgments are permitted. As in the literature, this issue was highly contentious for participants. Several comments alluded to the participants themselves having conflicting ideas on the issue. To begin with, some participants used the term 'objective' to describe the way they assess.

"But I mean overall, as a professional teacher, you should be able to objectively look and say...Did they stay focused? Did they stay in character? Were they working off the other characters? Was their space well used? Were their gestures appropriate, and their reactions?" *Jane*

But what Jane is referring to here is technical mastery, in which perhaps objective judgment would be highly valued. Having said this, drama is not a field where quantitative assessments take place based on right or wrong answers, nor are they seeking a competency style checklist of achieved skills. Humans are subjective beings and further to this, drama teachers are on the lookout for empathy, emotional characteristics and aesthetic values.

"Ultimately, the results are what you value as a teacher and marker. If the student is able to get to that essence of the drama and make you feel, they are going to do well." *Glenda*

Several of the participants arrived at the conclusion of taking an 'informed' (Aitken, 2007) perspective as being the preferred disposition when assessing.

"I don't think it is possible to be entirely objective, and we shouldn't try to be either. In marking a creative art you're judging how the audience reacted to what they created. And you're part of that audience." *John*

"The student is trying to make you feel. It's unreasonable to deny a natural reaction just because you're marking. I've laughed and cried at the same time as I'm marking. And that's not wrong." *Megan*

These comments remind us not to set up a diarchy of the subjective and objective where never the twain shall meet. Different types of responses can compliment each other, combining to create a full picture of the students' achievement in relation to the task requirements and criteria. Though, the way that this is expressed is critical. As Gordon (2004) says, the "knowing it when they find it" (p. 62) approach to marking is no longer acceptable in contemporary education. Christine reminds us of the importance of transparency in the process through which those judgments are arrived at.

"It's all a bit academic to consider whether your marking is objective, subjective, comes from your gut, heart, whatever. At the end of the day, students want to know how they performed and that must relate to what you taught, what the task asked of them and what the rubric said."

Continuing the conversation

In live theatre, aesthetic dimensions interact with technical skills, drama repertoire and cultural performance conventions. The field is certainly intricate, but these intricacies make it fascinatingly complex. All participants reported that they enjoyed the opportunity to muse over the issues, with some mentioning that professional dialogue on those matters was rare. More dialogue amongst drama teachers would help to understand the complex nature of aesthetic judgments in this artistic field.

Additionally, as identified by the literature and participants, drama is a field in which subjective judgments are permissible or even necessary in order to establish the successes or areas for improvement within a student's performance. Students are creating aesthetic texts in which they are aiming to elicit reactions from the audience and changes within themselves. Those factors warrant a response from the assessor that is both based on their own aesthetic values and the criteria at hand. The teacher's role in the creation of a piece will vary, depending on the content, task and level of autonomy required by the student. Ultimately, what is assessed must reflect what was taught. In drama this includes aesthetic learning, which can indeed be addressed in the classroom. Once again, further professional dialogue will help us to articulate the aesthetic elements of performance to each other and to those outside the drama fraternity.

Finally, we must remind ourselves that the challenges of assessing in drama are reflective of the field itself. Drama, like performance assessment, is connected to the human experience, contains aesthetic elements and requires creativity and imagination to be accessed. These challenges should be embraced as they reveal to students some of the challenges of life itself. In life there are multiple solutions to problems and these can elicit complex reactions from others. These reactions provide us with a myriad of perspectives in return, which we can use to further our future endeavours.

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CROSSING BOUNDARIES:

Jacki Cartlidge

Canterbury Christ Church University

Jacki Cartlidge is a senior lecturer at Canterbury Christ Church University in the United Kingdom. She has thirty years' experience of teaching non-traditional and older learners at all levels and she has been active in the development and delivery of a range of programmes. Her research interest is combining psychoanalytical perspectives and narrative theory in an educational context.

USING FACT AND FICTION IN ADULT LEARNING

ABSTRACT

This article argues for a creative approach to adult learning in times of rising fees and austerity in the funding of adult learning in the United Kingdom. It emphasises the possibilities of crossing the boundaries of fact and fiction through the use of auto/biography, biography, fiction and non-fiction to promote adult learning. It briefly suggests a methodological approach and rationale for auto/biographical and narrative writing. The third section, via a starting point of a photograph, demonstrates this creative approach to literacy and adult learning. The article encourages adult educators to adopt a creative range of strategies and viewpoints to enable adults to discover themselves and their world. The article goes on to demonstrate that the combination of learning objects, a photograph, a play and a film, while acknowledging and incorporating literacy skills, can contribute to the process of understanding and meaning-making in adults' lives. Above all the article is a plea to maintain the creative and poetic features of our work as adult educators.

