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**The Aesthetic Responses of Two At-Risk Youth
From an Alternative School**

Judy Dimentberg

A Thesis

in

The Department

of

Art Education

**Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Master of Arts
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ABSTRACT

The Aesthetic Responses of Two At-Risk Youth From an Alternative School

Judy Dimentberg

Adolescents who are at risk of dropping out of high school tend to feel less worthy than average students their age. They may put themselves down, after having experienced failure in their lives. Therefore, at-risk youth may not see the value in their own works of art because they are overcritical. Despite their troubled pasts, these youth can be very resilient, expressing their individuality through art, which may provide a stable source of positive affirmation.

In this study, two at-risk secondary students explored questions about art, responding to their own artwork and other works of art. Artworks were sampled from historical, multicultural, modern, contemporary and popular cultures. When the participants responded to art, the process led them to insights relating to (1) formal and technical qualities (2) historical and cultural content (3) symbolism or message (4) thoughts on art and society (5) value judgments and (6) personal feelings. The artistic dialogue we engaged in was a tool for learning and a path towards clearer communication.

Both students constructed their own meanings. For example, one of the students used a wolf in her artwork to symbolize her ties to her own native culture. The other student tried to figure out how artists become famous and questioned the notion of beauty in society. They shared their art-making processes freely and were concerned with conveying messages about issues in society that affect their daily lives such as racism or feelings of emptiness.

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CHAPTER ONE

THE FOCUS OF THIS STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Since they have been cast out or have dropped out from regular high schools, “at-risk” youth may feel isolated and hopeless, watching as many of their peers progress in school while they stay behind. Although some of these adolescents decide or are persuaded to finish high school, many lack a positive attitude, academic abilities or self-esteem that would enable them to make positive life changes. These deficits can endanger their futures.

Teachers therefore play important roles and need to be able to identify at-risk subcultures. They must try different approaches to help these teenagers succeed; otherwise, at-risk youth may feel lost and abandoned by society.

At-risk teenagers can be considered a separate youth subculture since they are often seen as “troubled youths with a set of norms, values, and behaviours [sic]” that go against that of the larger community (Teevan, 1986, as cited in Leonard, 1998, p. 1). I prefer to refer to these youth as at-risk rather than youth from “negative youth subcultures” (Leonard, 1998, p. 2) since many of the at-risk youth I have encountered were ultimately able to put their troubles aside and move forward.

The biggest challenge I have had teaching at-risk youth was keeping their attention so that the educational tasks were considered interesting to them and thus were taken seriously. In my experience teaching art to at-risk teenagers, I have found that some of these students did not know how to set and accomplish short-term goals. Some of them struggled with handing in completed work on time or were distracted, having difficulties focusing on a task.

Even an art class, which is more active and emotionally stimulating than many other courses, can be less attractive to students who do not see themselves as skilled in the subject. If we talk to our students, we may find that some reject art because they have had negative experiences with it. Many

have had very few experiences making, perceiving, and interpreting art. This was the case with many of the at-risk students at the alternative school where I taught. Some were persuaded to give art a chance and felt successful and proud of themselves after they did.

At-risk youth do not usually have below average intelligence, although some may have learning disabilities. The youth that I worked with expressed themselves on a variety of topics such as music, politics, and art, just to name a few. Although art may not be seen as an important subject in many high schools, success in the art class counts. It means that students have gained skills, knowledge, and good habits that are valuable in their own right and can also be transferred to other subjects.

Many at-risk youth enjoy art and some may want to pursue it as a career. There are many possibilities in the field today such as in graphic design, computer animation, and other related areas. Moreover, art can open up these youth's minds to many creative avenues.

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

This study aims to illuminate the way two at-risk youth perceive art. The way students make, see, and interpret their own works of art and that of others depends on their exposure to art through peers, school, home, and their own interests or initiatives. This research project was conducted in March of 2001 at an alternative school for at-risk youth, in Montreal, Quebec, where I taught art. The student population ranged in age from 16 to 19 year-olds. A typical class consisted of 12 to 15 at-risk students of different age groups, cultures, and socio-economic backgrounds.

