GEMS (Gender, Education, Music, & Society)

An online, peer-reviewed journal published in cooperation with Queen’s University
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Volume 6, Number 4, December 2013
Editor: Dr. Colleen Pinar
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GEMS is a peer-reviewed, online journal that explores the myriad intersections between gender, education, music and society. Emphasis is on the ways in which music teaching and learning can be used to re-dress and eliminate inequalities brought about through ideologies of domination by creating an open-ness to the musical experience that promotes access to all (and thus by extension, also the ways in which music teaching and learning have not been transformative in the past). Gender will be approached, not as male or female, but as a continuum of possibilities sustained by socially and historically constructed notions of masculinity and femininity that interact in complex, often competing and contradictory ways. A wide variety of methodological (historical, ethnographic, philosophical, sociological, etc.) and inter-disciplinary orientations will be featured, with contributors encouraged to make use of the variety of creative options presented by the electronic medium.

Materials submitted to GEMS must conform to the current edition of one of the following writing style manuals: *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*, *The Chicago Manual of Style*, or *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*. Articles and Book Reviews may not mix styles within a single manuscript. To allow for the identity of the author(s) to be transparent, it is requested that both first and last names be used when citing and when listed in the references.

For Text:
Roberta Lamb and Julia Koza brought feminist critiques of music education.

For References:

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Questions or comments? gems_editor@yahoo.com
Editorial

I would like to welcome GEMS readers to the December 2013 issue. Although I am not really “into” trivia, one of my favorite radio stations has “trivia Fridays”. It makes a long week feel lighter, always makes me laugh, and I learn a few interesting tidbits. On a more scholarly note, one of my biggest joy as a researcher is historical research. I can spend hours looking through historical archives. Therefore, I thought I would combine the two. Welcome to GEMS trivia.

First Question: Between the years 2002 and 2008, GEMS was published every year except for what year?

Second Question: Who said “My starting point for feminist analyses of music education was to consider the addition of women to the content of music teaching and learning…”

Third Question: How many issues of GEMS were published before being transferred to the current online host at Queen’s University?

Fourth Question: Who stated “What makes these issues feminist, of course, is not so much that they deal with women or social-emotional climates and spaces commonly associated with women, but because they seek to identify instances of oppression and injustice, reveal assumptions on which they are based and processes by which they work, and offer alternatives that would quite literally ‘help’…”

Fifth and Last Question (This one is hard): GEMS takes its title from what? Hint not “Gender, Education, Music, Society”.

GEMS is actively seeking articles and book reviews submissions. Please contact the editor at gems_editor@yahoo.com.

I would like GEMS and GRIME readers to support the authors whose articles and book review are included in the December 2013 edition of GEMS. You can post your comments pertaining to individual articles published in GEMS on GEMS blog page at http://gendereducationmusicandsociety.blogspot.com/

In the December 2013 issue of GEMS, Drs. Jennifer R. McGee and Dawson R. Hancock in their article titled, “Arts-Integration To Enhance Student Learning” provides the reader with overview of an arts-integration program and an external evaluation of the program. It was concluded that the infusion of the arts into the elementary school curricula could result in many positive outcomes related to student learning and development.

Jennifer Mischel-Klein shares her experiences and observations of the 100th anniversary of the Girl Scouts of America. She reveals how Girl Scout songs are more than just for “pure fun” and how Girl Scout songs help shape future women leaders in her article titled: “Girl Scouts: How Songs Lead Them To Success”. Mischel-Klein also provides examples of different girl’s experiences in Girl Scouts.

Jennifer Blackwell’s article, “Music Education, Recording Technology, And The Illusion Of Perfection” investigates professional music recordings and their effect on the physical and psychological well being of music students. She discusses how recorded music can aid the music educator to motivate students and to set standards for learning.

Lastly is Anne Wessels book review of The Theatre of Urban: Youth And Schooling In Dangerous Times by Kathleen Gallagher. Gallagher provides an ethnography of school sites in Toronto and New York. These distinct learning environments are captivating to the reader as well as her examples of pedagogy that can be difficult and conflict-ridden. Wessels also shares how Gallagher and her book motivated her learning experiences and shaped her professionally.

Trivia Answers
First Question: 2005.
Second Question: Roberta Lamb (2006, Fall, 4, Feature Articles).
Fifth Question: In the first issue of GEMS (2002, Spring, 1), it states that “GEMS takes its title from the way in which light moves through prisma, creating within its own play myriad possibilities for defining ourselves and music education”.

Dr. Colleen Pinar, Editor
Arts-Integration To Enhance Student Learning

Dr. Jennifer R. McGee
Dr. Dawson R. Hancock

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This research was a service project solicited by ArtStart, a program ran by ArtsTeach, a non-profit organization who was supported in part by the research grant from the U.S. Department of Education.

Abstract: The use of arts-integration to enhance student learning is a practice grounded in empirical research. A 2003 report by the National Association of State Boards of education (NASBE) highlighted the substantial body of research showing benefits of arts in educational curriculum and also called for stronger emphasis on the arts in educational curriculum. The purpose of this study was to highlight one arts-integration program in one school district that was a collaboration between the school district and a local arts and science council. This study highlights the findings of an external evaluation of the program conducted by researchers at a local university. Data from Teaching Artists (TAs), Classroom Teachers (CTs), school arts teachers, and external evaluators were used to provide evidence of the effectiveness of the program. Findings indicated that the goals of the program were met and allowed for the external evaluators to make recommendations to program stakeholders.
In a 2003 report, "The Complete Curriculum: Ensuring a Place for the Arts and Foreign Languages in American Schools" a study group from the National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE, 2003) noted that a substantial body of research highlighted the benefits of arts in educational curriculum and called for stronger emphasis on the arts and foreign language. More recently, a report by Keven McCarthy, Elizabeth Ondaatje, Arthur Brooks, and Andras Szanto (2005) on the visual arts suggested that the art experience, "can connect people more deeply to the world and open them to new ways of seeing," creating the foundation to forge social bonds and community cohesion. Strong arts programming in schools helps close a gap that has left many children behind (Rabkin & Redmond, 2006, p. 3).

In response to research about the importance of arts education, one large and progressive urban school district in the southeastern portion of the United States recognized the need to enhance arts education in its schools as a way to bolster student achievement and meet curricular goals. The school district, in partnership with an arts and science council, formed a local non-profit arts organization to develop arts-integration programming for 3rd and 4th grade classrooms aligned with curriculum. This organization ran several arts-integration programs at the time of this research, including the subject of this research, ArtStart.

Partially supported by a grant from the United States Department of Education, the overarching goals of ArtStart were to: (a) foster cooperation among Teaching Artists (TAs), Classroom Teachers (CTs), and arts teachers to make the arts an integral part of learning; (b) inspire students to think critically and use multiple intelligences to advance literacy learning; (c) generate opportunities for students and teachers to increase individual creativity by working with practicing local artists; and (d) support district, state, and national standards for literacy. Each academic year, the goals of the program were made more specific to focus on certain areas of interest. The primary goals of ArtStart were:

1. Support increased academic achievement for all students, especially in 3rd and 4th grade writing;
2. Help teachers and TAs grow in their use of high quality, arts-integrated instruction; and
3. Foster strong, collaborative relationships between TAs, CTs, and arts teachers.