This article was written shortly after I signed a petition launched to save the Adult and Community Provision of the University of Sussex, in the United Kingdom, its imminent demise another instance of retrenchment in the provision of broader activities and courses for adults provided by universities over the past few years. The article argues for an imaginative and creative approach to adult courses and learning which can contribute to literacy demands, while providing a meaningful learning experience for adults. In order to achieve this I argue for the crossing of boundaries between fact and fiction through using an auto/biography or biographical framework in creative and personal writing. I believe it is possible for such an approach to give adults learning experiences that may also contribute to their understanding of social issues.

The genesis of the paper developed from an auto/biographical research project I was undertaking which involved a teacher of English in a Further Education college on the south east coast of the United Kingdom (Cartlidge, 2011). Auto/biography and using narrative as a methodology is an increasingly utilised approach in research (Andrews, Squire and Tambloukou 2008, Clough 2002; Goodson, Biesta, Gert, Tedder & Adair, 2010; Merrill & West 2009)

Argument for Auto/biographical and/or Biographical Methodology

An auto/biographical methodology involves the researcher reflexively using their own autobiography to trace resonances and find themes in the biographies of others within the area being researched; in this case, their work as teachers of adults. Strict ethical guidelines are followed, and as Stanley comments “Writing biographic processes [can also make]... visible the existence of something usually invisible and effectively denied.” (Stanley, 1992, p.178) and help adults understand their life-world.

During thirty years of teaching adults I have discovered that they respond positively to using autobiography and biography as part of their learning experience; I have used it in a range of non-fiction and fictional narratives and through a range of media, including

the subjects own writing and photographs, poetry, fiction, drama (both text based and performance/film). I have used it initially to stimulate writing and literacy skills (oral, reading, and written) but a significant additional benefit arose that helped adults to have a broader understanding of their own lives, and that of others. This was the case with Liz, who was an interviewee in an auto/biographical research project (Cartlidge, 2012). In response to the interviews, Liz started writing a chapter from her life, and went on to use it auto/biographically in the classroom.ii I continued to think about our discussion and considered how it could be formalised in a wider classroom context when teaching adults.

Following several interviews, Liz brought a family photograph to show me. I had not requested one but I realised that the photograph was a transitional object (Winnicott, 1971/1980) that could be used in the interview as a means of discussing what the interviewee considered to be a difficult topic, that is, children born before/out of wedlock.



Protagonists real and fictional

The biographical narrative is concerned with Liz's family. She is from a working class background in a 'deprived' area in Dover on the south-eastern coast of the United Kingdom. She is currently a further education lecturer in the locality.

Whilst we looked at her mother's wedding photograph dated from 1949, she identified one of the bridesmaid's as her 'aunt', adding that she had been brought up as her mother's sister, but was in fact the natural daughter of another woman in the photograph. Liz's mother had told her that she "always knew" that the aunt was not her real sister. The real relationship was known only within the family. As we continued to gaze at the photograph, she pointed to another uncle from the same family group; he was in fact the husband of the 'aunt', who was the bridesmaid. He, too, had been brought up by a woman in the family who was not his mother. His birth mother, also in the photo, had never married. The illegitimate aunt had married a man from a similar family situation. There they all were in the photo smiling happily, if a little stiffly. Neither of the birth mothers had ever married, and this suggests unrecorded sorrow and loss.

The photo had two effects, first it made me consider the importance of an image/photo used as a transitional object, identified by Winnicott (1975) in providing a means of accessing autobiography and discussing a difficult topic with an adult; and secondly it made me wonder about the frequency of such events, and how could the sacrifices and pain behind such events be captured. The photograph contains a narrative, and itself prompted me to consider the importance of an image both visual and verbal in capturing a situation which could then be explored; and finally it made me think that only in poetry/fiction combined with the image could the emotional complexity be addressed. These narratives 'demand' to be read in a different way, other good objects, such as fiction, drama and film are needed to assist understanding and meaning making. It is, therefore, possible to argue that the intersection of fictionalised and actual life narrative provides a plausible and safe space for interrogating themes that have resonances for many adults. Fiction could be a "good object" in helping to explore themes often difficult for adults.

