

Children's Artistic Development and the Influence of Visual Culture

By

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Submitted to the graduate degree program in Visual Art Education and the Graduate Faculty of the University of Kansas in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

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Date Defended: January 12, 2012

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Date approved: January 30, 2012

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to identify the existing early and contemporary theories of artistic development, compare them, and examine the applicability to current children's drawings. I also investigated subject matter to find out the frequency of visual culture in the drawings. I collected first and fifth grade drawings at a suburban, public elementary school analyzed them by use of two different checklists containing many characteristics described in Viktor Lowenfeld's theory of artistic development. The results indicated that the majority of these characteristics were found in the first and fifth grade drawings. I also discovered that a minority of the students included visual culture subjects in their drawings. When given a choice, more students drew images from everyday life such as playing with friends.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the numerous people who helped me in this process. First, I sincerely thank my advisor, Denise Stone, for her valuable assistance and encouragement throughout my degree requirements and especially this past year. Also, thank you to John Derby and Elizabeth Kowalchuk for their sound advice.

A special thanks goes to my patient husband, Jason Smith, for his support and encouragement and my parents and brother for their constant encouragement of my academic endeavors.

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The Problem and Its Setting

Statement of the Problem

During my five years as an art educator, I have seen over one thousand students grow and mature in their artistic development. While teaching at a kindergarten through eighth-grade school, I noticed some students entered kindergarten at a more advanced artistic level, and some developed more quickly than others. I began to wonder what caused this progression and if my students were advancing faster or slower than other groups of students in different communities.

In my teaching experience, two students in particular sparked my interest in artistic development. I taught Kelly and Mitchell (pseudonyms) since they were in kindergarten, and both of them are now in second-grade. Kelly came into kindergarten with a particular interest in art, and her drawings appeared to be more artistically advanced than those of her classmates. Since kindergarten, Kelly's artistic abilities progressed more rapidly than the rest of the students in her class especially in drawing. Unlike Kelly, Mitchell's kindergarten artwork seemed similar to that of a preschooler. His drawings contained scribbles and only simple shapes. Mitchell also progressed in his artistic development. However, as a second-grader, he remained behind the artistic level of most of his classmates. As I observed these two students of a similar age and grade level, I wondered why students' development varied so dramatically.

As a teacher, I have observed thousands of student drawings and become fascinated with the sketches that contained images from popular culture. Over these past five years of teaching, I have seen many Tweety Birds, Angry Birds, and Jayhawks. When I gave the students free sketchbook time to do self-initiated drawings, I found it curious that the students (even the artistically talented ones) regressed to a copying behavior. At first, I attempted to steer them away from drawing these pre-made images, but at a second glance I saw how interested and connected they became more so than when I told them or showed them what to draw. This is the

inspiration which spurred my quest to search for answers about artistic development and the influence of visual culture on students' artwork as well as the impact of my teaching methods on their art.

Rationale

In the past five to ten years, the field of art education has experienced a dramatic shift in research emphasis. Correspondingly, the National Art Education Association (NAEA) has set new goals for research. According to NAEA (2009), visual art education in the 21st century is expanding “in the areas of teacher and learner diversity, visual culture, [and] material culture” (p. 2). The world is becoming smaller because of technology, and people are connected and able to communicate more than ever before. This, as well as other factors, has increased diversity among students and teachers. Advanced technology has allowed images from popular culture to be sent and viewed by millions of people instantly through the internet. Likewise, students are constantly barraged by images from visual culture. NAEA has called for research in learner diversity, technology, and visual culture to better understand how art educators impact their students and how to improve their teaching methods.

Art educators must understand artistic development in relation to the areas listed above to determine the influence on their students. Little research has been conducted on artistic development in the last twenty to thirty years. I do not believe that the artistic development of children is fully understood yet. This study will focus on children's artistic development and how visual culture influences the subject matter they choose to draw.

Research Questions

These questions provide a framework for the research:

What are the early views of artistic development, and how do they compare to contemporary views?

- How do contemporary children's drawings reflect stage theories?
- What subject matter do children include in their drawings, specifically visual cultural objects?
- What implications are there for teachers' instruction?

Importance of the Study

Children and society have changed since Viktor Lowenfeld began his studies on children's drawings in the 1930's. By studying children's drawings, he made many contributions to the field of art education, but his stages of artistic development were most notable. His theory consisted of five stages that linked children's age with characteristics of their artwork.

Lowenfeld's work was completed in the 1930's and 1940's which was a time much different from today's world.

Of Lowenfeld's contributions, Thompson (2003) wrote:

What [Lowenfeld] captured was a way of being a child that no longer exists in any unambiguous form, a world where children's experience was primarily direct and personal, mediated almost exclusively by the stories and expectations and interpretations made available by family and friends, largely confined to their own backyards (p. 136).

In the present day, the majority of young children spend time outside of the home with other children, caregivers, and teachers, who introduce them to ideas and experiences they might not have encountered at home or in their neighborhoods.

Many changes in motivation and interests of children and society have occurred since the early studies of artistic development. Today's art educators and classroom teachers must be aware of factors that influence children's artwork. Educators need to know how to develop

appropriate art experiences and gain insight into what students are thinking, understanding, and experiencing through their drawings.

The subjects children choose to draw reflect what they know and understand (Olson, 2003). Worldwide, children grow up in diverse environments and have varied experiences due to their culture, and their drawings often reflect these differences. Children are also drawn to visual images produced by their culture which is reflected in many of their drawings. This research will explore early and contemporary views of artistic development. I will attempt to determine if stage theories are applicable to children's drawings today, what subject matter children include in their drawings, and teaching implications.

Review of Literature

Researchers have studied artistic development for over a century. This review of literature will cover three subjects: artistic development theories, culture and society's impact on artistic development and children's art, and creating personal connections. The first encompasses both early and contemporary research, specific theorists' views on artistic development, comparisons and criticisms of studies and theories. The second, culture and society, will discuss the effect of culture on artistic development, studies examining cultural factors in artistic development, and visual culture in children's art. Finally, I discuss different ways teachers can promote personal meaning in children's artwork.

Artistic Development Theories

Darras and Kindler (1997) define artistic development as a phenomenon concerned "with human development in the domain of art" (p. 17). In this section, groups of artistic development theorists are divided into early and contemporary views. The early views include theorists who studied artistic development anytime between 1920 and 1980. From 1980 to the 1990s, there was a clear lapse in time when researchers were not conducting studies on artistic development. Research conducted from 1990 to present day is grouped into contemporary views. Lowenfeld (1982) and Vygotsky (1978) began studying artistic development in the 1920's. Theorists including Piaget (1956) and Gardner (1980) became interested in artistic development from the 1920's to 1980, but after this time, very little research was conducted until the mid-1990's by Kerlavage (1998) and Darras and Kindler (1994).

Early views. The early theorists who researched artistic development between 1920 and 1980 are Lowenfeld (1982), Piaget (1956), Vygotsky (1978), and Gardner (1980). Lowenfeld and Piaget looked at stages of artistic development according to the child's age and characteristics of drawings. Vygotsky concentrated on social, interpersonal, and language skills

in relation to artistic development. Gardner studied graphic symbols and expressive qualities of children's drawings.

Viktor Lowenfeld. Lowenfeld was born in Austria in 1903. He and his family fled Vienna for England during World War II, and later settled in the United States. Lowenfeld, thought of by many as the father of art education, spent years collecting and studying thousands of children's drawings in the 1940's and 1950's (Smith, 1987). From his observations of characteristics of children's drawings, he developed five stages of artistic development: Scribbling, Preschematic, Schematic, Dawning Realism, and Pseudo-Naturalistic (Lowenfeld & Brittan, 1982). The first stage, Scribbling, begins at age two and usually lasts until the age of four. This is the child's first opportunity to draw and use art materials. The young artist begins with random marks which later evolve into controlled scribbles. The second, the Preschematic Stage, usually ranges from four years of age to around seven. During this stage, children begin drawing people and representing objects in their environment. Children are able to discuss their art with adults and are eager to explain it without being self-conscious. The next stage is the Schematic Stage, which begins around seven and ends around age nine. Children's drawings begin to symbolize parts of their environment; representations are usually repeated with variation. Young learners in this artistic stage arrange objects in a straight line across the bottom of the page, called a baseline, creating decorative art. Around the age of nine, peers become important to the child. This marks the beginning of the Stage of Dawning Realism or the Gang Age and lasts until about twelve. The child becomes more aware of him or herself, and this is evident in the drawings. At this point, the drawing is small and contains more details. The child is no longer eager to explain his or her drawings and hides them from adult observation. The final, the Pseudo-naturalistic stage, begins at age eleven or twelve. This stage is characterized by reasoning and self-criticism. The child becomes more aware of his or her natural surroundings

and begins to worry about proportion and depth in drawings. Evidence of great detail in the human figure, an increased awareness of sexual characteristics, and greater awareness of differences and gradations in color is evident. For some, this marks the end of artistic development. If children are not involved in art beyond this stage when asked to draw, their adult artwork will exhibit the typical characteristics of a twelve year old (Lowenfeld & Brittan, 1982).

Jean Piaget. Like Lowenfeld, Jean Piaget noted detailed stage characteristics of children's artistic development. Piaget was an extremely influential psychologist and educator from Switzerland. He observed the cognitive and artistic development of his students and his own three children around the 1940's and 1950's. He formulated stages that combined biology, cognition, and artistic development as indicators for growth (Hardiman & Zernich, 1980).

Piaget (1956) developed four stages that were organized by chronological age: Sensorimotor, Preoperational, Concrete Operations, and Formal Operations. The first stage, Sensorimotor, takes place from birth to two years old. The child's actions progress from newborn reflexes to symbolic activity and repetitive responses. The first drawings of objects appear and fantasy play occurs. The Preoperational stage comes about in children ages two to seven years of age. Children's drawings advance from random scribbles to circular human forms in frontal positions. Other subjects popular to draw during this time are buildings, animals, and plant life. The colors of the objects remain secondary to subject matter (Hardiman & Zernich, 1980). During the next stage, Concrete Operations (seven to eleven years old), children begin to draw realistic representations of objects with more details, and more human forms are drawn. Children also gain a better understanding of the differences between visual and verbal communication. During Formal Operations (eleven to fifteen years old), the final stage of development, the emergence of abstract thinking occurs (Piaget & Inhelder, 1956). According to

Hardiman and Zernich (1980), in Piaget's theory, not all individuals have to reach mastery before proceeding to the next stage. Many people do not reach mastery of the final stage of formal operations.

Lev Vygotsky. While Piaget concentrated on the cognitive development of children, Lev Vygotsky stressed social aspects in his research. Vygotsky was a significant Russian psychologist who studied social interactions in relation to learning and development in the 1920's and the early 1930's, although his research was not translated into English and other languages until around the 1960's (Lima, 1995). He stresses the importance of the interpersonal, social, and cultural dimensions of learning and development; his work is formed on the basis of social constructivism which is the relationship between language and cognition (Matthews, 2004). According to his perspective, a laissez-fair approach to learning is not sufficient enough for a child to develop; activities have to be simulating and developmentally appropriate. Artistic development should be challenged and encouraged just like linguistic development which helps cognition and the growth of perception (Kindler, 1995; Masami, 2001). Vygotsky also stresses the value of the creative action of play by children (Matthews, 2004).

Vygotsky's (1978) most important contribution to education is the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). Vygotsky's ZPD is closely related to scaffolding in which the teacher models a task for the student and gradually shifts responsibility to the student. ZPD is the distance between the child needing adult guidance and/or peer collaboration and being able to complete a task independently. In this zone, a student is able to complete a task too difficult to accomplish on their own with the help of a teacher. Vygotsky believes that learning occurs in this zone. ZPD involves understanding that the relationship between learning and development can only be accessed by social interactions with other people (Darras & Kindler, 1997).