To gather more feedback regarding the potential effectiveness of ArtStart, four additional areas of interest were assessed. Those four areas were:

1. Increase students’ appreciation for the arts;
2. Increase students’ engagement in classroom activities;
3. Decrease students’ disruptive behaviors in the classroom; and
4. Increase students’ attendance at school.

The purpose of this research is to provide a contextual summative program evaluation of ArtStart in order to give evidence of the impact of arts education in the form of arts-integration in schools.

**Methodology**

**Participants**

ArtStart participants were 3rd and 4th grade students, CTs, TAs, and often arts teachers. CTs varied depending on the participating school. In some instances, it was a regular classroom teacher while in other instances the CT was a physical education teacher, dance teacher, art teacher, or music teacher. Sometimes there was a CT who was designated by ArtsTeach to be the lead instructor at the school and other arts teachers were not involved. In all, 39 schools participated in the program. Fourteen individuals or organizations served as TAs. TAs were approved artists from the local community and surrounding area who were trained to use arts-integration in schools. There art forms varied widely.

**Context**

To begin preparation for the upcoming academic year and provide some foundation for the formation of relationships between CTs and TAs, a four-day ArtStart workshop was held in the preceding summer. School leaders who had chosen to participate in ArtStart were required to have a representative attend the workshop. During the workshop, CTs and TAs concurrently received training on how to integrate arts into the classroom. In addition, CTs from each school
collaborated to design lesson plans using elements of music, theatre, storytelling, dance, and/or visual arts. The lesson plans were collected and made available on the ArtsTeach website.

On the last day of the July workshop, the TAs performed during an artist showcase to demonstrate their art form to the CTs and also how they would integrate arts into the classroom during a residency. After the showcase, teachers met with the TAs and decided with whom they wished to work during the upcoming school year by ranking their preferences on a form. After the workshop, ArtsTeach staff matched each school with a TA in accordance with the teachers’ requests.

Once TAs were assigned to schools, an initial meeting was held between the TA, CTs, and an ArtsTeach staff member to review the Art in the Classroom goals and to create lesson plans for the residency. The goal for the program was to use arts-integrated lessons to enhance literacy. Each CT was entitled to six hours of an in-class residency where arts-integrated instruction was to be presented by the TA with the active support of the CT. At the conclusion of each residency, all parties were expected to meet to evaluate program strengths and weaknesses and to offer suggestions for future arts integration activities.

Data Collection and Analysis
Six external evaluators from a large university located in the vicinity of the school district conducted an external evaluation of the ArtStart program. Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected. To identify the extent to which ArtStart goals were accomplished, 66 classroom observations were conducted by evaluators. The evaluators took field notes during the arts-integrated lessons and stayed for the duration of the lesson. Evaluators, CTs and TAs also completed a survey. The survey contained questions about the success of the implementation of the program and the perception of how well the goals of the program were met. The survey employed a five-point Likert scale and also included space for justification for their ratings. The Likert scale items were rated from 1 (“strongly disagree”) to 5 (“strongly agree”). Participants could choose a rating of zero if they felt the item was not applicable. Scores greater than 3 suggested support for the item. In addition to the survey and field notes, evaluators reviewed student work, instructional methods, and informally interviewed CTs, TAs, and students. The informal interviews took the form of sidebar conversations during, before, or after the residency. In most cases, the actual conversation was not captured but the evaluator took notes of the conversation immediately following. Descriptive data from the surveys was compiled using SPSS. Qualitative data from the surveys and anecdotal information from the informal interviews was used to support the quantitative findings.

Results
Evaluation findings suggest that all three ArtStart goals were met and that two of the four additional areas of interest were evaluated positively. We will address each goal in order and then proceed to address each area of interest in order.

Overall, CTs, TAs, and evaluators all indicated that they believed the ArtStart program increased academic achievement for 3rd and 4th grade students in reading and writing (Goal #1). Although TAs in separate 3rd and 4th grade classrooms rated this item as “agree,” four TAs who worked with combined 3rd/4th grade classrooms rated this item 3.25 (slightly above “no opinion”), suggesting that achievement was difficult to evaluate when residencies were spread between many classrooms or grade levels. The evaluators agreed that this goal was met with 3rd grade and combined 3rd/4th grade classrooms. However, for the 4th grade only, this item received a mean score of 3.63, between “no opinion” and “agree.” Individual classroom activities within the 4th grade residencies contributed to these scores, which ranged from 2 (“disagree”) to 5 (“strongly agree”).

The mean scores for this goal were higher among CTs than TAs and evaluators, likely due to the increased opportunities of teachers to influence students’ academic achievement. Results of the qualitative component of this study revealed that CTs’ comments about their students’ achievement were positive. For example: “Students have been able to make the connection between writing a story and composing music. Their knowledge and understanding have been enhanced.” Another teacher stated, “The writing is much better. The students are using specific details in writing.” Evaluators noted that in residencies
where the teacher felt there was an increase in achievement, the CT and TA demonstrated a respectful partnership, shared responsibility for the outcome of the residency, and evidence of diligent planning.

Residencies were conducted during relatively short periods of time -- normally six hours total. In some cases, the length of the residency combined with the type of residency the school and TA had constructed made it difficult for teachers to assess academic achievement. One teacher stated “…I’m not sure five days really changed their achievement.” In this particular residency, the art teacher and the TA were the lead instructors for creating a visual art project that included writing, but the residency was conducted in the art room and the CT did not have a role in the instruction. At another school, a CT responded with the comment, “It has not increased their achievement (lack of time), but it has increased their exposure and imagination.” This particular CT was an art teacher involved in the residency with the TA and the students’ regular classroom teacher was not involved in the residency.

Conversations with the TAs revealed increases in academic achievement in individual students but not necessarily with whole classrooms of students. One TA commented, “I hope that it does [increase academic achievement] but I have no way of measuring.” For the TA to be able to assess this goal, open communication with the classroom teacher was vital. To this point, one teaching artist commented, “I only work with students a few hours so I must base my judgment on the teacher’s opinion. She rated this goal as 5 (strongly agree).”

External evaluators agreed that this goal was generally met but that it was difficult to evaluate. In many cases, the only evidence of increased achievement came from conversations with the classroom teacher. One external evaluator commented, “I was asked to help proof-read students’ work during the residency because there was a shortage of adults in the room at the time to fill this role. In doing so, I could see students trying to improve their writing by adding details or looking up words for correct spellings. This helped me to evaluate this goal positively.”

End-of-Grade (EOG) reading standardized test scores were obtained at the conclusion of the academic year. In order to analyze these scores, ArtStart classrooms were matched to non-ArtStart classrooms based on demographics. Only 3rd and 4th grade EOG classroom means were examined as some of the CTs in the program taught a special subject that was not tested (PE, Drama, Art, Music, etc.) and some CTs were literacy facilitators who taught multiple groups of students. Residencies completed in March, April, and May on average had higher mean EOG scores (332.18) than those completed in the first half of the school year (August through December)(328.81). Differences between the non-Art in the Classroom (342.88) and Art in the Classroom (342.75) mean scores were negligible.

Overall, CTs, TAs, and evaluators believed that Art in the Classroom helped teachers and teaching artists grow in their use high-quality, arts-integrated lessons (Goal #2). For items related to this goal, both the CTs and TAs had mean scores corresponding to “agree” when asked to evaluate their own use of high quality arts-integrated instruction. When TAs were asked to evaluate the CTs’ ability, the mean scores ranged from 2.92 (slightly below “no opinion”) to 3.75 (slightly below “agree”). The mean scores of the evaluators ranged up to 4.47 (“agree”) in the 3rd grade classrooms.