I considered how the photo could be used. What follows is a methodological approach resulting from these considerations. I decided to focus on the lives of three generations of women in three different contexts; a biographical interview (2009); a play 'My Mother Said I Never Should...' (Keatley, 1986); and Almodóvar's (2006)

film 'Volver'. The common theme is children brought up in families where the birth mother is not the actual carer, but who may be a grandmother, a sibling, or as the result of an incestuous relationship, both sister and mother. The exploration of the interview, the play and the film will be divided into three sections; the first will identify the protagonists both real and fictional and their stories; the second will examine themes; and the third will look at narrative and theoretical perspectives. Throughout the argument promotes the importance of fiction and poetry alongside acquiring written and oral skills.

The theme is a taboo subject, particularly if incest is involved and for that reason is unlikely to be captured by statistics or scientific research. It is, therefore, likely to occur far more frequently than could be statistically captured, such instances remain known in the family but are mostly not discussed outside, they remain hidden. In any case statistics can in no way convey the pain and sacrifice involved; even in an auto/biographical research project the interview did not capture the topic and communicate it fully. Such a theme is a deep and hidden presentation of the human condition running through different strata of society and different cultures, that poetry, in its broadest sense, is a more likely way of capturing and portraying the pain and sacrifice involved. Adults interpreting and finding meaning in this sense are far more likely to become lifelong learners and I maintain that a poetic approach is needed for lifelong learning.

Aristotle's definition of poetry includes both drama and literature, furthermore, Ricoeur (cited in Valdes, 1991, p.450-451) claims that "Within poetry there is an attempt...to recreate expressions for deeply sunk experiences which are at the root of human life concerning... life and death, guilt and love...expressing complex and very subtle feeling...which struggle to find words."

Using fact and fiction to explore common themes

A brief synopsis of the story behind the photo has been given above, and now it might be helpful to include a synopsis of the two fictional narratives: the play, 'My mother says' (Keatley 1988/2006), and the film, *Volver* (Almodóvar 2006). In the former, Doris, born illegitimately

in 1900, abandons her promising teaching career for marriage and motherhood in 1924. After the war her daughter Margaret marries and becomes the mother of Jackie, who becomes pregnant while at university, and, finding it difficult as an impoverished single mother, gives her daughter to her mother to bring up. The agreement is that the daughter, Rosie, will not be told that her sister is in fact her birth mother until the age of sixteen. Rosie actually finds out shortly before her sixteenth birthday, leading to a dramatic *dénouement* of shock and disillusionment. There is one stage set for the play with symbolic props used to indicate the time shifts and movement between the households in Manchester and London. The fact that the play has been translated into twenty two languages (Atkinson, 2005) speaks of the resonance it holds across cultures.

The chronological time scales of the generations overlap with Liz's family, but time in the play, as I will discuss later in the theoretical section, is telescoped to bring all the female protagonists together as small children. The women in Liz's family, too, made sacrifices for the individual development of the next generation. In the situation of the actual biography and the play there is the contrast of class, one a working class family one a middle class family. However, it is noticeable how close Jackie draws to E.M. Forster's (1910) "abyss", impoverished people at the bottom of the class structure, in the brief period she experiences as a single parent when the baby's father and money are illusive and a university education and the possibilities it could bring recede.

Amodóvar's film shares a working class similarity with Liz's narrative. *Volver* is set in Spain in 2006 in a working class area of Madrid, and in a village in the wild windy region of Alcanfor de las Infantas, noted for madness and ghosts, symbolised by windmills. We are in Don Quixote country. Raimunda, Sole (her sister) and Raimunda's fourteen year old daughter Paula visit their home in the village to clean the tombstones of their dead parents/grandparents who died in a fire four years earlier. At the graveside they meet Agustina who looks after their mother's elderly and confused sister, Tia Paula. Agustina's mother disappeared at the same time as the fire. Tia Paula dies after their return to

Madrid and the villagers say they have seen the ghost of Irene, Raimunda's mother, in Tia Paula's house. Back in Madrid, Paula's father, claiming she is not his natural daughter, sexually assaults her and in defending herself Paula kills him. It later turns out that his claim is true but Raimunda tells her daughter that this does not justify his action. Raimunda deals with the body and is prepared to shoulder the responsibility. The reason becomes clear much later in the film when we learn that Raimunda had been assaulted by her own father and had born a child, Paula, who is both Raimunda's daughter and her sister. Irene is not a ghost as the village community suspects, but has had to remain hidden because of her crime. She wants to confess and make peace with Raimunda, who hates her mother for not noticing her father was abusing her; Irene also confesses to starting the fire in which her husband and not she, but Agustina's mother, was killed. Irene had discovered they were having an affair. This is the reason she secretly looks after the elderly and infirm Tia Paula until her death, it is an act of atonement, and the film closes with her nursing the dying Agustina, the woman whose mother she has killed. Irene says that it is the least she can do to in reparation for what she has done and she is contented that she and Raimunda have been reconciled and will manage together, both having husbands murdered by family members.