Howard Gardner. Another person who has made great contributions to the field of educational psychology is Gardner. Gardner is a well-known American psychologist and professor of education at Harvard, associated with Harvard Project Zero. Harvard Project Zero, founded in 1967, examines children's artistic development in symbol systems: music (notes), language (words), and graphic symbols of drawing (images). Project Zero is intended to form a new brand of art education that focused on cognitive processes. Gardner and his colleagues found that preschool drawings had the same expressive qualities as adult art, but in middle childhood (eight to eleven years of age), students began attempting to draw literally and more realistically and lost expressive qualities (Davis, 1997). In the "literal stage" children become disappointed in their own work. According to Davis, "in the literal stage the child is reaching for rulers and erasers in hopes of achieving exactitude" (p.51). Young children seemed to draw similarly to adult artists and children's drawings in middle childhood had declining characteristics so the graphic symbol looked like a "U". In other words, they found that very young children and adults exude highly expressive qualities in their artwork, but children's art in middle childhood tends to contain very little. Jessica Davis, who worked with Gardner on Harvard Project Zero, tested the U-curve of development on four hundred and twenty preschool, middle childhood, and adult drawings. Expert judges looked at overall expression, balance, line and composition. The preschool and adult drawings contained more expressive qualities than middle childhood sketches. Overall, the results confirmed the U-curve of development hypothesis (Davis, 1997).

Gardner (1980) also made observations about artistic development by studying his own children's drawings. He notes that the development from scribbles to controlled lines seem to be universal. According to Gardner, young children draw with energy and playfulness without inhibition or self-consciousness to express their feelings. He suggests that active interventions of

artistic development by adults are unnecessary during the preschool years (Kindler, 1995). Gardner proposes that during middle childhood drawings lose expression and individual characteristics because they want to achieve realism (Duncum, 2003). Evidence of this can be found in the U-curve of development. His theories have a developmental focus and can apply to diverse subjects including drawing, narrative, music, sensitivity, and style (Wohlwill, 1985). After Gardner's observations of children's drawings in 1980, there was very little research conducted on artistic development until the 1990s.

Contemporary research. Theories and research conducted since 1990 will be presented in this section. Marianne Kerlavage (1998) and Bernard Darras and Anna Kindler (1994) are contemporary artistic development scholars who offer two entirely different approaches. Kerlavage presents an artistic development stage theory based on chronological age similar to that of Lowenfeld's. Darras and Kindler present a non-linear artistic development theory based on pictorial imagery.

Bernard Darras and Anna Kindler. Darras and Kindler provide insight into children's artistic development by their extensive studies about pictorial imagery. Their theory was adapted from C.S. Peirce's (1955) semiotic theory. Semiotics refers to signs and symbols and their representation and meaning (Pearson, 2001). Darras and Kindler's (1998) model is supported on the assumption that "all pictorial representational activity shares communication potential" (p. 148). Darras and Kindler (1994) suggest that development of pictorial imagery cannot be explained by a linear progression model like Lowenfeld's. They propose a map-like configuration that illustrates an interactive, social environment and cultural aspects that lead to pictorial imagery.

The map model of pictorial development describes artistic development in three stages: gestation, birth, and the early childhood years; initial imagery; and numerous developmental

paths of pictorial imagery one could travel throughout life. The model also contains five *iconicities* which refer to the relationship between signs and their meanings. Iconicity 1 marks the beginning of the emergence of pictorial imagery and children's understanding of a basic relationship between movements and their traces. This is similar and is linked to Lowenfeld's Scribbling stage (Darras & Kindler, 1997). During Iconicity 2, the child begins to explore relationships between marks and traces and increases the regularity of marks. In Iconicity 3, pictorial images begin to represent things, the significance of social interactions increases, and children begin mimicking the gestures and sounds of others. This stage also marks the beginning attempts of representation. Darras and Kindler's (1994) research indicates that young children around this stage are concerned with recording their actions, not things.

The researchers (1994) state:

Analysis of vocal manifestations which accompany image making of two and three year old children supports our hypothesis that these toddlers do not draw fire engines, but 'the speeding' of fire trucks; they draw 'the flying' of an airplane, rather than the aircraft itself. (p. 6)

Darras and Kindler speculate that during play the child may become the airplane. In Iconicity 4 children develop a new ability to sort, classify, and represent pictorial images. They reproduce images from their environments and create new symbols. Social interactions become more significant at this time. Children who exhibit copying behavior should not be considered uncreative, but rather need to be challenged by being exposed to a variety of pictorial representations. During Iconicity 5, extensive explorations in visual imagery occur. At this point there is a blend of generic representations and unique realms of pictorial imagery (Darras & Kindler, 1997).

The Darras and Kindler's map model of pictorial development makes many assumptions about artistic development. It assumes that all art shares communication potential including thoughts, ideas, values, or emotions which are all semiotic foundations. The model also presumes that art learning occurs in an interactive, social environment and is free from any assumption that pictorial activity is a secluded experience. The map proposes that artistic development is propelled by two opposing forces of repulsion and attraction (Darras & Kindler, 1997).

Marianne Kerlavage. Kerlavage (1998) presents an entirely different contemporary theory. Kerlavage developed a holistic stage theory based on the studies of early researchers on artistic development including Viktor Lowenfeld (1982), Rhoda Kellogg (1970), Rudolf Arnheim (1979), Claire Golomb (1974), and Howard Gardner (1980). Six developmental stages based on the child's age are described in Kerlavage's theory: Mark Making, Early Symbol Making, Symbol Making, Emerging Expertise, Artistic Challenges, and Artistic Thinking. According to Kerlavage, Mark Making occurs between the ages of two and four and begins with accidental marks and progresses toward recognizable symbols. Within this stage, four behaviors can be observed: manipulation of tools, uncontrolled marking, controlled marking, and planned marking. Characteristics seem to be universal for this age group. Early Symbol Making occurs approximately between four and seven years old. Children at this stage begin to develop and expand their visual vocabulary, and they continually change their symbols in a search for clearer representations. There seems to be a similar focus between Kerlavage's (1998) perspective and Darras and Kindler's (1997) research on symbols and children's attempts to depict objects and ideas. The stories children tell about their drawings are the most important element at this stage. The Symbol Making stage occurs between seven and nine years of age. Children's drawings in this stage have many identifiable characteristics including a distinct head and torso, improvement

of visual organization, a move from arbitrary colors to more realistic colors, and problem solving with spatial issues. The characteristics and age grouping are very similar to Lowenfeld's Schematic stage. Kerlavage notes that the stage occurs in the first few years of formal schooling in Western societies. Emerging Expertise stage (ages nine to eleven) marks dissatisfaction with art as a representation. The drawings produced seem to regress to cartoon-like drawings, stick-figures, and V-birds. This apparent regression is also found in Gardner's research. Children begin making art as a way of expressing feelings, not just recording a story. Artistic Challenges occurs approximately between the ages of eleven to thirteen. In this stage children have a strong interest in creating art, but this is when they have the least confidence in their ability to do so. Lowenfeld also notes self-criticism with this age group in his research of children's drawings. Children track their own artistic development by comparing their work with more artistically talented classmates. The final stage, Artistic Thinking (fourteen to seventeen years old), marks entry into the adult art world. Social issues and emotional outlets serve as motivation for producing a wide variety of images. Adolescents begin to analyze works from the viewpoint of the artist. Kerlavage, like most of the other stage theorists, does not mention any artistic development past the age of seventeen. This theory is similar to and combines many of the theories previously discussed.

Comparison of theories. There appear to be many similarities between early and contemporary theories of artistic development. The overlaps that exist between the theories include: possible universal stages, stage and age boundaries, importance of social interactions, self-criticism in middle childhood, and the childhood search for symbols and their meanings.

Many theories of artistic development describe similar characteristics among very young children's drawings, so the stages for this age group could be considered universal. The first stages of Lowenfeld's (1982), Piaget's (1956), Darras and Kindler's (1997), and Kerlavage's

(1998) theories contain related characteristics. All stage researchers include findings of scribbles and repetition in children's drawings of two to four year olds. Characteristics of young children's drawings are possibly universal, meaning all children's drawings of this age group contain them. Studies have shown that universal factors of artistic development exist especially in the early childhood years. According to Feldman (1985), Lowenfeld's first three stages "are universal in the sense that children all over the world will pass through these stages regardless of the particular environmental conditions that prevail or the technologies available to them" (p. 86). Hamblen (1985) acknowledges cross-cultural commonalities in young children's drawings and had difficulty distinguishing the art of children under the age of five from one culture to another. Hamblen argues "until approximately five to seven years of age, children's graphic configurations are primarily due to universal options. Formal socialization after five to seven years of age results in the interjection of relative influence factors" (p. 77). It is important to note that research in artistic development cannot generalize or be universal when looking at the artistic development of adolescents or adults (Kindler, 1997).

Three of the researchers discussed previously observed stage and age boundaries in their studies. Lowenfeld's (1982), Piaget's (1956), and Kerlavage's (1998) theories are extremely similar in that they view development as a simultaneous biological and cognitive process. All of Kerlavage's stages are almost identical to those of Lowenfeld's in the description of the stages in concurrence with children's ages. Piaget's Preoperational and Concrete Operations stages appear to be a combination of Lowenfeld's Scribbling and Preschematic stages and his Schematic and Dawning Realism stages respectively according to ages of the child and stage characteristics.

Many theorists observe the increased importance of social interactions among peers in children of middle childhood. Darras and Kindler (1997), Piaget (1956), Lowenfeld (1982), and

Vygotsky (1978) all mention social interactions in their research. In Darras and Kindler's Iconicities 3 and 4, in Lowenfeld's Dawning Realism stage, Piaget's Concrete Operations stage, and Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development, the importance of social interactions on artistic development at specified ages is observed by the researchers.

In addition to the significance of socializing during middle childhood, some researchers observe the emergence of self-consciousness and self-criticism at this age. Lowenfeld (1982), Gardner (1980), and Kerlavage (1998) note how children in middle childhood appear insecure and self-critical. In Lowenfeld's Dawning Realism stage, he mentions that children ages nine to twelve appear to be self-conscious about their artwork, and in his Pseudo-Naturalistic stage eleven to fourteen year old children are self-critical of their work. Gardner states that eight to eleven year old children are self-conscious and self-critical of their artwork because they are striving to achieve realism. In Kerlavage's Emerging Expertise stage children ages nine to eleven appear to be dissatisfied with their artwork, and in the Artistic Challenges stage, children ages eleven to thirteen are self-critical.

Two contemporary theories of artistic development focus on young children's discovery of symbols and exploration of representations. Darras and Kindler's (1997) Iconicities 2 and 3 and Kerlavage's (1998) Early Symbol Making stage focus on the search for depiction of images. Darras and Kindler's Iconicity 2 children begin to use symbols to signify an object, and in Iconicity 3 they are able to produce clearer, more precise representations. In Kerlavage's Early Symbol Making stage children four to seven years old search for symbols and representations in which they understand. Although many theories have notable similarities, some researchers discovered possible faults in the theories.

Criticisms. Researchers have criticized theories of artistic development for multiple reasons. Researchers criticized the U-curve of development, the reliability of stages and ages to

characterize artistic development, various aspects of Piaget, Lowenfeld, and Kerlavage's stage theories, and universal and non-universal factors of development.