1.3 THESIS QUESTION

This thesis addresses the following question: How do two at-risk youth respond to art and what considerations should educators attend to when teaching aesthetics and art criticism to such students?

1.4 OBJECTIVES

This study has the following objectives:

1. To collect and analyze data on two at-risk students' responses to their own works of art and to works by well-known artists (pp. 4 - 6 and pp. 37 - 52).
2. To help educators motivate students to stay in school by expanding the students' knowledge and appreciation of art (pp. 26 - 36 and pp. 83 - 85).
3. To help educators understand the characteristics of two at-risk youth and the barriers they may face (pp. 8 - 15 and pp. 55 - 58).
4. To contribute to the research on art education and at-risk youth in alternative schools (pp. 17 - 25, pp. 53 - 58, and pp. 88 - 90).
5. To identify key categories that are of interest to at-risk youth when responding to art (pp. 59 - 77).
6. To suggest questioning and interview strategies that are useful with this population (pp. 85 - 89).

1.5 METHODOLOGY

This study is based on a qualitative paradigm, assuming that "... reality is ever changing, that knowledge consists of understanding, and that research goals should examine processes" (Goetz and Lecompte, 1994, p. 50).

Audiotaped interviews and field notes were chosen because they provide "... descriptive data about contexts, activities, and beliefs of participants ... [and are] characterized by the investigation of a small, relatively homogeneous and geographically bound study site" (Goetz and Lecompte, 1984, p. 17).

As a high school art teacher, I have seen that at-risk youth, often with low levels of self-confidence have benefited by becoming engaged in responding to art, their own as well as those of other artists. Teachers "... whose professional responses inevitably influence their research situations have at their command an additional research tool, for they can note changes in the situation that their own actions create" (Yoder, 1982).

Artistic approaches to research are less concerned with the discovery of truth than with the creation of meaning. What art seeks is not the discovery of the laws of nature about which true statements or explanations can be given, but rather the creation of images that people will find meaningful and from which their fallible and tentative views of the world can be altered, rejected, or made more secure. (Eisner, 1981, p. 7)

1.5.1 The Interviews

The three participants (two at-risk youth and their teacher) were interviewed separately on audiotape. The interviews lasted approximately 45 minutes each and were held on separate days. The interviews with the two at-risk youth consisted of three parts: (1) questions pertaining to their own art work, (2) questions about artists' works, and (3) comments on a specific work of their choice. The teacher's interview consisted of two parts: (1) criticism of the two at-risk students' personal artwork and (2) general questions about teaching at-risk youth.

To find out about how the two at-risk youth understand art, the researcher asked questions that led the participants to: (1) talk about the subject matter, (2) talk about symbolism, message or meaning, (3) compare and contrast, (4) criticize or make judgments, (5) discuss the formal qualities and techniques, (6) talk about historical or cultural context, and (7) comment on their feelings about the works.

1.5.2 Procedures

Part I: The Interviews of the Two At-Risk Youth

The two at-risk youth were interviewed separately first, followed by one of their teachers. The interview with the two students consisted of three parts:

1. In the first part, the students responded to open-ended questions about their own artwork.

2. In the second part, the two students responded to reproductions of artworks by well-known artists, in contrasting pairs. Each student chose the works he or she wanted to talk about and then was told to place them around the room in pairs that could be compared, i.e. similar works, different works, works they liked vs. works they disliked, modern vs. historical works etc.
3. The third part consisted of taking an inward “journey” (Horner, 2000, see pp. 33 - 34 and pp. 49 - 52 of this study) into a work of art of their choice.