The CTs rated this goal higher than did both the TAs and the evaluators. Most teachers felt that they had learned valuable skills that could be used even after the residency ended. One teacher commented, “The summer training does an excellent job with this. It is always impressive. It truly makes me think outside the regular classroom routines when planning lessons.” Another teacher stated that, “Before this summer’s training I would have used art (drawing) and possibly music, but I would not have considered using dance. Now, it’s a great option for me.” Along with the training provided by ArtsTeach, teachers also felt that they learned about specific techniques by working with their assigned teaching artist. Comments included, “This is a very weak area for me; I’m glad I attended the sessions and had a very good working relationship with our resident artist.”

For this goal, only one CT gave a rating of “disagree.” That CT was an art teacher. Three CTs gave this item a rating of “no opinion” and responded with comments such as, “I have new ideas, but time for instruction that varies from the pacing guide is difficult to find” and “I feel like I use theatre and art
anyways. I’m not sure how to use it in a more efficient way, which I was hoping to gain.”

TAs were asked two similar questions in relation to this goal. One question was phrased so that they evaluated their own ability to use high-quality arts-integrated instruction and the other question evaluated the classroom teacher’s ability. TAs overall scored themselves higher on this item than did the classroom teachers. Some TAs were optimistic that their teaching methods had an impact on the classroom teachers by commenting that, “I didn’t have much knowledge on how much the teachers used the arts in the classroom, but I do believe the residency has left them with tools and techniques to implement in the classroom.” Other TAs were not so optimistic in evaluating the teacher’s ability to use arts-integration lessons and offered comments such as, “More partnership is needed” and “I cannot see the growth.” Evaluators noted that unless open communication and trust existed between the CT and the TA, the TA often did not know what the CT would do when the teaching artist was not present.

During many residencies, the TA was the dominant instructor and therefore knowing what the CT did while he/she was not in the classroom was difficult to evaluate. However, on one occasion a CT said that she had worked for five years with the same TA through the ArtStart program and that they had established a close relationship. As a result, she had knowledge of many different methods of teaching literacy through arts-integration.

Overall, CTs and TAs believed that ArtStart fostered strong, collaborative relationships between teaching artists, classroom teachers, and arts teachers (Goal #3). The mean scores on items related to this goal were rated higher by the CT and TA than by evaluators. Mean scores for the CTs ranged from 4.18 (slightly above “agree”) to 4.63 (slightly below “strongly agree”). The CTs as a whole felt that there was a positive relationship established with the TAs. Comments supporting this positive evaluation of this goal included, “Our planning session flowed very well. We were able to make connections immediately.” Another comment was, “I have worked with ArtStart for a number of years and have developed a relationship with some of the agencies and their artists.”

Three CTs who rated this item as “disagree” felt little positive relationship with the teaching artist. On one teacher stated, “We were able to work together, but there seemed to be a lot of miscommunication along the way.” Another CT from the same school said, “The work expected in the residency required too much work outside of the time the TA was in the classroom and the scale of the project was too large for the students.”

The TAs’ mean scores ranged from 3.50 (“no opinion”) to 4.38 (“agree”). TAs as a whole felt that they had strong relationships with teachers, but their experiences varied. Several TAs rated this item 5.00 (“strongly agree”). Only one TA rated it 1.00 (“strongly disagree”). That TA spoke candidly with the evaluator about her negative experiences with the residency. She perceived a lack of involvement by the CT and felt that an inability to communicate with the teacher despite her efforts.

The evaluators rated the item about the relationship to the art teacher lower (2.21 to 2.91) than did the CTs (3.75 to 4.03). This discrepancy was due to the fact that in most residencies the CT was not an art teacher and therefore the school art teachers were either uninvolved or involved only in the absence of the CT. As a result, evidence of their relationship with the CTs was difficult to assess.

The evaluators noted that the personal relationship between CTs and TAs was the primary determining factor in the accomplishment of this goal. In some cases, CTs neither attended the initial planning meeting nor responded to electronic mail messages or telephone calls from the TAs. This lack of communication in some residencies was detrimental to the success of the residency and the creation of a professional working relationship between the classroom teacher and the teaching artist.

With regard to the four areas of interest, each was evaluated positively. Overall, CTs, TAs, and evaluators believed the Art in the Classroom program increased students’ appreciation for the arts. No appreciable differences were found between the 3rd and 4th grade classrooms. Mean scores for the item related to this area of interest were between 4.00 (“agree”) and 4.85 (slightly lower than “strongly agree”). The range of scores for this item were between 2 (“disagree”) and 5 (“strongly agree”).

Overall, CTs, TAs, and evaluators believed the Art in the Classroom program increased students’ engagement in classroom activities. No appreciable
differences were found between the 3rd and 4th grade classrooms. Mean scores for the item related to this area of interest ranged from 4.24 (slightly higher than “agree”) to 4.77 (slightly lower than “strongly agree”). Score ranged from 2 (“disagree”) to 5 (“strongly agree”). The few CTs who rated this item lower suggested that any increase in student engagement was due more to the novelty of ArtStart and not to the activities inherent in ArtStart.

Overall, CTs, TAs, and evaluators believed the ArtStart program did not necessarily impact students’ disruptive behaviors in classroom activities. No appreciable differences were found between the 3rd and 4th grade classrooms. Mean scores for the item related to this area of interest ranged from 2.75 (slightly below “no opinion”) to 3.50 (slightly below “agree”). TAs and evaluators felt that because they did not know the level of disruptive behavior prior to the residency that this item was difficult to evaluate. A few CTs commented that while engaging their students, ArtStart activities sometimes increased disruptive behaviors because students were excited. However, evaluators noted that in residencies in which the TA and CT a strong collaborative partnership that disruptive behaviors were limited because both professionals assisted with classroom management.

Overall, classroom teachers, teaching artists, and evaluators believed the ArtStart program did not necessarily impact students’ attendance at school. No appreciable differences were found between the 3rd and 4th grade classrooms. Mean scores for the item related to this area of interest ranged from 2.00 (“disagree”) to 3.25 (slightly above “no opinion”). TAs and evaluators felt that they could not evaluate the impact of the Art in the Classroom program on attendance. One CT reported that a student had told her that he came to school that day because he wanted to participate in the residency; however, most CTs did not observe an appreciable impact on student attendance.

**Discussion**

Three issues impacted the extent to which ArtStart Goal #1 was attained. The first issue influencing academic achievement was how well the TAs conducted activities designed to enhance critical thinking skills. Evaluators noted while observing the residencies that some TAs engaged students well and often increased the students’ appreciation for their art forms; however, activities designed to enhance students’ critical thinking skills were often less evident. One evaluator’s comment represented this finding when she wrote, “Although I saw improvements in students’ communication and interest, I saw little direct tie-in of the artist’s work with students’ thinking skills.” One suggestion for future projects like this would be to attempt to ensure that TAs conduct activities designed to enhance students’ critical thinking skills.