There are a number of critics of the U-curve of development. Wohlwill (1985) points out that Gardner and other proponents of the U-curve compare typical preschool and elementary school children with artistically talented adolescents and adults. Wohlwill also finds that when judging computer graphic artwork of middle childhood children (ages seven to twelve), they generate imaginative and nonrepresentational forms. Therefore, the loss of expression or imagination in artwork of children in this age group is not evident. Pariser (1997) questions whether the U-curve of artistic development is found only in Western cultures or if it is universal. Kindler (2000 & 2004) argues that the U-curve is based on a Western perspective, and is therefore, constructed with a very specific set of aesthetic values not universally shared throughout the world. She believes that it is an inappropriate interpretation of artistic development cross-culturally.

Piaget's theory seems to have fewer critics, but still have stage/age related criticisms associated with it. Researchers disapprove of the reliability of age to characterize artistic development. Pearson (2001) believes that Piaget's development theory applies to early childhood and is less reliable into middle childhood. Freedman (1997) also notes that age may not be the most important factor, but rather formal knowledge. Hardiman and Zernich (1980) find a positive correlation between chronological ages and the stages identified across Western cultures, but there is less similarity across non-Western cultures.

Lowenfeld's stages are criticized by Alter-Muri (2002) and Thompson (2003). First, Alter Muri (2002) condemns Lowenfeld's theory for failing to consider cultural influences on child art; the stages have a Western cultural bias because they were not designed to be culturally sensitive. Culture influences perceptual training, habits concerning orientation to space, and how

art behavior is rewarded. In a study conducted by Alter-Muri, the artistic stages seem to be evident in the children's drawings considering the cross-cultural differences in language, education, the ability to create art at home, and parental interest in art. He concludes that more studies need to be conducted about the effects of cultural influences on child art. Lowenfeld also did not consider social influences such as peers and advertising. According to Alter-Muri, today's children have much more experience with the visual world than they did fifty years ago. Furthermore, Thompson (2003) conducted a conscientious search through preschool and kindergarten sketchbooks in a twelve year study that revealed the classic characteristics of children's drawings discussed by Lowenfeld were difficult to find. For example, the floating figures and other distinctive characteristics of the Preschematic Stage were found nowhere in the children's drawings. Baselines, skylines, and figures facing the viewer with arms extended were found, but appear less frequently than Lowenfeld predicted. Very little autobiographical depictions of family and friends were found. These images were overshadowed in the children's sketchbooks by visual culture images of Pokémon characters, dinosaurs, spaceships, and the Little Mermaid. The directly experienced was often not depicted by young children today; instead, they chose to represent something seen from a secondary source such as television or a movie (Thompson, 2003).

Like Piaget, Lowenfeld's theory was also associated with stage/age criticisms. Alter-Muri (2002) collected children's drawings that reveal several developmental stages could be combined or may overlap. In Alter-Muri's study, he tested Lowenfeld's artistic stages with the corresponding children's age group. Only about half of the children ages four to seven were in the Preschematic Stage, and the other half were in the next level, the Schematic Stage. Another interesting observation was that 13% of the children's drawings included characteristics of more than one artistic stage. Out of the 156 children in the study, 104 created drawings that indicated

Lowenfeld's stage for their age group (Alter-Muri, 2002). As children grow, stage differences become more widespread, and development may occur at different rates and in dissimilar areas or domains.

Kerlavage's (1998) theory appears to be an updated version and combination of early stage theories, therefore, criticisms of the early theories mentioned earlier may apply to her theory. Kerlavage's stages are linear and combine early theorists' views on artistic development, which may result in critique similar to that of Lowenfeld's work. Her theory could be linked to stage/age criticisms and the lack of consideration of cultural and possible technological influences. Kerlavage did specify that the stages apply to Western cultures but did not attempt to explain differences between Western and non-Western culture theories of artistic development.

Another criticism of stage theories is many of them failed to deal with universal/unique distinction of stages between cultures (Feldman, 1985). Universal factors of development include any stages or levels of artistic development that all children throughout the world cross, no matter their culture or quality of education. Non-universal factors are stages or aspects of artistic development that not all children go through because of cultural and social gaps. Further research must be conducted because non-universal factors of artistic development are not fully understood yet. Culture and society may be factors in non-universal development.

Culture and Society's Impact on Artistic Development and Children's Art

Culture may be an important factor that is almost never mentioned in research on artistic development. In this section, definitions of culture, the effects of culture on artistic development, studies examining cultural factors in artistic development, and visual culture in children's art will be discussed.

Culture is defined by Kantner and Newton (1997) as patterns of values, beliefs, and ideas that influence human behavior as well as the objects produced from the behavior. Culture

includes language, arts, religion, and moral practices. According to Armstrong (1990) culture contains human-made components including artworks, music compositions, buildings, and novels and can be made up of sub-groups and micro-groups such as college students or ethnic groups. Culture consists of individual and social development and human relationships (Rampley, 2005). It is important to remember that culture is active and is always changing.

Within all groups of people, there are human-made objects that are considered material culture. According to Bolin and Blandy (2003), material culture is “any and all human-constructed or human-mediated objects, forms, or expressions, manifested consciously or unconsciously through culturally acquired behaviors” (p. 249). Material culture refers to objects in society for survival, entertainment, aesthetic, or expressive purposes.

Within material culture there is visual culture which includes visual components of a culture. According to Mirzoeff (1999), “Visual culture is concerned with visual events in which information, meaning, or pleasure is sought by the consumer in an interface with visual technology” (p. 3). Visual culture can be anything visual that transfers an idea from an oil painting to popular culture images on the Internet. It includes fine art such as paintings, prints, photographs, and film, as well as objects and images that are not fine art like television, video, advertisements, science images, and toys (Keifer-Boyd, Amburgy, & Knight, 2003). Children often include these visual images from their culture in artwork.

Visual culture in children’s art. Many researchers have noted evidence of visual culture in children’s drawings and believe that they draw what they notice and value. Many studies have shown that the art of culture, especially mass-media in Western cultures, influences children’s drawings by passing on graphic images to them (Erickson, 2002; Hamblen, 1985; Ivashkevich, 2009). According to Pariser (1999) there are two factors motivating children to

draw: the desire to tell a story and the inspiration from imagery from media, peers, journals, comics, and so on.

Vollrath (2006), Thompson (2003), Garoian (2004), and Rampley (2005) discuss the fact that children are consumers of media in their daily lives. Media can shape society through visual culture which affects not only children but adults as well. Vollrath (2006) states that even toys are a part of visual culture, permeating the daily lives of young children. This is evidence that children are consumers of culture produced by adults for profit. Some images and objects are designed for children's consumption, but most are intended for others (Thompson, 2003). Children are exposed to images intended for adults many times through visual culture on television or on the Internet. Visual culture is characterized by forms of representation of mass-media and "corporate capitalism to manufacture our desires and determine our choices" (Garoian, 2004, p. 299). Media institutions can shape public understanding of a society and culture by subtle means and contexts (Rampley, 2005). Fine art used to be most important in art education and popular culture was thought to dull students' imaginations. Now, visual culture is considered worthy of study because it is a major part of students' everyday experiences (Dorn & Orr, 2008).

Children may be over-exposed to many images of visual culture, so they may not notice or pay attention to images they see on a daily basis. Kharod (2006) had a discussion with an art class about visual culture and found that the students had a difficult time recalling visual images they see every day on the Internet, television, and on billboards. The students said that the images just start to blend together, and they do not think about them often. One could argue that some images are seen so repeatedly, they become part of the subconscious.

Many adults may discourage children drawing visual culture images because they want them to create something new and original. According to Freedman (1997), teachers and parents

try to discourage or filter out popular culture images in children's drawings for fear of stifling creativity and individuality. Visual culture creeps into the classroom when children are invited to draw what they want, but it may be less evident when teachers control the subject matter of their students' drawings. Children's spontaneous drawings rely on many different graphic media forms, so the popular culture images may be a tool for exploration or an avenue for creativity. According to Thompson (2003), young children's drawings provide a look into what they notice, value, and understand, but what children directly experience is often left behind in drawings and replaced with images from popular culture.

Children also borrow images from visual culture to express a thought or emotion. For example, in the 1870s youth from Native American tribes were sent to the Carlisle Indian School in Pennsylvania (Wilson, 2004). Young boys drew pictures of battles and buffalo hunts; the horses in their sketches had similar characteristics of Plains Indian, Sioux, and Comanche adult drawings. Wilson suggested that they drew these battles because they were longing for the culture from which they were removed. The young boys took visual images from other adult Native American drawings to express an idea and a feeling.

Children often draw subjects they find valuable and important which may reflect ideas in popular culture. In a case study by Ivashkevich (2009), drawings about social interactions between ten year old American girls consisted mainly of the ideas of beauty, fashion, and body image which are feminine Western ideals. These Western ideals permeate many aspects of popular culture and make a personal connection with young girls who have just begun to be very concerned with their appearance. Instead of being a negative aspect, visual culture can have positive effects in the classroom.

The use of visual culture in the classroom has potential for students to understand their everyday experiences. Gill (2009) examined student learning outcomes from an art class in a

Midwest public high school to focus on the role video games play in collaborative production of 3-D digital animations and how they infuse everyday experiences with popular visual culture. The art instructor used minimal class lecture and relied on individual instruction and discovery learning of software. The study found that given the minimal amount of traditional instruction by the teacher, students rapidly progressed through the projects during the course. Students were able to interact with software and manipulate visual qualities to express ideas and interests because of the cooperative, student-centered model the teacher used.

Children can connect to fine art through popular culture which can provide valuable learning experiences. Eckhoff and Guberman (2006) conducted interviews with children about visual culture and famous works of art. They found that the children were able to connect with art images through prior knowledge gained through experiences with popular culture. They concluded that popular culture could provide children with valuable learning experiences that can be extended to art classrooms. The children developed ideas and understandings of fine art through everyday experiences with popular culture and then drew upon that knowledge when viewing an image.

Children from Western cultures are more likely to reproduce images from visual culture in their drawings than non-Western cultures simply because they are exposed to it on a daily basis. Brittan (1990) collected drawings from children four to eight years of age from New York and Queensland, Australia. The New York population consisted of a typical Western society with one or two televisions, newspapers, and magazines at home. The Queensland population was operated by the Department of Aboriginal and Islanders' Advancement. These households had no televisions, cars, buses, newspapers, or magazines. All students were asked to draw a picture of "eating." The New York population showed a lot of evidence of popular culture in their drawings and environment such as cartoons. Aboriginal children drew their

natural, outdoor environment with friends and family. Students can not only draw images from visual culture but discuss and learn from them too.

Students can think critically about society and prejudices by analyzing visual culture. Park (2006) had a discussion in a South Korean art classroom about visual culture. A student interpreted the Disney animation movie, *Mulan*, as racist and conveyed only a Western point of view. The student said that the story made implications that the Han race was good, and the Hun race was bad. She noted that the animators drew the Huns with triangular faces and peaked, slanted eyes. The good Hans had white skin while the bad Huns were painted with dark skin. The student claimed that the movie failed to acknowledge the diversity of the East and suggested Western prejudices and Eastern inferiority.

Manga's influence on children's drawings. *Manga* is the Japanese genre of cartooning and comics, and it combines Asian traditions with the Western ideas of modernity. Rampley (2005) described the artists of *manga* as having “transformed the round eyes of Disney cartoons that flooded Japan during the American occupation of the 1940s” (p. 123). Japanese children's drawings have been significantly influenced by *manga* (Masami, 2001).

Like in Western cultures, children in Japan seem to borrow images from visual culture, specifically *manga*. Wilson (1997) went to Japan to study children's story drawings and found that five to seven year olds did not make up their own character but just borrowed one from *manga*. He suggested that *manga* may be attractive to children because it helps them cope with their problems. For example, they can experiment drawing themes of life because they can invent a situation that they can observe such as good versus evil or cause and effect. These children want to be able to send a message through their visual stories (Koroscik, 1997).