Part II: Brief Description of the Study

The responses to the first part of their interview (where the two at-risk youth talked about their own works of art) were summarized, analyzed (see pp. 37 - 43), and put into emerging categories (see pp. 59 - 70).

The students’ responses in part two (when they compared two works of art) and part three of the interviews (when they took a path or journey into one work of art) were analyzed and categorized according to Parsons’ (1987) and Housen’s (1983) stages of understanding art. A description of Parsons’ (1987) and Housen’s (1983) findings is found in the literature review (see p. 28 and p. 30). These responses were also put into emerging categories (see pp. 59 - 70).

Cindy’s search for expression and meaning rather than her appreciation of the ability to create representational or realistic works of art characterizes Parsons’ (1987) stage 3 viewers. For example, when speaking about Kandinsky’s “Points in a Bow” (Figure 7), Cindy said: “It’s bringing me into their world and trying to figure out what they’re thinking and like I said before, I like the colours” (Appendix C, p. 132). Bob’s responses fit into Parsons’ (1987) stage 4 category since he discussed historical dates, mood, method, media, and the purpose of art. For example, speaking about Picasso’s Cubist style, (Figure 19), Bob stated: “It’s like taking everything and putting it in a different angle but it’s still together you know ... Like, if you take a person – their eyes are crooked but it’s just from a different angle ... They’re all from different angles, which makes things look distorted because he does try to put so many views onto one surface” (Appendix D, p. 160).

Cindy's responses fit into Housen's (1983) second stage – the constructive viewer stage. Although she tried to decode the messages in works of art, her lack of theoretical knowledge did not allow her to file away details in the work into historical or cultural contexts. For example, speaking about "Assyrian War Chariot" (Figure 9), Cindy said, "... It looks like it was done on stone or something. I find that interesting and how it's all detailed." (Appendix C, p. 134). Bob's responses fit mostly into Housen's (1983) fourth stage – interpretive viewer stage since his associations related to broader ideas or themes, beyond the individual level. For example, speaking about a poster entitled "A Blind Bluff" (Figure 17), he said: "Maybe he made this to confuse people and make people talk about it and that's why it became so popular" (Appendix D, p. 154).

Part III: Interview with One of Their Teachers

The teacher who was interviewed (Appendix E, pp. 161 - 172) was asked:

1. To critique the two students' works of art
2. To discuss topics relating to art education and at-risk youth
3. To recall his experiences teaching at-risk youth
4. To speak about the role of the alternative school

Part IV: Data Analysis

The data is summarized, analyzed, and categorized into emerging themes. A discussion comparing the results of this study with the findings of other researchers in the field ensues. Research on responding to art leads to insights about what could help advance these teens' knowledge of art, art history, and what inspires them in their everyday lives.

1.5.3 The Participants

This study focuses on the responses of an at-risk subculture of adolescents. Two at-risk high school students from an alternative school were interviewed so that aesthetic responses about works of art could be elicited. I selected the

two students from an art class I was teaching. These two students stayed after class, had good attendance, and seemed the most motivated. The pseudonyms Cindy and Bob are used to preserve the participants' anonymity. At the time of the interviews, Cindy was nineteen years old and Bob, eighteen. Both were enthusiastic about being interviewed, since they had little time for art at school, where the focus was mainly on studio work. Besides being part of an at-risk subculture, one participant is partly Native American. Housen (1983) stated, " ... while one may plausibly expect different rates of aesthetic attainment in distinct cultural groups, the patterns ... should be equally observable regardless of the subject's cultural sub-group" (p. 72). One of the teachers was also interviewed. This teacher did not teach art. The teacher was an English teacher in the school and was chosen because he was accessible and objective. He was interviewed in the school office. I asked him general questions about teaching at-risk youth as well as questions about art.

1.5.4 The Reproductions

The two at-risk participants chose from a broad range of reproductions borrowed from Concordia University's Art Education Resource Centre's collection. These two students browsed through the collection and selected eighteen reproductions for use in this study. The collection included paintings, prints, sculptures, crafts, and installations ranging from western to non-western fine art and popular culture. Research was concerned with the participants' point of view and involvement.