Another issue impacting potential academic achievement is the extent to which the CTs’ learning objectives were supported by the activities of the TA. In many cases, teachers had been involved in the selection of the TAs and had chosen those artists to augment specific learning activities in their classrooms. In those classrooms, the coordinated efforts of the CTs and TAs resulted in enhanced critical thinking by students. However, in some cases, the CTs had not selected the artists and sometimes knew little about the ways in which the TAs could facilitate learning. In those classrooms, students’ critical thinking was often not enhanced around the desired outcomes of the teachers. One suggestion for future projects is to make CTs more involved in the selection of their partnering TA.

An issue impacting the evaluators’ ability to measure academic achievement is the lack of random assignment of students to classrooms under investigation. Random assignment of students mitigates pre-existing differences between groups of students within a population. It allows evaluators to determine whether differences in outcomes (e.g., reading achievement) are attributable to treatments being imposed (e.g., ArtStart) or to differences in the students that may have existed before the students became involved in the project. If random assignment of students to ArtStart classrooms is impossible, evaluators should attempt to match classrooms (i.e., students’ performance in classrooms should be compared only when students within those classrooms were similar in age, sex, socioeconomic backgrounds, and relevant knowledge and skills).

The second goal of the ArtStart program was to help teachers to learn to use more arts-integrated lessons. This was difficult to evaluate as the CTs participating in ArtStart activities changed frequently.
The list of participants in the summer workshops often differed significantly from the list of teachers who had subsequently accessed the lesson plans on the Internet. Similarly, the list of teachers and administrators who attended the showcases was often quite different than the list of summer workshop participants and the list of those who accessed web-based lesson plans. All three of these lists often differed from the list of residency participants. Although a few educators were involved in all ArtStart activities, most were not. Constant changes in participants made investigation of the impact of ArtStart activities problematic. One way to allow for better evaluation of the teacher’s use of arts-integration lessons is to attempt to emphasize continuity of participation in all ArtStart activities.

ArtStart Goal #3 was to foster relationships between the CT, TA, and other arts teachers at the school. The extent to which school administrators supported the teachers and TAs' efforts during the residencies seemed to have impact on this goal. In some schools, administrators were very aware of ArtStart’s activities and were involved in meetings and events designed to enhance the impact of the TAs' efforts during the residencies. In other schools, administrators knew little or nothing about the residencies in their environments. Cooperation levels between teachers and TAs were significantly improved in schools where the principals and assistant principals were aware of and supported the planning and implementation of the residencies. The second issue influencing the success of this goal was the extent to which teachers and artists had a clear understanding of their roles. In some cases, the CT had participated in the summer workshop and had also used arts-infused lessons in their classrooms. In other cases, the CT had not participated in the summer workshop but still been allowed to have a TA residency. As a result, these teachers' understanding of how to interact with the TAs in order to establish relationships was limited. The third issue was the interest of the participants. Evaluators observed that some teachers seemed complacent and even apathetic toward the use of the arts in their classrooms. Interactions between those teachers and the TAs were often less than collaborative. Secondarily, evaluators determined that the primary vehicle for accomplishing this goal were the showcases during the July workshop, followed by the residencies that occurred in selected schools. A few relationships were initiated during the showcase as teachers and artists interacted and then those relationships deepened during the residency. One suggestion for future projects is to create opportunities for more relationship building during the summer workshop and to enhance those relationships by providing opportunities for collaboration throughout the year.

The general success of the ArtStart program suggested that infusion of the arts into elementary school curricula can result in many positive outcomes related to student learning and development. However, as this study revealed, infusion and administration of an arts program in the schools is not without difficulties. To the extent that the ArtStart staff and program participants can rectify the shortcomings noted in this study, the ArtStart program will continue to offer tremendous contributions to student learning and related outcomes in the future. In addition, school districts with similar goals will be able to learn from the experiences of the ArtStart program.

References
Abstract: I wrote this piece initially based on my experience and observations while attending the 100th anniversary of the Girl Scouts of America event with my daughter, in regards to the reactions I observed to favorite camp songs that were enjoyed by multiple generations of current and former Girl Scouts in attendance. This led me to think about how often Girl Scouts (as well as Boy Scouts, and other organizations) engage in song, and what greater roles and purposes this serves in the lives of children, and on into their adult lives. I spoke with two troop leaders, as well as two high school-aged Girl Scouts, who shared their views and experiences into how songs unite Girl Scouts, and lead them to success.
On March 12, 2012, I attended a local 100-year anniversary celebration of the Girl Scouts of America, at a location in the Southern United States, with my daughter. After such formalities such as the flag presentation, reciting of the Girl Scout Promise, and tributes to GSA founder Juliette Gordon Low, members of a Senior Girl Scout troop (high school) stepped up on stage, shared what years of being Girl Scouts meant to them, and led the attendees in favorite Girl Scout camp songs. Goosebumps arouse on my arms, and tears welled in my eyes, as I observed a near magical event unfold….

As the afore-mentioned Senior Girl Scouts led their first song in a call and response style, I initially observed a shy Daisy Scout (Kindergarten – 1st grade) look at her mom, unsure of what to do, but with some encouragement, began to squeak out the words. I saw Brownies (2nd – 3rd grade) and Juniors (4th and 5th grade) singing along with gusto. The Cadets (6th - 8th grade) and few other Seniors (9th - 12th grade) in attendance acted as if they were a million miles away (too cool for this), but then shrugged their shoulders, and join in as well. Parents followed along the best we could, but then what really caused my emotions to come alive was when I looked behind me, and saw a small group of elderly women (former Girl Scouts) bopping their knees up and down, swinging their fists in the air, and shouting the lyrics louder than anyone else in the room. More songs followed, and Girl Scouts, young and old, were united in song. As local troop leader Linda explains, “I believe learning songs together unifies the Girl Scouts in a way that only music can. Songs can be sung anywhere at any time, and are fun! Setting words to music make it easy to remember them, and can be passed down generation to generation.”

After a moving to this same Southern town, a local girl, who was naturally shy, expressed an interest in joining Girl Scouts. She came home from her first summer camp giggling, and singing various silly songs. This led to the courage to join her elementary school choir, where her personality blossomed. She no longer felt that she was the “new kid.” She continued with Choir in middle and high school, where she gained the courage to complete in UIL Solo competitions in front of judges, and tried out for every solo and specialty choir. During these years, she also continued with Girl Scouts, which included leadership training. Part of her role was working with younger girls at camp and other Girl Scout events, including passing down the songs she loved so much. When asked what she loved so much about songs, and teaching them to younger Girl Scouts, she replied, “Because kids and people learn songs easily. They are fun, and can even be used to help teach facts, like the ABC’s, math, and science. At camp, songs help bring the girls together, and if there’s a girl with a bad attitude, joining with the others in song seems to improve it [attitude].”

Sharon, a long-time Girl Scout troop leader in the same Southern United States location, also shared that learning songs helps build solidarity among the girls, is an activity that “everyone can do. Not everyone is good at archery, but all can sing!” She said using the “call and response” method, especially with the younger girls, teaches them listening skills. Also, as many of the songs are learned by Girl Scouts all over the United States, she said it helps them build an identity, and feel like they belong to something special, like sorority women. Like at camp, Sharon’s troop also likes to say grace before any meals they have together. But they don’t say traditional prayers; instead, they opt to sing prayers, their favorite sung to the tune of a popular television show’s theme song. Sharon added that along with being a fun way to give thanks, this is another way to bring girls together, and break down barriers. “Not all girls belong to the same religion, or even attend church at all. Some don’t pray before meals at home, and don’t know how. Sung prayers, like the above, put everyone at ease.”