Manga may have a positive influence in children's drawings spatially. In a study conducted by Masami (2001) when looking at second, fourth and sixth grade drawings,

exaggerated and perspective views appeared in Japanese student drawings and not the American students. The Japanese student drawings were more advanced spatially and included exaggerated, bird's eye, and multi-perspective view points. This may be attributed to the practice of drawing *manga*. This study provides evidence that the practice of drawing *manga* may enhance artistic development; there may be other aspects of culture that have an effect on artistic development.

Effect of culture on artistic development. Naturally, culture will have some effect on children's artistic development; some researchers think it may have more of an influence than other researchers. Many have also explored ethnicity, environment (urban, rural, suburban), and socioeconomic status in relation to development. Brittan (1990) states that the two views on culture's effect on artistic development are the cultural setting may play an important role in limiting or directing children's drawings or cultural influences are minimal and children's drawings exhibit universal patterns reflecting common cognitive growth. Pearson (2001) writes "children are biologically programmed to a naturally existing intention to pursue graphic interests which exist culturally and socially" (p. 66). Similarly, Wilson (2004) states "every visual artifact produced by a young person is a product pervaded by culture" (p. 321). Children are drawn to and seek out cultural images because they see them on a daily basis. Many times children recreate these images in their drawings.

Kerlavage (1998) points out that urban school cultures can be very different from suburban and rural cultures. Urban schools for the most part tend to have a higher ratio of minority students in attendance and more students who come from families with lower socioeconomic statuses than suburban schools. These factors tend to lead to a higher student to teacher ratio and lower funding for urban schools. Less funding for art and other programs and a high student to teacher ratio could possibly negatively affect artistic development of students.

Kerlavage (1998) discusses cultural differences of groups of people specifically Mexican and African Americans. She concludes that Mexican Americans are typically people oriented, and their children learn best by sharing and cooperating with others. However, in a school environment, these learners are forced to work quietly and independently. Similarly, African Americans typically grow up in a culture that is highly charged emotionally and is people oriented. These students may be more physically active and may be more cooperative learners. These cultural differences will affect how these children learn, and in turn, influence how they develop artistically.

Studies examining cultural factors in artistic development. Eristi (2009), Winner (1993), Carlisle (1989), Masami (2001), and Pariser (1997) have studied in both Western and non-Western countries and have discovered different ways in which culture may affect children's artistic development. Artwork of children from all different cultures give insight into what they have experienced and what they know about the world in which they live.

According to Eristi (2009), technology equips students with skills to communicate and collaborate with peers around the world, prepares them for the informative society, and provides opportunities for experiences in new learning contexts and connections to other cultures. Eristi studied third and fourth grade students from schools in Turkey and Canada. Turkish and Canadian students interacted with each other through email, chat, video, photo, and shared their drawings on the Internet. Students were able to question each other and send visual images about their cultures. Turkish students created an interactive CD about their culture and sent it to the Canadian students to introduce their way of life to them. The Turkish students represented traditional cultural symbols, activities, and historical sites in their artwork. Canadian students focused more on popular culture and current events in everyday life in their art. Eristi stated "It was more difficult for the Canadian students, who live in a multicultural society and experience a

variety of cultural values on an everyday basis to figure out what their cultural identity is” (p. 254). Most students said the program was successful, and the experience was enjoyable, exciting, and motivating.

Some cultures advance through artistic development stages more quickly than others. For example, the people of the nomadic Orotchen tribe of northeastern China are reindeer herders. Young children in this tribe rapidly skip through stages and draw realistic reindeer (Hamblen, 1985). Perhaps because these reindeer are such an important part of their culture this connection inspired quick development in this area.

Similarly, children from China and Japan on average seem to progress through artistic development stages quicker than children from Western cultures. Ellen Winner conducted many studies on the development of gifted children in the United States. After observing Chinese children, Winner (1993) concludes that they draw like gifted children who progress more quickly in artistic development, but it is cultural rather than an individual phenomenon. Winner (1993) states “Western, progressive education is grounded in the belief that children learn best by doing, exploring, and discovering on their own. Chinese education is grounded in the belief that children learn best by imitating” (p. 39). For centuries teaching in China has been based on imitating models as opposed to learning concepts and applying them to new situations. Memorization of the Chinese characters becomes the foundation of learning and affects all schooling. Teachers leave little room for students to conceptualize or analyze. Experienced teachers in art take the children through a specific step-by-step process of brush painting, and by the end of kindergarten, children are able to successfully reproduce many traditional forms such as fish, bamboo, and pandas. By the end of second grade they are quick workers and good observers of art, and by fourth grade they are using X-acto knives for paper and wood cuts (Carlisle, 1989). In Japan, kindergarten teachers are well-trained in music and art, and a

significant amount of time is spent teaching art and music in the classroom. Japanese children develop language skills through peer dialogue in the classroom. This language development may aid in the growth of their artistic talents (Masami, 2001). In addition, Masami found that Japanese children had greater spatial awareness and stronger early art education programs in kindergartens and preschools than in many Western cultures.

Unlike Western cultures, Chinese adults do not value child art for its originality. In China, children are taught and expected to copy works and the correct sequence of brushstrokes as done by master artists and calligraphers. Pariser (1997) observed while in China that adults believe that originality is for an adult artist, not a child. Some children in China never draw from their own experiences in art class, and teachers regard child art as having little or no artistic value (Carlisle, 1989). Children in other countries as well as the United States draw their own experiences which may include images from visual culture. Allowing children to make artwork based on their own experiences creates personal connections.

Creating Personal Connections in Children's Artwork

Art educators can possibly enhance artistic development and creativity of their students. Educators and researchers have shown that artistic creation and understanding can be fostered through a student-centered environment, discussions, self-exploratory learning with some guidance, and critical thinking activities.

Research has shown that self-exploratory activities can aid in fostering artistic development and creating meaning for students. For instance, J.C. Holz was known for his imaginative, realistic comic book character drawings as a child. After observation, Wilson (2004) concluded that Holz learned “advanced concepts of foreshortening, movement, action, multiple viewpoints, value, contrast, shading, metamorphosis, zoomorphism, fantasy, futurism, themes, and plots” from his self-initiated play art (p.12). Wilson encourages teachers to allow

self-motivated child artwork which may lead to more expression. According to Ulbricht (2005), as Holtz looks back on his own child art experiences in school, he does not think it aided in his artistic development. He felt that he learned more through his self-initiated art experiences.

Olson (2003) and Park (2006) have made conclusions about the importance of personal experiences in children's artwork. Olson (2003) focused her work on children drawing from their own experiences. She found that students naturally express knowledge and events through visual or verbal stories, and that there is a connection between the visual and language arts. Interestingly, Park (2006) observed that because students interpret images of popular culture based on happenings in their own life, they are better able to analyze daily life and social problems. Park concluded that this may enhance students' judgments regarding social issues relating to their lives.

Subjects and content that art educators choose to teach will be more meaningful for the student if it connects to his or her life. For instance, Cummings (2006) realized that the students in her classroom were no longer responding positively to the activities they were doing in class because they found them boring and did not see the point. Cummings realized she needed to change her curriculum so that the content was more interesting, meaningful, and connected to the students. Her curriculum focused on inquiry, self-expression, and communication. It emphasized contemporary visual culture and offered students the opportunity to address concerns and reflect on who they are and what they value. Class discussions, group activities, and journal responses all became ways that the students could creatively express themselves.

When children are able to draw and create what they want, they are able to explore and make creative decisions on their own, but usually need guidance and a safe environment. Thompson (1995) believes that sketchbooks provide children with a space for personal explorations, allow them to perfect their skills, and give freedom for them to make decisions as

artists. Sketchbooks also let children act as participants in the cultures that converge and emerge in their classroom. When children get to choose their own project, it is almost always developmentally appropriate and personally meaningful. Thompson explains, “True freedom occurs when choices are made within a structure that is stable, reliable, [and] protected from distraction” (p. 9). Students’ drawings can provide indicators of what they are thinking, understanding, and experiencing.

Conclusion

After reviewing the literature, there is evidence that culture affects artistic development. Cultural setting plays a role in children’s drawings. For instance, research has revealed that special cultural factors may allow children to progress more quickly through artistic development stages, for example, children seem to possess advanced spatial awareness in Japan. Also, there appear to be universal stages or factors in artistic development in which children of all cultures pass through.

Many times children incorporate visual culture in their drawings. The literature suggests that they borrow these images to express specific thoughts and show what they value. By leaving students choices about subject matter in the art classroom, it invites visual culture into their artwork and allows it to become more personally meaningful for them. Then, the viewer which may include teachers, parents, or peers may get a glimpse into what the student artist values and experiences.

For my research, I will examine children’s drawings. By investigating the sketches, I will explore how they reflect the artistic development stages. I will also examine the subject matter of the children’s drawings, specifically visual culture. Then, implications for teachers’ instruction can be formulated.

Methodology

Overview

This study investigated artistic development and the prevalence of visual culture in children's drawings using a qualitative, descriptive research design. I selected a public, suburban elementary school in Kansas to conduct my study. To evaluate two different levels of artistic development, all first and fifth grade students in the school were participants. Data were collected in the students' art classroom with their drawings. Research questions guiding the study were explored by analyzing the students' drawings with checklists.

Research Design

This research employed a qualitative, descriptive design. According to Leedy and Ormrod (2010), descriptive research involves identifying characteristics of an observed occurrence. A qualitative research design was applied to this study because I wanted to investigate characteristics of children's drawings as well as their subject matter which could not be investigated simply by analyzing numbers.

Participants

Context. The sample school is part of a large public, suburban school district located in a metropolitan area of a large city in Kansas. The schools in this district vary greatly in both ethnic diversity and socioeconomic statuses of families. Thirty-five percent of students qualify for free or reduced lunches. Sixty-seven percent of the district's student population are White, 15.9 % are Hispanic, and 8.4% are Black; a very small percent of the population includes Asian, Native American, and Multiethnic students.

Sample. The sample elementary school is less diverse and has fewer students who qualify for free or reduced lunches than the school district's average. This elementary school enrolls 434 kindergarten through sixth grade students. Ninety percent of the students are White,

and small percentages of the remaining population include students who are Black, Hispanic, or Multiethnic. Nine percent of the students at this school qualify for free or reduced lunches.

I have a connection to this school because I am a middle school art teacher within the same district. Three months prior to the study, I contacted my school district's Visual Art Coordinator and gave her a copy of my research proposal. After reading the research proposal, she gave me contact information for Mrs. Morris (pseudonym), an elementary art teacher she thought would be open to having this research study conducted in her classroom. After discussing my research project in a face to face meeting with Mrs. Morris, she agreed to allow me to conduct the study with her students.

The study included first-grade and fifth-grade students at the school because they represented children both in lower and upper elementary. There were three first-grade and three fifth-grade classes in the school, and the classes met for art once per week for sixty minutes. Fifty-five first graders and 63 fifth graders attend the school. Mrs. Morris, allowed me to come into each of the six art classes and collect data.

A total of 88 students participated in this study. In order to conduct research with the students, parental consent forms were needed. Of the 55 first grade students in the school, 41 of them turned in their consent form, and therefore, were able to draw for the study, a participation rate of 75%. Seventeen females and 24 males participated from the first grade. Forty-seven fifth graders out of 63 returned their form, also a 75% participation rate. Of the fifth graders, 26 were females and 21 were males.