The bones of the synopses in the two fictional narratives do not acknowledge the extremes of feeling, nor the nuances and extremes of behaviour; nor do they capture the humour, pain or the resilience of the women who owned the responsibility and made sacrifices of their lives. This is where a poetic interpretation of such narratives has the advantage over a straight forward interview or linear narrative given in the synopses.

When discussing *Volver* with Liz it prompted the memory of another photograph; one of her father at the age of eleven where he is sitting on a beach with two boys. She asked him if they were his 'mates' but he said no, the boys were cousins who came every summer holidays. In term time they went to a charity boarding school and stayed with his family at other times. He

wondered about this because his grandparents, who raised him, had very little money; eventually his grandmother told him that her daughter's husband had abused the children. The resilience of this redoubtable woman is endless and on this occasion she faced up to the fact that her son-in-law was abusing her grandchildren and, in the way that women do, she simply coped with it, and allowed them all to survive.

Fictional objects an aid to understanding and interpretation

When I looked at the interview transcript and the photograph I considered how I might approach such a topic with adults. It was then that it occurred to me that Keatley (1986) and Almodóvar's (2006) films might allow a creative and playful way for adults to explore the themes identified above, but at a distance from their own lives because of the potential sensitivity of the topic for some adult learners. It also can give adults a different notion of time, events and themes linked by an emotional chronology rather than a linear one.

Almodóvar is quite blatant in his interaction of fact and fiction; in *Volver* he uses 'real' people alongside the actors and a publicity photo of the film shows actors and villagers intermingled, fiction and fact working together (photo below).



In the use of these non-fiction and fiction narratives it is the survival, and above all the resilience of the women, that is being celebrated and recorded in a range of narrative techniques discussed in this article. It is an understanding of life that may not be captured in a more factual, documentary approach. Almodóvar (2006), in autobiographical comments, recognises the strength of women “It was the women in our house who were in the saddle”, and “... women are stronger than us. They face more directly the problems that confront them” (Almodóvar, 2010). The position of men remains peripheral in all three narratives; it is the main reason Almodóvar is able to create humour surrounding the murder. In both of the constructed narratives the marginalisation of men is quite deliberate, Keatley claims she kept the men offstage because “...[she] wanted female language and silence, humour and, sexiness and violence to walk on stage in a way which doesn’t happen if men are present” (1994, p.lxxx).

She acknowledges that some men recognise it without feeling threatened and affirms the remark of one critic (Hulme, 1987, cited in Keatley 1987, p.lxxx) who notes “In this play men are banished off stage...but are rarely out of mind.” Keatley also claims that she sees the mother/ daughter relationships as a “lens to look at huge themes that concern all people” (1994, p.lxxx). The shifting of perspectives in one of the elements that gives the narrative a poetic quality for me.

Themes

The most obvious of the emergent themes is children raised believing someone to be their mother, but who, although related, is not their birth mother. The exception to this is Paula, where Raimunda is both her mother and sister, but again a relationship is hidden. I have suggested that this occurrence is more frequent than is captured by statistical methods, but the amount of literature associated with such themes indicates that this condition within the human situation has to be conveyed by other means. A range of narratives and story-telling are the most obvious.

The basic human instinct for survival and protection of the family runs through the generations, the women in the families being

prepared to sacrifice their own lives for the future generations. A second theme is the resilience of women. In Liz's family her great grandmother not only brought up her father (his mother died shortly after childbirth), she had also brought up her own children and walked fifty miles across Kent so her husband could find work in a coalmine in Dover. Her resilience survived the early death of her husband, and the need to provide for her family, and left her with sufficient strength to deal with her son's abuse of her grandsons. It is the strength and resilience of the women that is a driving force in all three narratives. Jackie's mother, Doris, in *My Mother Said...* gives up a teaching career for marriage, and is willing to undertake an unfulfilling job when her daughter leaves her with her own daughter, Rosie, to bring up.