Finally, another way Sharon’s troop enjoys song is at their annual cookie booths. They sing to attract customers! One member of the troop explains how they do this at a large retailer. The troop is split into two groups, one at each entrance, each facing the same parking lot. They get into a loud singing/chanting match with each other: “We’ve got cookies, yes we do! We’ve got cookies, how ‘bout YOU!” The other group responds with the same, only louder, and so on. In this Girl Scout’s opinion, “this helps bring us more attention and business, from customers who might normally ignore us.” Sharon adds that this is a creative way for the girls to learn people, teamwork, business, and marketing skills, as is a primary goal of Girl Scout cookie sales.
In conclusion, Girl Scout songs are meant for more than pure fun. They shape skills, including learning, listening, social, self-confidence, and business. The Girl Scouts of America organization is commonly known for helping to create women leaders. These skills gained from various songs, most of them silly, are an ingenious, yet simple way to shape girls into becoming future leaders, or at least giving them some basic tools and a path to potential success in life. Though they will lead their own lives, Girl Scouts, and the lessons they’ve learned from singing within this organization, will always keep them united.
Music Education, Recording Technology, And The Illusion Of Perfection

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Abstract: This paper investigates professional music recordings and their effect on the physical and psychological well being of music students. Feminist theories that explore eating disorders and body shame in relation to the modeling industry are used as a framework for comparison to the effects of the doctoring of music recordings on performance anxiety amongst musicians. The effects of music performance anxiety are compared to similar effects on women in a cultural environment that assesses them based solely on their bodies. The editing of recordings is compared to edited images in the beauty industry. This comparison suggests that professionally recorded music may not be the best model of performance for students. Suggestions are given for alternate models such as live performances, recordings of live performances, and peer listening.
Regardless of genre, style, or specialization, music educators commonly assert the importance of one thing: listening. The student is encouraged to experience as many high-caliber performances as possible, and the most accessible way to do so is through professional recordings. This has remained a largely unquestioned teaching strategy since recordings have become readily available; in many ways, it just seems logical to use the best available versions of compositions to set the standard for musical goals (Garofalo, 1983). This well-intentioned teaching strategy is problematic, however, because recordings are often edited beyond the ability levels of the performers showcased in them (Hamilton, 2003). The extent to which a recording can be altered to achieve a sort of musical perfection is quite staggering, but this remains a secret of sorts, particularly within the realm of classical music. Recordings are created to “screen out allegedly contingent imperfections of live performance” thus “hiding” any mistakes or flaws that would otherwise be present in a live performance (Hamilton, 2003). Thus, the final product is presented as if it is possible for that performer to play flawlessly, when in fact there are many behind-the-scenes processes involved in achieving such a high-quality result.

To understand the problem of unrealistic standards and edited musical products, the modeling industry can act as a useful parallel. Feminists have thoroughly addressed the problem of doctoring for perfection in relation to the modeling industry, as image editing is both prevalent and has been extensively studied (Thompson & Heinberg, 1999). Much can be learned from their analyses for application in music education, as the consequences of presenting edited recordings to students have not been equally analyzed, but may have similar effects. It is important to consider the effects of teaching strategies, as they can impact both the effectiveness of teaching and the overall well being of students. The presentation of ideal recorded performances as models for student achievement has been under evaluated, and thus must be further studied, as it continues to be the standard method of performance modeling in many classrooms (Linklater, 1997).

**Aural And Visual Orientation**

It is important to address that the modeling industry is particularly well suited to cause anxiety and shame, because of the visual orientation of modern society (Soh, 2009). Because western society emphasizes the visual, physical appearance is extremely important in social interactions and our perceptions of other people (Jay, 1994). People are quickly judged based on their appearance and body language, with less importance placed on the input of the other senses. This would suggest that within mainstream society the aural sense would be less powerful in constructing societal standards, and thus less capable of producing the anxiety associated with visual standards. There is evidence, however, suggesting that musicians are more aurally oriented in their learning than the general population. Studies suggest that students who are initially taught to play music through a traditional, visual approach (i.e., reading music) are generally inefficient in their ability to comprehend music, both from notation and aurally (McPherson, Davidson, & Faulkner, 2012). Because musicians exhibit a stronger than average aural orientation, this suggests that they could also be more susceptible to the aural pressures associated with musical perfectionism. This is not to say that the aural orientation of musicians outweighs their visual orientation, but rather that aural cues carry more weight than would otherwise be assumed. This suggests that both aural and visual standards can hold significant influence for the performing musician.

Visual and aural beauty also share similarities in terms of social standards—namely, they are culturally oriented and narrowly defined. In Western culture, a standard of physical beauty is defined by mass media. The characteristics thought of as beautiful are both naturally rare and difficult to achieve, and are presented to the public by select beauty models. Similarly, recordings present an idealized standard for students. Women who feel the pressure to conform to these physical standards frequently feel body shame, which is a result of comparing themselves to the cultural standards and failing to meet them (Moradi, Dirks, & Matteson, 2005). Most people cannot conform to these beauty ideals, even if they wanted to. The same is true of musicians—the standards set for professional musicians are unattainable by the vast majority of the population. Musicians frequently
experience performance anxiety, which is a symptom of fearing failure or feeling unable to perform at a certain level (Robertson & Eisensmith, 2010). Moreover, the aesthetic ideals of aural beauty in music are also relative to culture and narrowly defined. Standards of visual beauty have evolved and changed over time, much in the same way that musical standards for tone, style, phrasing and other aesthetic considerations have. Since extreme and unrealistic standards are prevalent in both visual and aural ideals, they are sufficiently similar to warrant comparison.

The Modeling Industry And The Myth of Perfection

Feminists have been quite successful in documenting the impacts of the modeling industry on women as a source of anxiety and various disorders (Thompson & Heinberg, 1997). Their insights are of particular value for musicians and music education, because students are presented with aural ideals that are relevantly similar to beauty industry products. In the modeling industry, women (and men) of unusual height, weight, and appearance are chosen to act as the symbols of beauty in society. These people are already recognized as exceptionally attractive in relation to western culture, but they are also given the benefit of extensive makeup, lighting, and photo editing to enhance their appearance. Unfortunately, however, when a magazine presents a model, there is no acknowledgment of the extensive procedures involved in making her “perfect.” Kevin Thompson and Leslie Heinberg (1999) help to explain this in research on the relationship between body image and eating disorders. As he warns, models presented to the viewing public are subject to:

Photographic techniques such as airbrushing, soft-focus cameras, composite figures, editing, and filters may blur the realistic nature of media images even further, leading consumers to believe that the models the viewers see through the illusions these techniques create are realistic representations of actual people rather than carefully manipulated, artificially developed images. (p. 340)

Images of these unnaturally attractive women are shown as the aesthetic ideal, and their level of beauty is perceived by many women as attainable, due to the marketing surrounding those images. Moreover, since women are routinely judged by their appearance alone, the importance of meeting beauty standards is intensified. According to objectification theory, the life experiences of women frequently include episodes of sexual objectification, which transform women from whole people into bodies, body parts, or body functions (Moradi, Dirks, & Matteson 2005, 420). This implies that beautiful models are more valued as people, because their beauty represents the entirety of their importance as human beings. Moreover, since the doctoring of these images is only tacitly acknowledged, they are not socially rejected as unnatural. If models were perceived as “fake,” their images would be less influential, but there is also pressure to be beautiful in order to be accepted in society, no matter what the cost. Thus, women are pressured to fit into this narrow definition of beauty.