Art teacher and classroom. Mrs. Morris (personal communication, December 12, 2011) is a very experienced teacher and has been an art educator for 33 years with a total of 15 years in the school district. Her curriculum involves mainly giving the students choices and engaging critical thinking. Much of her curriculum is inspired by the book *Teaching Meaning in Art*

Making by Sydney Walker (2001). The book explores ways of fostering inquiry and critical thinking as well as explains the role of big ideas and personal connections in the art classroom.

According to Mrs. Morris, first grade does 12 to 14 art lessons, and fifth grade only completes about six per year due to district-wide budget cuts. For this reason, her curriculum concentrates less on studio art and more on discussions, brainstorming, and critical thinking.

The art classroom at this elementary school is modern and well-equipped with many art supplies at the students' disposal. While in the school, I observed that Mrs. Morris hangs student artwork in the hallways of the school regularly, and she has many visual posters hanging in her classroom about famous artists and the elements of art. The art classroom has four long tables with chairs and the students sit in a seating chart each class period. I quickly learned that many of the students' art experiences extend beyond the classroom.

Many of these students have had additional experiences with art outside of their art classroom. For example, one of the fifth grade participants in the study was a student of mine two years ago in a summer art class. These experiences will inevitably affect the students' drawings.

Materials

The materials include two checklists, one for the first-grade drawings (Appendix D) and one for the fifth-grade drawings (Appendix E). The first grade checklist contains multiple characteristics of Lowenfeld's (1982) Schematic stage, and the fifth grade checklist includes Lowenfeld's Dawning Realism stage characteristics. These characteristics are from Viktor Lowenfeld and Lambert Brittan's book *Creative and Mental Growth* (1982), and similar checklists of these stage characteristics were used in a study by Charlene Lett (2005). Of the early theories of artistic development, Lowenfeld's stages provided the most detailed descriptions of drawing characteristics; therefore, I applied them to the drawing checklists.

Both checklists include three categories: drawing characteristics, space representation, and figure representation and list five to thirteen characteristics. In particular, the figure representation category lists specific body parts such as the inclusion of a head, arms, and legs. The category is more detailed than what the early theorists studied, but this was added to have a more complete understanding of which parts the students include and exaggerate. Subject matter is also listed on both checklists. Next to each characteristic there are three boxes to check as it applies to the drawing: Yes, No, or Not Applicable (N/A). The checklists were used to determine how many and which of the stage characteristics these students' drawings contain, which characteristics are still applicable to children's drawings today, and how often certain subject matter appears.

Data Collection Procedures

Data were collected at the beginning of October, 2011. By this period in the term, the students had been in school for over a month after summer break. Thus, they were focused by that point in the school year. Parental consent forms, the school district's written permission, and the principal's approval were needed to conduct the study with the students. I contacted the school district and principal in late August and received approval from both by the beginning of September. I gave the parental consent forms to the students' homeroom teachers to send home two weeks before the research project and requested they be returned to Mrs. Morris, their art teacher, within one week. The parental consent form consisted of a cover letter, description of the study with my contact information, and participant certification for parents to sign (see Appendix A).

I used similar procedures for collecting data from the two groups of students. During their weekly art class, all first and fifth-grade students were asked to draw "playing". The subject of "playing" was inspired by Lambert Brittian's (1990) comparative study of New York

and Aboriginal children discussed in a previous section. All of the students in his study were asked to draw “eating” which is a universal activity that every child does as is “playing.” The subject of “playing” leaves choices for the students because they can draw toys, games, their environment, themselves, other children, family members or anything else that may come to mind. I decided on the theme of “playing” instead of “eating” because I believed that “playing” would invite more visual culture subjects into the student drawings than “eating.”

Only the students who turned in a signed parental consent form were allowed to draw for the study. Mrs. Morris gathered the students who could not participate in the study and sat them at a separate table; the students continued to work on an art project they started during a previous art class. The student participants had thirty minutes or half of their class time to complete the drawing. Each student was given a sharpened pencil with an eraser, a set of eight washable markers, and a 9 x 12 piece of white construction paper. The scripted directions were read to the first-grade (Appendix B) and fifth-grade (Appendix C) classes. The students were not allowed to talk to their peers during this class, but their art teacher played soft music for them while they drew. Once the students completed their drawings, I instructed them to raise their hand and collected them. If some students finished their drawings before the end of the 30 minutes, their art teacher handed them an art project to finish from the previous class. After I collected all of the drawings from the students, I passed out stickers to them to show gratitude for participating in the study.

Pilot study. The materials and procedures of this study were pilot tested with a convenient sample of first and fifth grade students. The pilot study was conducted in my art classroom at a private elementary school I taught at the previous school year. The pilot study consisted of 50 participants, one first grade class of 23 students and one fifth grade class of 27 students.

After the pilot study was conducted, a few additions to the checklist and procedures were necessary. The subject matter section was added to the checklists; the subjects listed were all found in drawings during the pilot study. Drawing characteristics of specific body parts of figures such as the arms, legs, hands, feet, head, eyes, nose, and mouth were also added to both checklists. After reading the students the scripted directions during the pilot study, most of the students were unsure and confused about the task of drawing “playing.” Many students asked my permission if they could draw a specific subject. Therefore, I found it necessary to give the students some examples of what they can draw for “playing” in the scripted directions.

Data Analysis

All student drawings and checklists were numbered and labeled according to grade-level and homeroom. Data from the first and fifth-grade checklists were tallied per characteristic using a frequency count and then converted to percentages. Hereafter, I could determine majorities for the characteristics, therefore, drawing conclusions about which characteristics are still found in children’s drawings.

Subject matter and visual culture content were also documented with the checklists. Then, the data were organized into a frequency count and next percentages on a spreadsheet. Once the drawing characteristics and subject matter were organized into a frequency count, I was able to see patterns and reoccurrences in the drawings.

Summary

This descriptive research study used drawing collection and checklists to determine if early stage theory characteristics still apply to current student drawings. The subject matter portion of the checklists established what subjects students choose to draw. By analyzing the information collected, conclusions can be drawn about artistic development, the subject matter children include in their drawings, and implications for teachers.

Results and Discussion

The purpose of this research was to determine if the early stage theories of artistic development are still applicable to current children's drawings and how frequently visual culture appears in children's drawings as subject matter. In this chapter, the analysis of the first and fifth grade drawing checklists will be presented and discussed individually. A summary of the prominent findings of my investigation will conclude this chapter.

Analysis of First Grade Drawings

All of the first grade drawings were analyzed using a checklist to determine how relevant the early stage theories, specifically those of Lowenfeld, are to today's children's drawings (see Appendix D). Also, student work was examined to discover what the majority of first graders chose to draw. The results will be presented in three categories: (a) drawing characteristics, (b) figure representation, and (c) subject matter. The first two relate to artistic development, and the third will determine the pervasiveness of visual culture and other subjects in children's drawings.

Drawing characteristics. Most of the first grade work exhibited the characteristics discussed by Lowenfeld. There are several qualities that suggest this. First, every drawing analyzed appeared flat. Then, in 95% of the drawings, I was able to recognize all of the objects. Only two drawings had objects that were unidentifiable. Eighty-five percent of students used realistic colors for their subject (see Figure 1). Interestingly, the students' drawings that contained unrealistically colored objects included some items that were colored realistically. These three characteristics observed in the drawing are congruent with the early stage theories of artistic development.

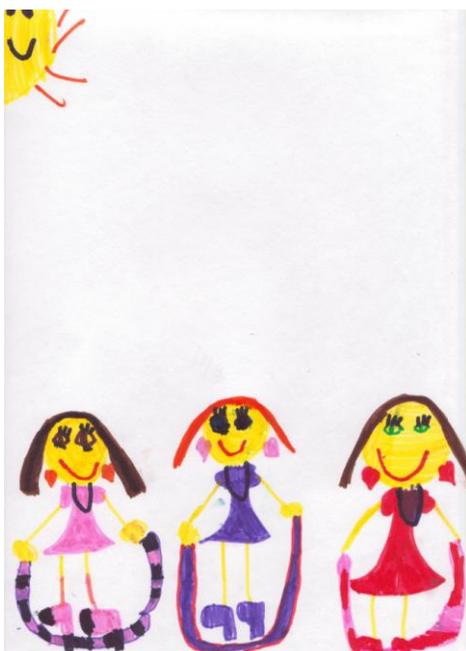


Figure 1. First grade drawing with realistic colors. The drawing includes three human figures with close attention to realistic color details.

The first grade drawings that I collected contained all of the same spatial qualities described by the early stage theorists. That is, in every one of first grade drawings, objects were drawn perpendicular to the baseline and were two-dimensional. Subsequently, a total of ninety percent of the drawings included no overlapping objects. The remaining sketches contained overlapping objects, a characteristic of a more advanced artistic development stage. The children's work demonstrated the expected ability of representing size differences of objects. An exaggeration of size between objects and figures appeared in 59%, but in 12% of the drawings, the children only drew one object, so this characteristic was not applicable to these. For example, both flowers and trees appeared in a couple of the drawings in which the flowers were drawn large compared to the trees (see Figure 2). Another common exaggeration of size could be seen in many human figures as they were drawn as large as houses or even trees. Finally, in addition to qualities previously discussed, I found that 58% of the drawings contained a definite baseline and skyline; although in 22% of the drawings, the children did not include a

background, so this characteristic could not be determined. In general, the spatial features of the student work corresponded with the theories discussed by early researchers (Lowenfeld, 1982; Piaget & Inhelder, 1956).



Figure 2. First grade size exaggeration drawing. The flowers are drawn large in comparison to the trees.

While the findings showed that students' drawings included many typical qualities, there were some deviations in expected characteristics of the early theorists. For example, none of the drawings contained objects drawn upside down; Lowenfeld (1982) observed this developmental trait in the Schematic stage. Also, only 4% of the students' work contained x-rays. One these drawings contained three human figures with circled organic shapes drawn on the torsos. In terms of these spatial characteristics, the sample population seems to be more advanced than the children Lowenfeld observed decades ago.

Figure representation. The results indicated that these drawings had the typical qualities of figure representation described by Lowenfeld, and many characteristics support this

(see Appendix F). Not all of the children chose to draw figures, but the majority of children (85%) did. Of these drawings, (80%) contained figures made up of geometric shapes, and the rest drew linear figure representations or stick figures. The figures comprised of geometric shapes included oval torsos and rectangular arms and legs. Not only were the figures made up of geometric shapes but also clothes appeared on 66% of them. Students drew female figures with triangular dresses and skirts and males with boxy t-shirts and rectangular pants. Interestingly, none of the stick figures were drawn with clothing. These drawings are less advanced than those sketches containing figures constructed with geometric shapes and clothes. These findings are parallel to the early theories of artistic development.

Most of the students included a head, hair, arms, and legs on their figures, but some parts were omitted. Children exaggerated these body parts which was an expectation of the early theorists. First, all of the drawings containing figures included a head, and the majority (71%) had hair. As affirmed by the early theorists, 77% of the heads were drawn in an exaggerated manner; most were much larger than life size. Besides this quality, a total of 94% of the figures possessed arms, many of which were exaggerated, either drawn longer or shorter than realistic ones. Unexpectedly, less than half showed volume, so most of the arms were represented with only one line rather than with shapes. Interestingly, about half of the children omitted hands and fingers, and all of these were exaggerated. Likewise, legs were drawn on nearly all of the figures, and 83% were exaggerated. Of these, many were depicted much shorter than realistic legs. Like the arms, only a minority (31%) contained volume. According to Lowenfeld, children draw body parts made up of shapes and these should contain volume, so the linear representation of arms and legs is unexpected. Similar to the hands, only about half of the figures did not have feet; all of these were exaggerated also. The children's exaggerated figure representations contained characteristics observed by the early theorists.