1.5.5 Limitations

Because this study was carried out with only two at-risk youth and one of their teachers in an alternative school, there is no possible way of generalizing the results. In addition, time restraints were a concern. Some students were not considered for the study because they had other responsibilities after school hours, when the interview took place.

CHAPTER TWO

CHARACTERISTICS OF AT-RISK YOUTH

2.1 DEFINITION OF AT-RISK YOUTH

For the purposes of this thesis, the term at-risk needs to be defined when referring to the two 18 to 20 year-olds in this study. Students may be labeled at-risk as early as primary school when they show signs of discomfort with school. They often do not live up to the academic standards of the traditional school. During adolescence, many of these students feel that they do not fit in socially in large schools and seem to prefer smaller schools where they can find other students in similar situations.

One of the characteristics of students at risk of dropping out of high school is that their participation in cultural affairs is negligible. They may also exaggerate the importance of status symbols, be overage for their grade, have poor school attendance, be indifferent to responsibility, not communicate very well, and not respond well to conventional classroom approaches.

As educators, we may determine whether a pupil is educationally disadvantaged through a variety of methods: standardized tests, teachers' observations, students' comments, parental occupation, or a combination of any of these or other factors. At-risk students need opportunities for achieving recognition, security, and a sense of belonging. They also need a community that reinforces the positive influences of school, heightened aspirations, motivation for the achievement of potential capacity, and a willingness to initiate self-improvement. Kronick (1997, pp. 88 - 89) suggested that respecting at-risk youth as individuals, reaching out, trying to understand, and offering incentives could help reduce conflict or deviant behaviours.

There are many definitions of at-risk youth. Those "... who leave school before high school graduation ... are more likely to dislike school, have failed a grade in the past, lack self-esteem, come from low socio-economic backgrounds and tend to be young parents" (White, 2000, p. 4). Furthermore, "... quality of health, family characteristics, peer influences, community

climate and social status may be affected by support networks and significantly influence a student's readiness to learn" (Montgomery, 1993, p. 5).

Some maintain that merely being an adolescent means a person is 'high-risk' (Glen & Nelson, 1988); some define at-risk students in terms of their personal and familial characteristics (Richardson, Cassanova, Placier & Guilfoyle, 1989). Others define at-risk individuals as those whose behavior could lead to mental and/or physical harm to self or others (Robertson, 1995); whereas, still others wonder if the system rather than the youth ought to bear the label at-risk (Bacarro, 1995). (as cited in McArthur and Law, 1996, p. 7)

Some researchers take issue with the notion of labeling youth at-risk because:

- (1) Of the stigma attached.
- (2) Students drop out for a variety of complex reasons.
- (3) Departures from conventional concepts of normality can lead to increasing numbers of youth being declared at-risk for the wrong reasons.
- (4) The term has been overused and may have lost its meaning (Crocker, 2000, p. 38, as cited in Statistics Canada and Human Resources Canada [SCHRC], 2000).

At-risk youth who have been encouraged to leave the mainstream usually have academic and/or personal problems that have interfered with their success at school. These youth not only have poor academic and literary skills but may also have emotional problems such as: (1) feelings of alienation, (2) feelings of racial discrimination, (3) impulsivity, (4) poor judgment, and (4) a history of school-related and perhaps life-related failures. All this leads to feelings of self-doubt and low self-esteem. The consequences of dropping out are severe and " ... often result in individual economic disaster and a tragic waste of human potential and resources" (Morris, 1992, p. 192).

The behaviours of students who are at risk of dropping out of high school may range from lack of involvement in school activities: skipping classes,

family or personal responsibilities that interfere with school, to adopting a street lifestyle when feelings of stress take over. At-risk youth are very susceptible to anti-social peer influences and usually have limited family support. Adverse and illegal behaviours such as drug and/or alcohol abuse are indicators of youth being at high risk of leaving high school before completion (Office of Alcohol and Drug Dependency Issues, Health Canada, 1997, p. 2).