Unfortunately, the standards of beauty presented by these models are plainly unhealthy. As Kevin Thompson and Leslie Heinberg (1999) notes, the ideal model is a teenage girl who is 5’7” tall, weighs 100 pounds, and is a size 5. This is unrealistic, extreme, and dangerous for the vast majority of the population, as the body mass index for a person of these proportions is less than 16, which is in the anorexic range.

Presenting tall, impossibly thin, artificially beautiful women as the standard for the female aesthetic is fundamentally damaging to young women who cannot live up to it. It has been noted that with increased exposure to media such as soap operas and music videos (in which beauty ideals are put on display), young women express greater body dissatisfaction, body image problems, and restrictive or disordered eating patterns (Thompson & Heinberg, 1999, p. 342). Indeed, body shame is often a key predictor in the development of eating disorders (Moradi, Dirks, & Matteson 2005).

Of course, there is a commercial motivation for creating a culture of unrealistic beauty standards. The beauty industry relies on the myth that models are simply ordinary people, who benefit from the beauty products that they use or endorse. As Leora Tanenbaum (2002) notes:
The celebrity machine wants ordinary people to believe that the glamour can rub off on us. Thus, untold numbers of women mistakenly believe they can achieve the same look as celebrities. Millions of women waste precious resources, including self-worth, following the diet and beauty tips of the stars. (p. 89)

Of course, celebrities and models have entire teams of people to make them look beautiful, but that strategy is unrealistic for the average person, and thus not profitable. By creating an unattainable standard that seems possible, the beauty industry ensures the sale of magazines and products that claim to make the dream a reality. One can draw parallels to very similar problems that occur in music when performance training becomes a quest for perfection, which, it could be argued, is illusory.

The Recording Industry And The Myth of Perfection

While similar to the anxiety faced by women in relation to models, the anxiety of musicians in relation to recorded music has not been sufficiently evaluated. Recordings are edited to an extent that may be compared to modeling photographs; this is important when considering the negative impact these recordings can have on students. When students are asked to listen to a recording, the multiple takes, edits, and alterations that take place before the recording is considered of professional quality are not generally mentioned. Because this process is not made readily apparent, students may believe that they are expected to play to that level in live performance. Just as “beauty media” can seriously impact women’s self-esteem, recordings can also negatively affect the self-worth of musicians. Paul Lehrer (1987) notes the negative effects that recordings can have with respect to the development of stage fright and performance anxiety:

Demands for perfection are particularly problematic for musicians or actors. Compounding this problem is the fact that today’s musicians can compare their own live performances with recorded performances by the greatest artists-performances that may have been dubbed and redubbed numerous times, yielding a standard of perfection that rarely is possible for anyone in a live performance. (p. 147)

Comparing a recording to a live performance is obviously problematic, yet it is frequently the primary standard for performance evaluation.

Among the technologies currently available to edit the quality of a recording, one of the most prominent is Auto-Tune. This technology can alter an out-of-tune pitch to conform to the closest in-tune pitch, thus eliminating any pitch errors (Diaz, 2009). The technology was originally designed to make the recording process faster and more cost efficient by fixing minor errors, but it has gradually become a crutch for performing difficult passages while sounding pitch-perfect. For the performer, it can become an easy way out of difficult sections. As Joe Diaz (2009) notes from his conversations with a sound engineer:

It [modifying the pitch] usually ends up just like plastic surgery. You haul out Auto-Tune to make one thing better, but then it’s very hard to resist the temptation to spruce up the whole vocal, give everything a little nip-tuck. (p. 6)

This technology has some serious ethical implications, in that it allows performers of a lower caliber to present themselves as extremely accurate artists. If educators hold students to these high standards of performance, the actual ability levels of these performers, not just their recording quality, must be considered.

Much like the beauty industry, the music business can reap economic benefits by creating a culture of inferiority. In order to meet the standards of high-calibre recording artists, method books, how-to guides, and multimedia programs are designed to help the average performer become the exceptional performer. This is not to say that these aids do not work, at least to some extent, and students do often need guidance for improvement. It is important to note that the same is likely true for the beauty industry: the products sold can often make women appear more beautiful, according to society’s narrow definition of what constitutes beauty. The fact remains that being effective tools for attaining society’s standards does
not make them less commercial or more beneficial in alleviating the anxiety involved in meeting those standards. Acknowledging the ways in which companies manipulate insecurities in order to sell products is essential in solving such problems.

Although the recording artist has had the benefit of many takes, editing, and mixing (much like the editing applied to photographs of models), live performances are expected to be of a similar standard; essentially, they are expect them to be flawless. Anything less is unsatisfactory, and the performer has not lived up to the standards set out for them. Unfortunately, since the standards were virtually unattainable, the performing student is all but doomed to fail from the start. This sort of inevitable failure can have serious consequences for the developing student, both psychologically and physically.

**Psychological Injury**

Perhaps the greatest damage done by the myth of perfection is the inferiority complex it can produce in students. When students cannot perform a piece at the desired level, there may be many proposed causes, many of which could be both damaging and untrue. The most caustic of these reasons are that they lack the talent required to master the piece, or they have not spent enough time preparing. A variety of factors are ignored in this instance: the amount of time spent with the piece, the current level of the student, the competency of teachers, the effectiveness of private practice time; the list goes on and on. Despite this, the stigma of ‘failure’ in relation to unrealistic standards lives on within music education. The same is true in the study of obesity and the social stigma surrounding it; research on the subject can help to shed light on our own biases (Rothblum, 1994).

Feminist scholars have studied the impact of obesity on women’s lives; their findings are highly applicable to the inferiority complex of the music student. Societal stigma surrounding obesity assumes that weight is entirely under the control of individuals, and those who are overweight eat too much and exercise too little. Society deems obese women less competent, capable, and hard working than their thin peers, regardless of the facts presented to them. Conversely, thin women are considered more kind, sensitive, interesting, strong, modest, socially skilled, and exciting than obese women (Rothblum, 1994).

Similar stereotypes are applied to music students; when performers are not playing at the level that is deemed acceptable, they are often perceived to be at fault. It is thought that they have not practiced enough or effectively, or that they lack natural musical ability. The music students may adopt this sort of perfectionism, as they are frequently evaluating the performances of others alongside their own. Though perfection is often unattainable, the standards of musical performance at the professional level in Western art music are still very high (Lehrer, 1987). To some extent, students cannot be blamed for being perfectionists, because otherwise they have little chance of making a professional career out of music, should this be their goal. As Paul Lehrer (1987) notes:

> Although neurotic perfectionist tendencies can exaggerate the problem, there is some basis for the perceived need for perfection. At the very least, all notes should be played in a perfectly correct sequence. Anything less will be universally judged as a fault in the performance. Also, the stakes are high in many performances, and the probability of success in a career as a performer certainly is low. Only a small percentage of conservatory graduates will ever be able to earn a living as performers. In such a buyers’ market for talent, performers can lose a steady job or a chance for a concert tour because of a single bungled performance (p. 147).