Students' representations of figures were not surprising. However, first graders' drawings of faces were fascinating. All of the drawings contained a mouth, and 97% drew eyes. Interestingly, only about one-fourth of the students drew noses on the figures' faces. Consequently, the majority of the faces contained eyes and mouths only and excluded noses.

Subject matter. Students explored many different subjects in their drawings including architecture, nature, sports participation, playgrounds/parks, figures, and visual culture. The most common subject was figures with the majority (85%) of children including them in their drawings. A total of 76% of the drawings contained human figures, and a minority (22%) included animals. Over half (54%) incorporated multiple figures. These included images of children playing with their friends, family, and pets.

Architecture and playgrounds/parks proved to be the least popular subjects to draw, as only 10% of students included these. The architecture represented in the sketches, consisted of houses, presumably the children's own homes. The playgrounds and parks depicted contained slides, swings, and monkey bars, and in all of these drawings, children drew more than one human figure. They most likely drew themselves playing with their friends on the playground.

More children drew nature or sports related subjects, but these still apply to only a minority (20%) of drawings. Flowers, trees, and ponds were a popular nature images in these first grade drawings. The school's ground may offer an explanation. A large flower garden and pond surrounds their school; their teacher takes advantage of this designated space and conducts lessons outside regularly. Presumably, the students were inspired by this and decided to draw it. The children also drew figures playing basketball, soccer, and baseball. One child drew herself surfing, and when asked to describe her drawing, she explained that her family had gone to the Virgin Islands the previous month. Most of the students in this study come from middle to upper

class families and have many opportunities available to them such involvement in many sports and family vacations.

Visual culture subjects. Visual culture did not prove to be very popular subject with the first graders. Only one-fifth of the students included this subject in their drawings (Appendix G). Popular culture characters appeared in 5% of the drawings and included Mickey Mouse and Pikachu, a Pokémon character (See Figure 3). A heart shape symbol was found in one drawing, which was the only visual culture symbol found. One first grader drew detailed Pokémon cards which were classified as toys. I found Pokémon characters, which originated in Japan, in two different drawings. The literature on *manga's* influence on children's drawings explains how children commonly borrow images from *manga* instead of creating their own characters. Wilson (1997) offers an explanation that children are attracted to these characters because they help them cope with their problems. By drawing these characters, they can experiment with life themes such as good versus evil.

After I reviewed the drawings, I discovered that video games were the most common representation of visual culture (7%). Video games specifically were not included on the subject matter checklist but these drawings were included in the 10% for the toys and games category. In these drawings, students depicted themselves in front of flat-screen television sets with video game controllers in their hands. Children also drew the video game characters on the television screens. The participants for my study come from families who are able to buy their children video games. If the research had been conducted with a sample population of children from less advantaged neighborhoods, fewer video games may have been depicted in the drawings.

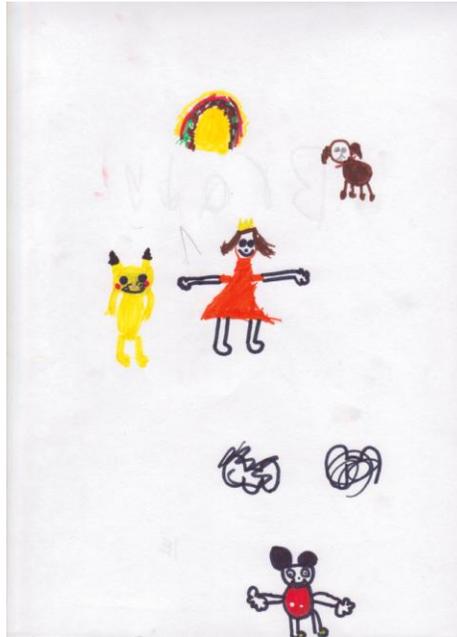


Figure 3. First grade cartoon characters drawing. This drawing includes two pop culture characters, Pikachu and Mickey Mouse.

Analysis of Fifth Grade Drawings

Like the first grade, I examined the fifth grade drawings both to determine the applicability of the early stage theories and to discover the subject matter the fifth graders chose to draw. The results analysis of the fifth grade checklists will parallel those categories previously discussed.

Drawing characteristics. According to Lowenfeld's theory, drawings at this age level should contain details, physical environments, simple events, no shading or shadows, and realistic color. The drawings contained most of the characteristics established by the early artistic development theorist. In every drawing, the objects contained obvious details. Seventy-four percent of the drawings included a physical environment. One drawing in particular included meticulous details which the child illustrated a public swimming pool environment complete with a tube water slide, lifeguard perch, diving boards, kids in inner tubes, and a snack

bar. The remaining sketches contained only objects and/or figures which lacked a background; these drawings are considered less advanced. For the most part, students portrayed simple events in their drawings (70%); a smaller number of learners sketched one stagnant figure or object. Many of the events drawn involved playing sports (see Figure 4).



Figure 4. Fifth grade action figures and event drawing. The drawing depicts a baseball game and includes multiple players in action.

According to Lowenfeld, as expected a majority (87%) of the drawings had no evidence of shading or shadows. The small percent (13%) of students that did include shading and/or a shadow are considered more advanced for their age group according to the early theorists of artistic development. One of the drawings that contained shading was particularly notable and featured a goalie and another soccer player trying to score a goal. In the sketch, the young artist shaded the clothing on both figures, the soccer ball, and the goal. The majority of the fifth graders chose to color their drawing instead of shading, and 87% colored their drawings realistically. One reason may be that the students feel self-conscious about their shading

abilities; most of them have been coloring since before kindergarten, so coloring was possibly a more comfortable avenue. Lowenfeld (1982), Gardner (1980), and Kerlavage (1998) mention self-criticism when attempting to achieve realism at this age in their theories. The results indicate that all five characteristics for drawing correspond with the early stage theories.

In terms of spatial representation, five attributes were analyzed: students' use of perspective, differentiation of object size, the relation of the sky and horizon line, and overlapping and interrelationship of objects. Some of these qualities were found in the drawings but not all. Most of the children (79%) drew objects that relate to one another, but a small number illustrated one or more random objects. More than half (51%) of the fifth graders attempted to show depth in their drawings through the size variation of the objects. For example, one student drew a very large baseball flying across the sky with a smaller, less detailed baseball stadium in the background. A few students (15%) used one-point perspective to show depth in their sketches. For instance, a student drew two figures playing volleyball; the volleyball net was drawn with perspective. Use of perspective is a more advanced characteristic of artistic development according to Lowenfeld (1982). Although many spatial qualities correlated with the stage theories, most of the drawings did not contain overlapping objects or a sky and horizon line. Fewer than half of the drawings (43%) had overlapping objects. According to early stage theorists, most students of this age should have objects that overlap in their drawings. Although many students did not include overlapping objects, one young artist incorporated this characteristic with great skill (see Figure 5). A minority of the drawings did include a sky that met the horizon line (30%). One explanation for this is more half of the students (51%) did not draw a background or an outdoors environment; therefore, their drawings did not contain sky or horizon line. The results for the inclusion of the sky and horizon line are inconclusive since more than half of the students' drawings were not applicable.



Figure 5. Fifth grade overlapping drawing. This drawing includes many areas in which objects overlap.

Figure representation. I discovered many typical figure representations described by Lowenfeld for this age group, and many characteristics suggest this. Most of the children included figures (74%) in their drawings, and clothing appeared on most of the figures (72%). The clothing mainly included detailed sports uniforms, cleats, collared shirts, and v-necks. Clearly defined gender details appeared as well in 69% of the drawings primarily shown with differences in clothing. For example, many of the boys were drawn with short hair and pants or sports uniforms, and students portrayed girls with long hair worn down or in a pony tail and dressed in colorful outfits. Most of the figures were drawn facing the viewer (80%), while a few of drawings (29%) contained figures drawn in profile. These qualities are parallel to that of the early theorists.

The results of one figure characteristic on the fifth grade checklist do not support the early stage theories. Lowenfeld observed that most children of this age group draw figures that appear still or motionless. I found that more than half of the students (60%) captured figures

while in action instead of rendering stiff, rigid people which is a more advanced stage characteristic. One drawing contained a diamond with a baseball team and drew the players as if they were actually playing the game (see Figure 4).

While most fifth graders clearly depicted figures that featured at stage level characteristics, others did not. For example, many images excluded body parts (see Appendix H). Many of the fifth graders seemed to avoid drawing a full body and drew only partial figures with a head and shoulders, so many did not include arms, legs, hands, or feet. This may indicate middle childhood self-consciousness discussed in the literature by Lowenfeld (1982), Gardner (1980), and Kerlavage (1998); perhaps some of the students were not confident in their figure drawing abilities. All of the drawings included a head and a large majority of them (66%) were proportionate. According to the stage theory characteristics, the remaining drawings were less advanced. Over half of the children (51%) drew detailed eyes on their figures showing the iris rather than simply using two dots for eyes. Interestingly, fewer than half (49%) of the students drew noses on their figures which is slightly higher than the first graders. The remaining figures were drawn either with eyes and a mouth, or they were faceless because the bodies were drawn so small.

Subject matter. I observed the same subject matter in fifth and first grade's drawings. Like the first grade drawings, the most common subject found was figures. Seventy-four percent of the students drew figures. Most of them drew humans (57%), and a small number (19%) of drew animals. The majority of students (57%) drew more than one figure which included either one or more people or animals. Most of the drawings with more than one figure featured two or more peers playing. For instance, one student drew three girls running and playing jump rope together during recess. This could be an example of the increased importance of social

interactions in middle childhood described by Darras and Kindler (1997), Piaget (1956), Lowenfeld (1982), and Vygotsky (1978) in their research.

Also, like the first grade drawings, architecture and playgrounds/parks proved to be the least favored subjects to draw because only 9% included these. The students who drew playgrounds or parks included slides, monkey bars, swings, and sand boxes. Many of these drawings looked similar to their school's playground. In another drawing, a student featured a skyscraper with rectangular windows which was classified as architecture. Perhaps if the study was conducted with children in an urban setting, more architecture would have represented.

A minority of students included nature in their drawings (30%). More fifth graders included nature than the first graders. The nature subjects for the fifth grade drawings include a sandy beach with seashells, and trees, flowers, and grass were seen over and over in the drawings.

Interestingly, one subject proved to be very popular among the fifth graders and that was sports. Almost half (43%) of the drawings included figures playing sports such as swimming, football, tennis, volleyball, and basketball, however, soccer and baseball were the most common sports I observed. One explanation for the frequency of sports subjects may be the sample population's socioeconomic status; many of the students are able to participate in multiple sports.

Visual culture subjects. Visual culture was not prevalent in the fifth grade drawings. In fact, only 17% of fifth graders chose to incorporate visual culture subjects (Appendix I). I found a few different pop culture characters in the drawings including Ugly Dolls, Minnie Mouse, and Detective Donut, a character that can be seen in an online comic alongside Pikachu, the Pokémon character. Like the first grade drawings, I discovered Pokémon characters which originated in Japan. The implications of this were discussed in the analysis of the first grade drawings.

Fifth grade drawings included video games much less frequently than the first grade drawings and focused more on social games. Surprisingly, more traditional board games including Monopoly, Apples to Apples, Hungry Hungry Hippos, Sorry, and Twister were found than modern video games (see Figure 6). Only one drawing contained a Playstation 3 controller, the sole fifth grade drawing influenced by video games. This could be further evidence of the emerging importance of social interactions described by Darras and Kindler (1997), Piaget (1956), Lowenfeld (1982), and Vygotsky (1978) because traditional board games are more communal than video games.