The major dilemma in all three narratives is whether to inform the children of their natural parents. In Liz's family's case the children knew, but not revealing the hidden secret results in the tragic and painful dénouement at the close of *My Mother Said...* with Rosie exclaiming "You wanted your own life more than you wanted mine!...I used to hate you, only I never knew why." The fact that her natural mother is now successful, well off, and tells Rosie "I could give you everything now" does not appease the girl.

Again an image (Haynes 1988) from the play provides the narrative; it depicts Jackie, on her childhood swing, with Rosie, her natural mother, after Rosie has revealed the family secret.



Jackie as well as Rosie ends the play feeling alienated; Keatley, bringing the three characters Doris, her mother Margaret and Jackie together as children, and highlights this emotion when Jackie says “The others won’t play with me any more.” The manipulation of time and poetic licence available to the playwright allows Keatley to bring the three generations of women together as children. The implicit danger of keeping such a secret hidden from the children concerned is apparent, and provides discussion points for adults in class. Keatley (1994, p.xxxix) defends Jackie, saying she has heard her described as selfish, but never being credited for the opportunities she wished her daughter to have.

Raimunda, too, in *Volver*, hates her mother, Irene, because she did not notice her father’s abuse of her, but the conclusion of the film is much more positive. It ends with their reconciliation because Irene is penitent, she acknowledges she was wrong, and wants to atone, she has suffered the pain and has witnessed the incipient danger to the emotional health of the relationship if secrets remain hidden. Paula too, quickly forgives her mother for allowing her to believe her step father was her actual father, the unsentimental treatment of his death, and Raimunda telling Paula, “I am responsible”, indicates the strength and depth of their relationship, and above all the need for Paula to be protected by her mother/sister and the primary position Paula holds in Raimunda’s world. We do not witness any disbelief or anxiety when Paula discovers Raimunda is both her mother and sister, only an acknowledgement of the sorrow she feels for what the woman had experienced. It is interesting that in Liz’s narrative all the family, and only they, knew of the complex relationships and accepted them. In all three narratives the stress is carried by women. Again this provides good discussion material for use in the classroom.

Narratives and theoretical perspectives

This article considers an interview and two fictional narratives, and I am arguing for a creative approach to adult learning, one that does not solely insist on acquiring grammatical and structuring skills of a functional skills course. These skills can be acquired in a more meaningful way. A methodological approach using auto/biography

and rationale has been considered. I want to emphasise that I do not consider the intermingling of fact and fiction produces a major tension in the discussion or in the classroom as part of lifelong learning for adults. Fiction can illuminate life histories, Bruner (1986) supports this point, when he asserts that fiction in literature opens us to real-world dilemmas. This is decidedly Keatley's intention; she indicates that she wrote the play after five years living in Manchester and Leeds "...listening to the way women talk, whose lives were very different from my own" (1994, p.xxiii); I feel a resonance with this as a researcher who is capturing life histories. Keatley's sociological ambition, that she wanted the play to have wide social impact, required her to make a poetic leap into C.Wright Mill's (1959) 'sociological imagination', she did not have any children of her own when the play was written. Almodóvar admits to using his own life experience in his work "all my movies have an autobiographical dimension, but that is indirectly...In fact I am behind everything that happens and is said" (2010).

Narrative and Time

A linear and chronologically structured narrative is non-existent in any of the three narratives. In the classroom this can provide discussion about time, memory and narrative. The interviewee's account of her family came at an informal meeting, after lengthy interviews, when she brought me her photographs. In the play and the film people's life narratives are held together by what I term an 'emotional chronology'. In a linear account of a life history a clarifying moment often has to be postponed, thus reducing emotional impact and understanding. Keatley deliberately rejects a linear structure and moves back and forward through time; she has the three generations of mothers appear on stage together playing as children of similar ages, meeting at a magic place, a waste ground, outside time and space. The juxtaposition of characters as children and adults highlights important themes and pivotal moments in the play; an example of poetic elements used highly effectively. Keatley is not aiming at mimesis, her intention is to explore the complexity of feeling and issues via "a creative imagination" not a "reproductive