King (2000, as cited in [SCHRC], 2000) reviewed statistics on youth in Ontario and found that “ ... a substantial number skip school and smoke. Ninety percent of smokers use marijuana, and many try harder forms of drugs. They often do not feel part of the school, and create their own cultures” (p. 4).

One Canadian study on self-reported school leavers identified five categories of school leavers (Employment and Immigration Canada, 1991, pp. 6 - 8):

1. The Disadvantaged Youth – Those who grew up with economic or emotional instability were from one-parent homes or a series of foster and group homes. This group seemed to have the least aspirations or plans.
2. The Vocationally Focused Group – These are students who were more interested in making money and could not see the value in the courses they were taking.
3. Minority Students – These students often felt they were lacking appropriate role models. These students expressed that in their country of birth, they would have felt a sense of belonging that is missing here.
4. Critical Event Leavers – These youth were faced with unexpected family crises and many were from working class families.
5. Creative Independents – Perceiving themselves as artistic individuals, these youth complained about school rules although they appeared self-assured, feeling that they could find jobs.

Kronick and Hargis (1998, p. 7) believe that dropouts should be sub-classified into the following groups:

Group A: The quiet dropouts are those who go unnoticed until they drop out.

Group B: Low achievers are those who react to failure in disruptive and annoying ways.

Group C: These are students with high academic potential and creativity who are at odds with the curriculum structures. Their progress may have been squelched by poor attendance or disruptions that were not of their own making.

Group D: Students who have dropped out of learning although they may survive in school because of compensating factors, i.e. good at athletics, have durable character, or are skilled at hiding their shortcomings by cheating.

Identifying students' non-productive or negative behaviours and helping the students make necessary changes needs to be done in a caring, non-threatening way, within a set of limits and boundaries.

Working with students in difficulty demands more patience and time, for lesser results. It is students at-risk [sic] of dropping out who need the attention most and seem often not to get it (unless they are disruptive, in which case the attention they get is negative).

(Mc Cool, 1994, p. 34)

Risk “ ... is a characteristic of situations, not individuals less effort should be given to predicting individuals' outcomes as our abilities to do so are poor. Instead, we should focus on the situations that create risk ...” and the factors that lead to success and resiliency (Levin, 2000, as cited in [SCHRC], 2000, p. 36). Perhaps, we should try to identify the individual, family, peer, or school-related factors that induce risk. Risk can be perceived as “ ... a continuum and ... the probability of risk can range from low to high, depending on the combination of individual or environmental circumstances to which ... [youth are] exposed” (Crocker, 2000, p. 40, as cited in [SCHRC], 2000). In addition, “... risk propensity is heightened during periods of transition” (Schonert-Reichl, 2000, as cited in [SCHRC], 2000, p. 9).

It takes effort to help students to reduce the risk factors in their lives. It is also beneficial to help them learn to deal with risk and to provide at-risk youth with a consistent source of positive affirmation.

2.2 BARRIERS FACING AT-RISK YOUTH

As this decade unfolds, the rate of high school dropouts remains outstandingly high. Many are functionally illiterate and fewer jobs are available as the need for highly trained, technologically well-informed workers increases, year by year. If left to get caught in a cycle of problems associated with poverty, discrimination, low grades or troubled pasts, at-risk youth may find themselves trapped in a web of low self-esteem. Educators may find it increasingly difficult to help at-risk youth reach their aspirations. Consequently, our whole society may be deprived of the untapped skills of at-risk youth “ ... needed to expand employment, productivity and income for all Canadians” (Employment and Immigration Canada, 1990, p. 7).