Figure 6. Fifth grade visual culture drawing. This fifth grade drawing includes a television, iPhone, computer, and a donut character from an online Pokémon comic. The student also included traditional, low-tech ways of playing such as tag, board games, and a dog.

Summary

Primarily, the results of my research indicate that characteristics of the early stage theories are still evident in children's drawings. Also, visual culture appeared in only a small number of student drawings.

I found many of the characteristics described by Lowenfeld (1982), Piaget (1956), Gardner (1980), Vygotsky (1978), Darras and Kindler (1997), and Kerlavage (1998) in the first and fifth grade drawings. First, most of the qualities in Lowenfeld's Schematic and Dawning Realism stages were clearly evident in the first and fifth grade drawings respectively. Then, evidence of the importance of social interactions in middle childhood described by Darras and Kindler, Piaget, Lowenfeld, and Vygotsky was found in the fifth grade drawings. This was apparent in the subject matter. Many of these students drew images of friends playing and board games instead of video games which are both social activities. Lowenfeld (1982), Gardner (1980), and Kerlavage (1998) all mention self-consciousness in middle childhood in their theories. I found evidence of this in the fifth grade drawings since many of them avoided drawing full figures, possibly because they were self-conscious and lacked confidence in their figure drawing abilities.

I found visual culture subjects in a minority of both the first and fifth grade drawings. Pokémon characters and video games were seen more than once in the first grade drawings. The fifth grade drawings contained more traditional board games than video games. Figures were the most popular subject for both first and fifth graders to draw, and almost half of the fifth graders included sports participation in their drawings.

According to this study, children's artistic development has changed very little over the last seventy years, and although children have plenty of contact with visual culture, it did not necessarily pervade their drawings. Students primarily chose to draw scenes from everyday life.

Conclusions and Recommendations

In this final chapter, I will discuss the findings of this research and the implications of the data. From this study, I have made some conclusions about artistic development and the subject of visual culture in art classrooms. I also included recommendations for further studies, and I hope that art educators can use my findings to enhance their curriculum.

My research set out to compare early and contemporary artistic development theories and discover the applicability to student drawings today. This study also examined the subject matter in children's drawings especially the inclusion of visual cultural objects and the teaching implications.

Discussion of Research Questions

Research question: What are the early views of artistic development, and how do they compare to contemporary views? Lowenfeld's (1982), Piaget's (1956), Vygotsky's (1978), and Gardner's (1980) early artistic development theories are comprehensive.

Lowenfeld's theory contains similar qualities to Piaget's, and both consist of consecutive stages according to the child's age and characteristics of drawings. Furthermore, Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development stresses the importance of social interactions. In this theory, social interactions must occur between the teacher and learner until the student can successfully complete a task. Finally, Gardner's U-curve of development suggests that drawings in middle childhood are not as expressive as young children's sketches due to their quest to achieve realism. For this reason, he notes that these students become self-conscious and self-critical of their artwork. Research conducted decades later seems to combine and elaborate on these early views.

Two main contemporary views on artistic development are that of Kerlavage (1998) and Darras and Kindler (1994). Darras and Kindler's theory consists of five stages called *iconicities*.

In these stages, the use of imagery is linked to the child's environment, social interaction, verbal language, and gestures. Kerlavage presents six developmental stages based on children's ages in her theory. This theory consists of a combination of the early stage theories.

Many overlaps exist between the early and contemporary theories of artistic development. The first stage of Lowenfeld's, Piaget's, Darras and Kindler's, and Kerlavage's theories contains nearly identical qualities in all of the theories, meaning all of them observed the same characteristics in two to four year olds. These characteristics could be considered universal, in other words, all children's drawings of this age group contain them. All of the early and contemporary theories note an increase in social interactions, self-consciousness, and/or self-criticism in middle childhood. One main difference observed between the early and contemporary theories is the focus on children's discovery of symbols and clear representations in the contemporary theories.

Research sub-question 1: How do contemporary children's drawings reflect stage theories? I found many of the same qualities in the sample's drawings that the early artistic development theorists discovered in their research. In the first grade drawings, the objects were easily recognizable, realistically colored, two-dimensionally drawn, placed perpendicular to the baseline, and exaggerated. Also, the learners drew the majority of the figures with geometric shapes, clothing, and exaggerated body parts. I did not find all of the same qualities observed by the early theorists. For instance, Lowenfeld described this age group as having upside-down objects and x-rays in their drawings. The absence of these two qualities in the sample drawings possibly means that this study's participants have advanced passed them or that these are simply not characteristic of today's student drawings.

The fifth grade drawings also had many of the same characteristics described in the early stage theories. The sample drawings were colored realistically, contained details and interrelated

objects, portrayed simple events, and showed depth which were the same qualities in Lowenfeld's theory. Figures drawn by the fifth grade had detailed clothing, gender details, and action poses. Interestingly, many of the students seemed to avoid drawing a full body and included only partial figures with a head and shoulders, so many did not include arms, legs, hands, or feet. This might be an example of middle childhood self-consciousness discussed in the literature by Lowenfeld (1982), Gardner (1980), and Kerlavage (1998); perhaps some of the students were not confident in their figure drawing abilities. Also, according to Lowenfeld, I should have found more drawings with overlapping objects and stiff, rigid figures. Surprisingly, the students drew figures in motion, instead, and many of them were playing sports. The instruction to draw "playing," which is a verb, may have contributed to the large number of figures in action.

Research sub-question 2: What subject matter do children include in their drawings, specifically visual cultural objects? Visual culture subjects were found in some of the drawings. In both the first and fifth grades, about one fifth of the drawings contained visual culture images. Other subject matter proved to be more popular to draw. Friends and family were the most prevalent subjects found in both grades' drawings. Toys, games, and pop culture characters were the visual culture subjects drawn most frequently in both grade levels. Video games were more commonly found among the first grade drawings, and fifth graders drew more traditional board games. These board games are a more social activity than playing video games, so this may be evidence of the emerging importance of social interactions in middle childhood described by Darras and Kindler (1997), Piaget (1956), Lowenfeld (1982), and Vygotsky (1978). The students did not just draw video games, but also the characters represented in them.

All of the characters portrayed for both grades were cartoon or video game characters instead of real actors or pop stars. Perhaps, the students concentrated on cartoons because they

are simple to draw, or they see these characters on TV or in video games on a daily basis. In both grade levels, Pokémon characters, which originated in Japan, were subjects in drawings. The literature on *manga*'s influence on children's drawings suggests that instead of creating their own characters, children borrow one from *manga*. Wilson (1997) offers an explanation that children are attracted to these characters because the characters help them cope with their problems and experiment with life themes.

Research sub-question 3: What implications are there for teachers' instruction? This research can enhance teaching methods in multiple ways. First, by being knowledgeable about the artistic development stages teachers can confidently develop developmentally appropriate lessons for their students. Through understanding of the different theories of artistic development, teachers will be able to determine if a lesson is going to be too simple or difficult for their students because neither one is ideal for learning. Teachers can also be more aware of their students' artistic development. For instance, I look for spatial awareness, use of perspective, and accuracy of shading for my students at the middle level.

Another teaching implication is the importance of leaving students some choices especially with subject matter. According to the literature, art will be more meaningful to the student if the subject connects to his or her interests. For example, Cummings (2006) realized that her students were more involved when the subject connected to their lives. She also found that visual culture allows students to address concerns and reflect on what they know and value. Subject matter can be a good implication of what is important to a student. I have found that I can form relationships with my students by striking up a conversation about the subject matter of their artwork, and how it relates to them.

Limitations

There were some limitations to this research study. One limitation to this study was the small sample size because I examined student drawings at only one suburban school. Another limitation was much of the subject matter in the student drawings was biased because of the drawing task, “playing.” Playing is an action, so naturally, the majority of both first and fifth graders included figures. This may explain why many of these drawings contained more than one figure because the students drew themselves playing with friends or family. Playing is the verb used when describing what a person is doing when they are participating in sports and games. This may clarify why the first graders drew figures playing video games and the fifth graders included figures playing sports and board games.

The students may have drawn different subjects for “playing” if the study was in an alternative setting. Because this study took place at their elementary school, in their art classroom with their art teacher present, some students may have censored their subject matter. Like many art teachers, Mrs. Morris makes clear to the students that some subjects and content are not appropriate for school such as weapons. The students were also aware that I am an art teacher which may have also affected the outcome of their drawings. Many of the students probably drew to the best of their ability because they knew I was an art teacher. If I was a classroom teacher looking at their drawings, they may not have done their best work. The setting and classroom expectations probably affected some of subjects and the manner in which the students drew.

Recommendations for Future Studies

My study investigated artistic development of children and the frequency of visual culture and other subject matter in their artwork. The study could be broadened to include

students living in rural or urban areas. A school district in one of these areas may have less art, which may affect students' artistic development.

The research could be expanded to compare different socioeconomic statuses. A comparative study could give insight into how and if children differ in their artistic development. According to Hedburg and Rabkin (2011), childhood art education's decline has been concentrated among low-income children. Consequently, research should be conducted to find out how and if this is affecting students' artistic development.

A longitudinal study would be useful to interpret how a certain population of students grows in their artistic development over a span of a few years. Certain tasks could be documented such as direct instruction, self-initiated sketchbooks, and observational drawing, and conclusions could be made about which activities facilitated artistic development. This type of study could also interpret the different types of subjects children draw, therefore, speculating about what they notice and value at certain ages.

Conclusion

Historically, artistic development theories allowed classroom teachers to create developmentally appropriate art lessons. The theories also linked art to cognition and development. Society has changed since these theories emerged, but according to this study, they remain an accurate measure for children's artistic development. Consequently, current educators can still use artistic development theories to create lessons for their students.

According to the literature, culture can affect artistic development and the subject matter children include in their drawings. The subjects the students chose to draw allowed me to examine more than just their drawing characteristics. For instance, I was able to determine that the fifth graders showed signs of self-consciousness and importance of social interactions because of the subject matter. The choice of subject matter also allowed visual images from the

students' culture to be present in their drawings. Friends and family members were drawn more frequently because this is what they experience and how they socialize. With this information, I hope that teachers are able to utilize the artistic development stages to make developmentally appropriate lessons and allow students some choices so they can create personally meaningful experiences in the classroom.

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Appendix A

Approved by the Human Subjects Committee University of Kansas,
Lawrence Campus (HSCL). Approval expires one year from 9/20/2011.
HSCL #19589

Dear Parents,

Hello, my name is Lindsey Grandstaff, and I am an art teacher at Westridge Middle School in the Shawnee Mission School District. I am currently working on my thesis for Master of Arts in Visual Art Education at the University of Kansas.

Prairie Elementary School has been chosen to conduct research for my thesis. The school district has approved this study. Research will be conducted in your child's weekly art class October 4th- 6th. I will be collecting drawings for the study to look at artistic development and the subjects children choose to draw.

The next two pages contain a detailed description of my research. Please send the signed consent form (below) to school with your student to give to their classroom teacher **no later than Thursday, September 29th**. This form allows your child to take part in this study. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Lindsey Grandstaff

PARTICIPANT CERTIFICATION:

I have read this Consent and Authorization form. I have had the opportunity to ask, and I have received answers to, any questions I had regarding the study. I understand that if I have any additional questions about my child's rights as a research participant, I may call (785) 864-7429, write to the Human Subjects Committee Lawrence Campus (HSCL), University of Kansas, 2385 Irving Hill Road, Lawrence, Kansas 66045-7568, or email mdenning@ku.edu.

I agree to allow my child to take part in this study as a research participant. By my signature I affirm that I have received a copy of this Consent and Authorization form.