But if students learn in this culture of fear, they may be doomed to failure. A minority of musicians make careers as performers, but this does not legitimize bringing such standards into the classroom. The objective of music education cannot be exclusively to produce world-class performers—if it were, both the music educator and student would consistently fail. Even if the teacher presents a nurturing environment for the learning process, recordings act as an unspoken standard, and presenting them as desirable inadvertently presents them as attainable. Without direct action, the presentation of recordings can lead to psychological injury, which may lead to crippling performance injuries.
Physical Injury

When the classroom environment treats mistakes as failures, students can be negatively motivated to work beyond the limitations set by the body. The same is true of young women exposed to media images of extremely thin women—they resort to various eating disorder behaviors in order to try and live up to the standards put before them.

In young women, patterns of bulimia and anorexia can emerge and worsen with exposure to media images (Thompson & Heinberg, 1997). These women are led to believe that they can conform to these images with “hard work,” and attempt to do so regardless of the realistic weight that their individual body can achieve in a healthy way. As already mentioned, the increased pressure of our society for women to be thin, combined with a barrage of media images, have led to an increase in anorexic behaviors in young women (Gardner & Garfinkel, 1980). These behaviors lead to serious health concerns, but the women partaking in such behaviors feel compelled to do so in order to meet the unrealistic standards of contemporary Western culture.

Music performance students can react to the demands of playing in high-stress situations in a similar way. Because they may fear not being good enough performers, students may ignore the limitations of their body through long practice sessions, until they seriously injure themselves. This is compounded by the “play through the pain” mentality that often exists in musical environments (Bruser, 1997). Because many musicians do not see music performance as an athletic activity, the pain associated with performance injuries is considered insignificant. Sometimes, the players themselves can ignore their own pain, thinking that it is unimportant.

Madeline Bruser (1997) recounts the story of pianist Leon Fleisher, whose career was cut short when he lost function in one of his hands.

There was something macho about practicing through the pain barrier. Even when my hand was exhausted, I kept going. Although I thought I was building up muscle, I was, in fact, unravelling it. (p. 16)

Being unable to perform because of physical limitations cycles back to psychological damage, and a vicious cycle occurs. Moreover, students who feel motivated to improve tend to hide their pain symptoms as long as possible in order to continue playing (Fry, 1987). Teaching students of all levels and ages healthy and efficient practice strategies, including stretching, taking breaks, paying attention to proper technique, and stopping at any sign of pain is essential in preventing long-term physical damage.

What Can Be Done?

If educators are to change the ways they present performances to students, what alternatives should they consider? Perhaps the best way to expose students to realistic standards for music performance is to have them listen to and attend live performances. Live performances give students the opportunity to hear the true capabilities of a real performer, without the alterations associated with recordings. This can also allow students to interact with high-calibre performers. Speaking with performing artists about their work can help students to understand what is involved in the execution of exceptional performances, along with a realistic view on the amount of work, sacrifice, and potential problems associated with this career choice. It can be of particular interest to ask professional performers about issues of stage fright, performance injuries, and other concerns about which they can provide particularly valuable insight.

Alternatively, recordings and videos of live performances can give students a better idea of what professional musicians sound like. While recordings of live music lack the personal aspect of a live performance, they can give a more realistic view of the limits of live performance. That being said, the definition of what constitutes a live performance is constantly evolving, and students should be informed that even recordings labeled as “live” may still be edited in some way.

If possible, music students should be able to hear other students perform frequently, both at similar and higher ability levels. While professionals can give good examples of great artistry, they are already a “finished product”—they are not working out technical and musical issues in the ways similar to students. Exposing students to performances by others at their own level can give them a way to listen actively within the context of their own ability level. By exposing students to peer players of a higher level,
educators can demonstrate what is possible within the context of their own work. Providing goals for performance is essential, but caution must be exercised in the way that they are presented.

Of course, live performances are not always an option because of factors like cost, location, and availability. Also, there are valuable things to be gained from listening to studio recordings; the fact that they could be doctored in some way does not make them worthless. Students can be given various recordings of the same piece, and asked to evaluate the artistic differences that will inevitably exist. By evaluating recordings in this way, students are able to develop their ear from a musical perspective, and to make artistic judgments of their own.

Recordings can also be presented as a way to explain the recording process and to bring the various alterations used to improve them to the students’ attention. If students are taught about the ways in which recordings can be altered, they develop a critical ear, critical thinking skills within a musical context, and they can see the often unrealistic standards presented by these recordings.

There are also several factors to consider when presenting performance models for students. There may be differences, for example, between listening to instrumental performances and vocal performances. It may be beneficial to show musical examples on both the students’ own instrument and other instruments (or voice). This puts value on musical interpretation alongside technical considerations, because aspects such as phrasing and musicality can be evaluated independently of the technical considerations of a particular instrument. Moreover, students may feel different pressures associated with solo, chamber, and ensemble playing. A variety of models may assist in easing student anxiety surrounding the various musical projects students are involved in.

The age of students is also an important consideration. The pressures involved in performance change with the age of the student and thus their reaction to those pressures differ. Research suggests that susceptibility to peer pressure peaks at age fourteen and decreases over time, lessening the likelihood that students will succumb to it after the age of eighteen (Steinberg & Morgan, 2007). Moreover, males are much more likely than females to leave musical activities due to social pressures (Green, 1997). In terms of musical learning, this would suggest that older students are less likely to stop playing due to pressure, and that females are more likely to persevere than males. It is difficult to tell, however, if these students continue despite feeling performance anxiety and inferiority or because they do not feel these pressures acutely. If students feel they are both under social pressure to stop musical activities and that they are not successful when compared to performance models, it is likely that they will quit. Perhaps showing realistic performance models and discussing the processes of recording earlier in musical training could help alleviate anxiety and keep more students involved in music.

While the pressures on elementary and secondary school students are primarily social in origin, post-secondary students in music face the pressure of meeting the incredibly high standards of contemporary Western art music. Students in conservatories, colleges, and universities are somewhat justified in their anxiety when their playing is compared to recordings, because they must compete with the professionals on those recordings, who often have more experience and connections, in a saturated and competitive job market (Lehrer, 1987). Perhaps this sort of pressure is unavoidable in the training of professional musicians, but care must still be taken to avoid putting pressure on students that is beyond their human capacity.

Recorded music has much to offer the music educator, but the consequences of teaching strategies need to be considered. In order to have motivated, happy students who continue to partake in music making, teachers must set realistic standards for their progress. If they manage to do so, the results, in terms of student satisfaction and learning, could be monumental.

References


The Theatre of Urban: Youth And Schooling In Dangerous Times
By Kathleen Gallagher

192 pp. Hardcopy $58.00; Paperback $28.95; Kindle $15.37

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There are books one encounters that seem to open the research imagination in unexpected ways and Kathleen Gallagher’s *The Theatre of Urban: Youth and Schooling in Dangerous Times* is one such book. So pivotal has it been for me as a new researcher that I could not have conceptualized nor implemented my research projects without it. Integral to the research that became my Master’s and for what will become my doctoral dissertation, this review will chart how *The Theatre of Urban: Youth and Schooling in Dangerous Times* has opened possibilities methodologically and caused me to reconsider the importance of conflict and the role of the youthful research participant. It has helped to galvanize my commitment to drama as a pedagogy and methodology that creates data while also fostering social relations. It has further helped to
me understand the important ways in which the art of theatre-making can contribute to evocative and vital interview conversations regarding youth experiences of schooling and their reflections on their communities. Gallagher makes just this point when she says,

our encounter with the fictional gave our subsequent interviews with students a quality and depth I imagine would be difficult to reproduce without having experienced, together, such a shared context; without having, however briefly, transformed our space. (p. 135)

What follows is not an objective account of the book, an impossible task given that Gallagher has acted as my thesis supervisor and mentor throughout the five years that I have worked alongside her as a research assistant. I should be clear that I did not work on the research project from which this book was written, but I do believe that this entanglement with her later work equips me well to chart the book’s influence on my own scholarly journeys while documenting just one of the many projects her research has inspired.