Some of the barriers that at-risk youth face are a lack of liaison between their parents or caretakers and their schools. Older adolescents and teenage mothers feel more mature and socially distant from their school environments. Students whose dress or appearance makes them stand out may feel like they are being stereotyped as well (Employments and Immigration Canada and Statistics Canada, 1990, p. 13). In addition, these youth prefer programs where they may progress at their own rate. “Many existing services are neither culturally nor socially sensitive to the needs of youth-at-risk” (Office of Alcohol, Drugs and Dependency Issues, Health Canada, 1997, p. 1).

Without a high school diploma, these youth will encounter many difficult challenges, not only in the workforce but also in their roles as becoming independent adults who need to be equipped to make intelligent decisions. “When we provide young people with effective conflict resolution ... strategies and the tools to make better decisions; improve students’ self-esteem, personal sense of dignity, and importance through creative instructional technique ... we are carrying out primary prevention interventions [that will benefit at-risk youth as well as the] community ... ” (Bazemore and Umbreit, 1998, as cited in DeVore and Gentilcore, 1999, p. 3).

Many at-risk students have skills that are not recognized. For example, they may want to pursue vocational careers, athletics, the arts etc. but are

unable to do so in their schools, since some subjects are not considered core subjects and therefore do not take priority in the curriculum. Creative youth have skills and intelligence that may be overlooked by their families and their communities. In their search for recognition, they may display their talents in contrary or unconventional ways such as through tagging or graffiti. Nevertheless, graffiti art provides novelty in both language and visual representation. It is naturally favoured by at-risk youth, “... like using coded language amongst their own peer group” (Kan, 2001) and is often the most familiar form of art in their everyday lives. At times, conflicts with authority may lead at-risk youth to be marginalized. “Yet, if guided and nurtured, non-conformity can be a catalyst for creative thinking and positive change” (O'Thearling and Bickley Green, 1996, p. 20).

2.3 STATISTICS ON HIGH SCHOOL DROPOUTS

Recently, there has been a reduction in the number of dropouts in Canada. In 1990, a federal “stay-in-school initiative” (Employment and Immigration Canada, 1990, p. 11) allotted a total of 296.4 million dollars over five years for funding of programs and services for at-risk youth. Work orientation workshops (WOW), projects that offer the use of interactive computer-based materials promoting personalized career choices (CHOICE), and other multifaceted programs had as goals to “... raise the self awareness of the dropout problem and encourage youth to stay in school” (Employment and Immigration Canada, 1990, p. 17).

The Youth in Transition Survey (YITS) is a longitudinal survey developed by Human Resources Development Canada and Statistics Canada. More than 22,000 Canadian youth aged 18 - 20 years old (a response rate of 89.9% for all provinces) participated between January and March 2000 (Bowlby and McMullen, 2002, p. 71).

The YITS shows that there was a decrease in high school dropouts in the 1990's. As of 1999, the high school dropout rate for 20 year-olds stood at 12%, (6% less than it was in 1991). Prince Edward Island (16.4%), Quebec

(16.0%), Manitoba (14.8%) and Alberta (12.5%) had the highest rate of dropouts. Nova Scotia (10.1%) and Saskatchewan (7.3%) had the lowest rates. The proportion of 25 to 34 year-olds without a high school diploma in Canada dropped from 23% in 1991 to 15% in 2001 (Bowlby and McMullen, 2002, p. 27).

Dropping out is a drawn-out process for some youth. About six in ten dropouts (59.6%) said they left school once; 18.9% said they left school three times or more. Dropouts were also asked why they dropped out of high school. There are many reasons and further research would help determine the catalysts or specific factors that lead students to drop out. In the YITS survey, most answered with school-related responses (41.7%), followed by work-related issues (27.3%), personal or family-related problems (16.9%), and other reasons (14.1%) (Bowlby and McMullen, 2002, p. 42).