Print Child's Name

Date

Parent/Guardian Signature

[If signed by a personal representative, a description of such representative's authority to act for the individual must also be provided, e.g. parent/guardian.]

PARENT-GUARDIAN INFORMED CONSENT STATEMENT

Children's Artistic Development and the Influence of Visual Culture

INTRODUCTION

The Department of Visual Art Education at the University of Kansas supports the practice of protection for human subjects participating in research. The following information is provided for you to decide whether you wish your child to participate in the present study. You may refuse to sign this form and not allow your child to participate in this study. You should be aware that even if you agree to allow your child to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time. If you do withdraw your child from this study, it will not affect your relationship with this unit, the services it may provide to you, or the University of Kansas.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purposes of the study are to determine if the early stage theories of artistic development are still applicable in current student drawings, if visual culture impacts the subject matter that children choose to draw, and how visual culture affects children's artistic development.

PROCEDURES

During one weekly art class, first and fifth-grade students will be asked to draw "playing". The drawing subject of "playing" leaves choices for the students because they can draw toys, games, their environment, themselves, other children, family members or anything else that may come to mind. The students will have 30 minutes of class time to complete the drawing once instructions are given. Each student will receive a set of eight washable markers, a sharpened pencil with an eraser, and a 9 x 12 piece of white construction paper to use for their drawing.

Scripted directions will be read to all of the students by the researcher as follows: "Hello, students. I am interested in finding out about how you develop as an artist and what you like to draw, so I would like you to take part in this drawing lesson today. You are about to participate in a special activity called a research project. If you don't feel like drawing, you don't have to, and you can stop drawing at anytime and that will be all right. I will be happy to answer any questions you may have now. Do you want to take part in this project? (Pause for questions and affirmation.) I am passing out a piece of white paper, a set of eight washable markers, and a pencil to each of you. Your task today is to draw 'playing.' You can draw toys, games, your environment, yourself, your friends, family or anything else that may come to mind. You may only use your pencil and markers for this activity. It is very important that you do not talk unless you raise your hand and have a question. Concentrate and use your imagination for this drawing. You have the rest of class to complete it. Please take your time on this, but if you finish early, raise your hand, I will collect your drawing and give you an art worksheet to complete.

The students will not be allowed to talk to their peers when they are drawing. When they have completed their drawing, students will be instructed to raise their hand, and the researcher will collect their drawing. The researcher will pass out stickers to all students to show gratitude for participating in the study.

RISKS

There are no risks anticipated to the participants in this study.

BENEFITS

Potential benefits include a more advanced understanding of children's artistic development and the subjects they choose to draw.

PAYMENT TO PARTICIPANTS

The students will not receive payment for their participation.

PARTICIPANT CONFIDENTIALITY

Your child's name will not be associated in any publication or presentation with the information collected about your child or with the research findings from this study. Instead, the researcher will use a study number rather than your child's name. Your child's identifiable information will not be shared unless required by law or unless you give written permission.

Permission granted on this date to use and disclose your information remains in effect until May 2012. By signing this form you give permission for the use and disclosure of your child's information, excluding your child's name, for purposes of this study until that time.

REFUSAL TO SIGN CONSENT AND AUTHORIZATION

You are not required to sign this Consent and Authorization form and you may refuse to do so without affecting your right to any services you are receiving or may receive from the University of Kansas or to participate in any programs or events of the University of Kansas. However, if you refuse to sign, your child cannot participate in this study.

CANCELLING THIS CONSENT AND AUTHORIZATION

You may withdraw your consent to allow participation of your child in this study at any time. You also have the right to cancel your permission to use and disclose further information collected about your child, in writing, at any time, by sending your written request to: Lindsey Grandstaff, 340 Art and Design Building, 1467 Jayhawk Blvd. Lawrence, KS 66045-7531

If you cancel permission to use your child's information, the researchers will stop collecting additional information about your child. However, the research team may use and disclose information that was gathered before they received your cancellation, as described above.

QUESTIONS ABOUT PARTICIPATION

Questions about procedures should be directed to the researcher listed at the end of this consent form.

RESEARCHER CONTACT INFORMATION

Lindsey Grandstaff
340 Art and Design Building
1467 Jayhawk Blvd.
Lawrence, KS 66045-7531
lgrandstaff@ku.edu

Faculty Supervisor: Denise Stone
340 Art and Design Building
1467 Jayhawk Blvd.
Lawrence, KS 66045-7531

Appendix B

Scripted Directions for First-Grade Classes

Beginning of class: “Hello, students. I am interested in finding out about how you develop as an artist and what you like to draw, so I would like you to take part in this drawing lesson today. You are about to participate in a special activity called a research project. If you don't feel like drawing, you don't have to, and you can stop drawing at anytime and that will be all right. I will be happy to answer any questions you may have now. Do you want to take part in this project? (Pause for questions and affirmation.) I am passing out a piece of white paper, a set of eight washable markers, and a pencil to each of you. Your task today is to draw ‘playing.’ You can draw toys, games, your surroundings, yourself, your friends, family or anything else that may come to mind. You may only use your pencil and markers for this activity. It is very important that you do not talk unless you raise your hand and have a question. Concentrate and use your imagination for this drawing. You have the rest of class to complete it. Please take your time on this, but if you finish early, raise your hand, I will collect your drawing and give you an art worksheet to complete.”

2 minutes remaining to draw: “Please put the finishing touches on your drawing if you have not handed it in already. I will collect the remaining drawings, the markers, and the pencils in one minute.”

End of class: “I would like to thank you all for taking part in this research study. I will pass out stickers now to each of you for helping me with this project.”

Appendix C

Scripted Directions for Fifth-Grade Classes

Beginning of class: “Hello, students. I am interested in finding out about how you develop as an artist and what you like to draw, so I would like you to take part in this drawing lesson today. You are about to participate in a special activity called a research project. If you don't feel like drawing, you don't have to, and you can stop drawing at anytime and that will be all right. I will be happy to answer any questions you may have now. Do you want to take part in this project? (Pause for questions and affirmation.) I am passing out a piece of white paper, a set of eight washable markers, and a pencil to each of you. Your task today is to draw ‘playing.’ You can draw toys, games, your environment, yourself, your friends, family or anything else that may come to mind. You may only use your pencil and markers for this activity. It is very important that you do not talk unless you raise your hand and have a question. Concentrate and use your imagination for this drawing. You have the rest of class to complete it. Please take your time on this, but if you finish early, raise your hand, and I will give you a *Scholastic Art* magazine and a piece of notebook paper. Read the first article on pages two and three and write a two paragraph summary.”

2 minutes remaining to draw: “Please put the finishing touches on your drawing if you have not handed it in already. I will collect the remaining drawings, the markers, and the pencils in one minute.”

End of class: “I would like to thank you all for taking part in this research study. I will pass out stickers now to each of you for helping me with this project.”

Appendix D

Homeroom _____

Student Number ____

1st Grade Drawing Checklist

DRAWING CHARACTERISTICS	Yes	No	N/A
1. Drawing appears flat			
2. Colors appear same as real-life			
3. Shapes and objects are easily defined			
4. Some objects appear to be drawn upside down			
5. X-ray drawing (viewer can see inside and outside of object)			
SPACE REPRESENTATION	-----	-----	-----
6. Definite baseline and skyline			
7. Objects drawn perpendicular to the baseline			
8. Two-dimensional organization of objects			
9. No or little overlapping			
10. Exaggeration of size between objects and figures			
FIGURE REPRESENTATION	-----	-----	-----
11. Body made up of geometric shapes			
12. Linear figure representation (stick figure)			
13. Clothing appears on figures			
14. Arms included			
a. Contain volume			
b. Exaggerated			
15. Legs included			
a. Contain volume			
b. Exaggerated			
16. Hands and fingers included			
a. Contain volume			
b. Exaggerated			
17. Feet included			
a. Contain volume			
b. Exaggerated			
18. Head included			
a. Size exaggerated			
b. Hair included			
19. Eyes included			
a. Represented with dots			
b. Represented with a circle inside of a circle			
20. Nose included			
a. Represented with a dot			
b. Contains volume			
21. Mouth included			
a. Represented with a line			
b. Contains volume			

SUBJECT MATTER	Yes	No
1. Architecture		
2. Figures		
a. Human		
b. Animal		
c. More than one figure		
3. Nature		
4. Sports participation		
5. Visual Culture		
a. Symbols (hearts, stars, smiley faces, sports mascots, etc.)		
b. Pop culture characters		
b. Toys or Games		

Appendix E

Homeroom _____

Student Number _____

5th grade Drawing Checklist

DRAWING CHARACTERISTICS	Yes	No	N/A
1. Details of objects are evident			
2. Details of physical environment			
3. Simple events are drawn			
4. Evidence of shading and/or shadow			
5. Colors appear same as real-life			
SPACE REPRESENTATION	-----	-----	-----
6. Objects overlap			
7. Objects interrelate			
8. Sky meets the horizon line			
9. Attempts to show depth through size of objects			
10. Uses perspective to show depth			
FIGURE REPRESENTATION	-----	-----	-----
11. Clothing details appear on figures			
12. Figures appear still or motionless			
13. Figures drawn in profile			
14. Figures drawn facing viewer			
15. Clearly defined gender details			
16. Arms are proportionate			
17. Legs are proportionate			
18. Hands and fingers are proportionate			
19. Feet are proportionate			
20. Head is proportionate			
21. Eyes drawn with details			
22. Nose drawn with volume			
23. Mouth drawn with volume			

SUBJECT MATTER	Yes	No
1. Architecture		
2. Figures		
a. Human		
b. Animal		
c. More than one figure		
3. Nature		
4. Sports participation		
5. Visual Culture		
a. Symbols (hearts, stars, smiley faces, sports mascots)		
b. Pop culture characters		
c. Toys or Games		

Appendix F

First Grade Figure Representation Percentages

Characteristics	Yes	No	N/A
1. Body made up of geometric shapes	80	20	0
2. Linear figure representation (stick figure)	20	80	0
3. Clothing appears on figures	66	34	0
4. Arms included	94	0	6
a. Contain volume	40	54	6
b. Exaggerated	91	3	6
5. Legs included	86	3	11
a. Contain volume	31	54	15
b. Exaggerated	83	3	14
6. Hands and fingers included	46	46	8
a. Contain volume	43	3	51
b. Exaggerated	49	0	51
7. Feet included	43	46	11
a. Contain volume	40	3	57
b. Exaggerated	43	0	57
8. Head included	100	0	0
a. Size exaggerated	77	23	0
b. Hair included	71	29	0
9. Eyes included	97	3	0
a. Represented with dots	46	51	3
b. Represented with a circle inside of a circle	51	46	3
10. Nose included	23	74	3
a. Represented with a dot	11	14	75
b. Contains volume	14	11	75
11. Mouth included	100	0	0
a. Represented with a line	54	46	0
b. Contains volume	46	54	0

Appendix G**First Grade Visual Culture Subject Percentages**

Visual Culture Subjects	%
Pop culture characters	5
Symbols	2
Toys or Games	10

Appendix H**Fifth Grade Figure Representation Percentages**

Characteristics	Yes	No	N/A
1. Arms are proportionate	43	43	11
2. Legs are proportionate	49	31	20
3. Hands and fingers are proportionate	37	29	34
4. Feet are proportionate	49	14	37
5. Head is proportionate	66	14	20
6. Eyes drawn with details	51	29	20
7. Nose drawn with volume	43	6	51
8. Mouth drawn with volume	44	32	24

Appendix I**Fifth Grade Visual Culture Subject Percentages**

Visual Culture Subjects	%
Pop culture characters	9
Symbols	0
Toys or Games	11