imagination” (Ricoeur, 1983, p.243). She is concerned less with chronological events but rather with narrative as a means to interpret life events as part of a whole. The audience has to read/view in a deeper way, acknowledge and become a part of a poetic imagination. Keatley’s presentation of the group of children is non-naturalistic. Similarly Almodóvar’s arresting image of the Raimunda and Sole’s mother in the boot of the car raises doubt and uncertainty both for the audience and the characters; Sole, and the audience, believing Irene dead, think she is a ghost. Both Keatley and Almodóvar use a non-naturalistic approach within a realistic framework. It allows a framed narrative, a story within a story that is also apparent in Liz’s narrative. In all three narratives there is a telescoping of time, the narrative always within time, but time revisited, anticipated. This is how time in a semi/unstructured interview occurs, and in the fictional narratives a deliberate manipulation of time encourages an interpretive reading.

A non-naturalistic approach allows repetition both verbal and visual, for example the children singing and appearing at critical moments in *My Mother Said...*; Keatley (1994, p.lxv) emphasises “the dialogue is not documentary or naturalistic”. Repetition in *Volver* is also both verbal and visual: the wind-swept journey across La Mancha between Madrid and the village; the song ‘Volver’ itself, is another framed narrative within the film, evocatively expressing the concept of returning to places/events; all serve to emphasise the different lives experienced by the protagonists. This is what a research interview alone, even with a photograph, was unable to accomplish. It takes a poetic imagination for the hidden to be illuminated.

The symbolic value of the image cannot be overstated in all three narratives: the wedding photograph in the participant interview; the car and the mother in the car boot and under the bed, symbolising the theme of something hidden; the scene of reconciliation on the bench when symbolically and literally Raimunda and her mother, Irene, draw close together; and the ever present car journey the windy plain of La Mancha with a back drop of turbo windmills, suggesting movement, myth and a possibility of madness. Almodóvar is conscious of narrativity using images, he claims “my first ambition

was to be a writer...[but] it seems I have more capacity for telling a story in images” (2010). Keatley also discusses the deliberate use of symbolic props that appear throughout the play, the piano, the solitaire board, and especially the baby clothes, one red sock left with the natural mother, when Doris takes the baby away. All the objects re-appear at the end of the play when Jackie has to face the loss of her mother to death and her daughter’s rejection.

It is the symbolic use of words and images, and a sense of the poetic that is missing from linear and chronological life histories. The anguish experienced by people concerned is barely captured in an interview. It is at this intersection of the three narratives that is it possible to reach both the cognitive and the affective domains. I agree with Ricoeur when he asserts that “the images created by the talent of the artist are not less real but more real because they augment reality” (Ricoeur, 1979, cited in Valdes, 1991, p.130).

It is through a conscious use of the real and the fictional that issues can be addressed on a deeper and wider level and hidden themes can be experienced by a range of audiences, not necessarily cathartic, but certainly in terms of issues and themes that might remain hidden or marginalised and drawing them to the attention of a wider audience; focusing on the lives of the people which E.M. Forster considers in *Howard’s End* indicates that some aspects of the abyss in which human beings find themselves are ‘better left to the poets and statisticians’, I hope I am demonstrated that the poets, in the broadest sense, have the advantage and provide a better way for adults to understand the complexities of the human condition and provide a means of learning for life.

Information of the kind considered in this article is not explored or utilised by statisticians who would not be able to produce data; people strive to keep some life experiences hidden. A ‘poetic imagination’ and the recognition of the poetic in its broadest sense enables us to capture what other approaches to learning cannot.

I agree with Bruner when he states that the “conversion of private trouble... into public plight that makes well wrought narrative so powerful” (cited in Knights & Thurger-Dawson, 2006, p.146). The

poetic can illuminate and awaken us to the possibility and potential of a new way of knowing and enhance our understanding of hidden and marginalised sections of society.

Conclusion

The paper indicates, in the broadest sense, that adults studying for literacy purposes, where there is a choice and selection of literature, can be enabled by an imaginative teacher to explore social issues more deeply and meaningfully in a contextualised format in the safe space of the classroom. Above all this is a plea when adult courses other than those at basic skills levels are contracting, to leave room for the poetic.

Adults need creative learning and the use of the poetic in its broadest sense. As teachers, we need to remember that of functional skills are not all that adults need. I consider an imaginative approach to adult learning suggested above will be more likely to promote lifelong learning, than an adherence to the constraints of a purely functional literacy agenda.

Notes

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i British Educational Research Association (BERA) guidelines

ii See Cartlidge, J. (2012) 'White Cliffs, White Horses'

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