According to the YITS, high school dropouts were five times as likely to have repeated an elementary school grade and had lower grades in their last year of high school (Bowlby and McMullen, 2002, p. 34). Dropouts were 16.8% more likely to obtain a grade under 60% (p. 33). More males were expelled from school than females (9% compared to 4.3%). The results of school engagement show that the dropouts in comparison to graduates paid less attention to teachers. At-risk youth were not as interested in what was going on in the classroom and thought school was a waste of time, saying they spent three or fewer hours per week on homework (p. 35).

While some at-risk youth are hampered in their reading, writing, communication and problem-solving skills (Bowlby and McMullen, 2002, p. 50), a large percentage of dropouts did not have low grades in their final year of high school (p. 66). Absenteeism or skipping classes was one of the main indicators of dropping out; 57.6% of dropouts skipped one or more classes a week compared to 21.2% of graduates (p. 40). Furthermore, the most important school-related reason for dropping out was that at-risk youth were bored or not interested in school (19.9%) (p. 42).

The YITS shows that almost half of the dropouts had no jobs during their last year of high school (Bowlby and McMullen, 2002, p. 37). A higher percentage of those who did not work in their last year of high school dropped out compared to those that worked (p. 38). Yet, the most common barriers that dropouts said they faced were financial problems (p. 59).

The higher the level of the parents' education, the more likely their children were to complete high school (Bowlby and McMullen, 2002, p. 31). Parents of dropouts were more likely to be in sales or service jobs while mothers of graduates tended to be professionals (p. 32).

Longitudinal statistics can help educators find the common trends that lead high-risk students to drop out of high school. Some practitioners are in a position to take action in helping these youth overcome their challenges but it is not always easy to know what to do. While reading about statistics, hopefully educators and administrators will become aware of how important it is to intervene and help prevent adolescents from dropping out. Nevertheless, statistics are generalities and each at-risk adolescent comes from a unique background with an individual personality. At-risk youth can be persuaded to stay in school when they begin to understand what they will need to navigate in the wider world. Rather than suffering in silence, at-risk youth can learn to take responsibility for themselves and progress in so many ways.

CHAPTER THREE

EDUCATING AT-RISK YOUTH

3.1 GENERAL EDUCATION AND AT-RISK YOUTH

The emphasis taken in dealing with at-risk youth in general education has often been a problem-focused behavioural approach based on discipline rather than a proactive position based on building skills, assets, and resiliency. Leonard, (1998) stated, “ ... what youths are dismissing in the educational system may be as informative as what they are engaging in within the system” (p. 2). Education often determines whether young people can obtain jobs and support their families. Educational systems often consist of contradictory dimensions, such as conformity and competition as well as diversity and inclusiveness. Researchers stress the need for “ ... integrated intervention approaches, which would bring together ... the [youth’s] family, school and community (Wotherspoon and Schissel, 2000, as cited in [SCHRC], 2000, p. 19). Current reforms in the teaching of high-risk youth address the notion that people at risk of educational failure are in that position partly because of their ethnicity, culture, language, or economic status. A focus on the applicability of principles of social justice, a concern for diversity, pluralism, and context needs to be considered.

To foster resiliency, i.e. social competence, problem-solving skills, autonomy, and sense of purpose, schools need to follow some basic practices when teaching at-risk youth. Krovetz, (1999) observed other practices that foster resiliency such as: (1) working in small groups or independently, (2) having a plan of action for students who are falling behind, (3) common instructional strategies across grade levels, and (4) replying with a question to students’ inquiries (p. 3).

In his fourteen years as a school principle, Krovetz (1999, p. 3) cites three situations that cause students to give up. Many of these at-risk students: (1) find classroom learning irrelevant to their lives, (2) dislike the competitive nature of some classes, and (3) feel alienated in terms of peer relations.

The New York City Schools Dropout Prevention Initiative was a serious attempt at bringing new resources to the schools; however, numerous problems with this program and the school board in general were identified and recommendations for improvement were made (Grannis, 1992).