_The Theatre of Urban: Youth and Schooling in Dangerous Times_ is an ethnography of four different school sites in the two cities of Toronto, Canada and New York, USA. In Toronto, the research was situated in a Toronto District School Board downtown vocational school as well as in an all-girl secondary school in the Toronto Catholic District School Board. Interested in drama classrooms in particular, in Queens New York, Gallagher followed classes in a diverse school of 3000 students that housed six mini schools, one of which was a Theatre Institute. The second New York school was a mid-town Manhattan alternative school that also served a diverse but smaller student population and struggled with a very low graduation rate. Gallagher, committed to youth in urban schools, refuses to equate ‘urban’ with ‘problem’ by “listening to the plural voices of those normally Othered, and hearing them as constructors, agents, and disseminators of knowledge” (p. 8). This perspective regarding youth is crucially important to her project and one that has featured in my own framing of youth in ethnographic research that asks in what ways drama can make known the contemporary suburb and the diverse lives of youth who live there.

Drama, in Gallagher’s work, enhances the more traditional ethnographic methods of interviews and fieldnotes in groundbreaking ways. In _The Theatre of Urban: Youth and Schooling in Dangerous Times_, drama and its processes are the object of study while at the same time drama is used methodologically to explore issues of schooling and the lives of youth. For example, disturbed by the levels of surveillance that she and her team found in these post-9/11 North American schools, Gallagher used improvisation with the students to explore this subject in greater depth. The student who is engaged imaginatively and physically in an improvisation can communicate to the researcher something different from what might be articulated in an interview. Gallagher contends,

we understood one of the primary tenets of drama itself as a research methodology to be that the fictional, active, and even unconscious world of the drama elicits understandings and utterances that would otherwise be inaccessible. (p. 128)

In playing through improvisation, the imagination is engaged and notions of the self can be elasticized, while in an interview, we are all performing the rules of the interview and playing out versions of our day-to-day selves. This is not to favor one method over another but to acknowledge that the interview and the improvisation create data differently. Gallagher suggests that:

through studying how drama teachers and students work in role, with each other and through theatre genres, these non-linear and narrative modes of drama education might, indeed, productively interrupt our traditional qualitative accounts of classrooms and theatre studios, and of the actors/people who enliven them. (p. 58)

By taking the research “inside the art frame” (p. 131), Gallagher suggests, “through the remove of the fictional, the convention of creating an alternate world, allowed us, ultimately, to co-construct knowledge with the youth” (p. 132). The importance of a participatory
ethnography that diminishes the distance between the researchers and the researched (the students), so important in Gallagher’s work, meant in practical terms, that her researchers interacted with the students through drama activities that became shared experiences between them. In reflecting upon these drama activities later, in individual and focus group interviews, Gallagher suggests that the youth became a kind of co-researcher. Experimenting with these practices in my own research, I asked the students to enact rituals of their daily lives in school and what they offered were dramas about initiation, conflicts regarding territory within the school, physical fights, gender relations and social media. I also integrated drama into Focus Group Interviews as a means of creating a shared experience, following which the students could discuss ‘life’ through the interesting remove of one another’s drama work. Inspired by Gallagher, drama became methodologically productive and diminished the distance between us, as I worked alongside the students to bring their dramas to life.

Another strand of my thesis that was supported conceptually by The Theatre of Urban: Youth and Schooling in Dangerous Times was Gallagher’s analysis of the productive potential of conflict. She coins the phrase, “pedagogies of conflict” (p. 140) to illustrate what conflict can teach, not by seeking a quick resolution but by exploration through both discussion and drama. Reading her accounts and the verbatim dialogue that she includes in the book, I began to recognize the importance of conflict in the drama classroom and this became the spine of my Master’s thesis, a project that looked at sabotage in practices of student-created playbuilding and devising that mistakenly insisted on too much cohesion.

Gallagher documents conflict that is simultaneously interpersonal and political. In one particular discussion, which will be of interest to the readers of this journal, a conflict erupted in one of the Toronto schools after the teacher invited her students to reflect on a play they had seen the previous day exploring the issue of HIV/AIDS. The exchange was excruciatingly raw and acted as a poignant example of unresolvable conflicts regarding troubled gender relations and brutally frank homophobia. Gallagher credits the teacher for keeping such a difficult discussion going and for managing to:

critique heteronormativity and condemn its violences while opposing, in several instances, the boundedness of identity. She accomplished her difficult work on this day by helping the youth in her charge to be heard and to hear things that invited them to think through the complexities of their own sexual, gendered, racialized, and religious identities and affiliations. (p. 127)

This powerful example of difficult and conflict-ridden pedagogy underscores the importance of bringing the everyday into the drama classroom so that issues of hidden and not-so-hidden homophobia, heteronormativity, sexism, racism and income polarity can be discussed and challenged.

Gallagher credits Dominque Riviere (Gallagher & Riviere, 2004) who talks about an “unofficial multicultural doctrine” that searches for “commonality” and “racial transcendence” (p.89). Writing against this effacing of difference, Gallagher suggests that schools are “places steeped in liberal humanist values” that prize social coherence and community-building” (p. 89). I came face to face with the dangers of humanism in my own Master’s research site where the avoidance of conflict and divergent viewpoints promoted a kind of enforced, albeit well meaning, conformity. This pull to conformity and cohesion became an easy target for a student who worked to sabotage the playbuilding/devising process. The pull to sameness that youth experience is also emerging as one of the central themes of my doctoral research looking at schooling and youth attitudes to diversity in the changing suburb.

I would like to close this brief review with a passage that expresses my sense of Gallagher's commitment to drama and its potent ial in work with youth as a means of accessing their experiences of the power relations within their school, the local community and the broader world:

I wanted the specificity and intimacy of these classrooms to create a counterpoint to the broader, more generic school context. How do, for example, the dialectics of self and other, of local and global, of democracy and domination play out in drama’s pedagogy? Further, how do we come to understand the dialectical
relationship between the performative and the non-performative or the fictional roles enacted in the drama classroom and the so-called ‘real’ ones? (p. 5)

Gallagher’s purpose is not to use drama simply as a means to represent youth experiences but as a way to challenge what is taken as ‘normal’, “The youth in this study, I came to learn, use their words and stories not only to reflect their realities but to reconstitute them” (p. 5).

Gallagher’s work spurs methodological curiosity and leaps into new research methods. But it does not end there. In my experience, this book has also acted as a valuable reference point, a welcome place to return to again and again. Re-reading The Theatre of Urban: Youth and Schooling in Dangerous Times, provokes new questions and new considerations of the tensions and assumptions within my own scholarly work that aspires to be both artful and socially engaged. The provocations expressed in The Theatre of Urban: Youth and Schooling in Dangerous Times, the ways in which relationships between youth and researchers are reconceptualized, and the artful experimentation with traditional ethnographic methods have been crucial to the conceptual and methodological practices of my own fledgling research.

References
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