3.2 ALTERNATIVE SCHOOLS

Many at-risk students who have dropped out or have been expelled from regular high schools are placed in alternative schools. Smaller classes and programs that are tailored to individual learning styles are common in these schools. This means that courses tend to be learner-centered rather than curriculum-based because of the personalized environments and close supervision. Students in the alternative school where I taught art move up or repeat a course while remaining in the same class with their peers, who may be at different levels of education. The alternative school where this study took place stressed responsibility. I have found it helpful to stress attendance since students who regularly show up to class seem more motivated to learn, are more likely to complete assignments, and follow through on homework. Students participated in decision-making processes that helped shape their education. The students expressed their concerns, carried out projects, and were guided to set both short-term and long-term goals. Furthermore, a schedule that allows these students to combine school with work, family, or a vocation such as art was found to be useful.

Alternative schools may have different philosophies. For example, some specialize in dealing with at-risk youth who have learning disabilities. Other alternative schools may accept students that are high functioning and some are for those who are artistic (Appendix E, p. 169). Students who have had problems in traditional schools are taught to be accountable for their actions in a positive, supportive atmosphere. According to the teacher who was interviewed for this study, the role of an alternative school is to help students pick up the pieces in their lives and get back on track in terms of their education; or else, these youth may end up with desperate futures.

Pereda (1981) suggested, “ ... whether or not a student becomes a dropout depends not only on the particular background and personal characteristics he brings with him to school, but also on the characteristics of the institution he meets when he arrives” (p. 27).

Just because mainstream schools may seem more orderly without the disruptive youth attending, does not mean that at-risk youth should be abandoned. Communities should realize that alternative schools need to be supported so that they can continue to help students who feel stifled, unable to explore their full potential and expand their creativity in traditional schools. When students lose hope, they are at risk of dropping out. “It should be remembered that students drop out from learning long before they drop out of school” (Kronick, 1997, p. 34).

In the late 1960’s and into the 1970’s, alternative schools proliferated in the United States for those students who could not or would not succeed in the teacher-directed secondary school mainstream.

Some believe that at-risk youth may fail because regular schools refuse to adapt the curriculum to the needs of these youth. King, (2000, as cited in [SCHRC], 2000) argued that:

Schools were not serving the function of reintegrating these [at-risk] students as they are further alienating them by judging students and by not providing adequate programming in response to their needs schools need to be more accepting by providing a full range of recovery programs – upgrading, retraining, alternate schooling ... (p. 33)

Sagor, (1999, p. 2), a teacher in a public alternative school for more than twenty-five years stated that in “... the 1960’s, alternative schools did not attract, recruit, or enroll students who were on a trajectory for success”. That is still the case today. The teacher who was interviewed for this study (see p. 169, Appendix E) would agree with the statement “... that a capable young person, achieving adequate grades in the mainstream, should not consider enrolling in an alternative setting” (Sagor, 1999 p. 4). Some researchers

conveyed that alternative schools are becoming the exclusive preserve for education's outcasts. The public who funds the alternative schools should possibly be asking questions such as:

- (1) How can regular schools better integrate at-risk youth while meeting the needs of other students?
- (2) Do alternative programs aim at improving outcomes for students with different educational needs or just separate disruptive students from the mainstream? (Gregg, 1999, p. 3)
- (3) Are some alternative schools becoming dumping grounds for disadvantaged students? (Sagor, 1999, p. 4)

Some strategies that alternative schools use are thematic units, portfolios, high interest topics, technology etc. "To be effective, alternative education must adapt to the uniqueness of the setting, the transitory nature of the population and the characteristics of the youth" (Guerin and Denti, 1999, p. 2).

Today, there are many attempts to create new alternative schools in the United States and Canada that address the needs of at-risk youth. For example, in Alabama where the dropout rate was 24% for secondary students in 1989-1990, administrators explored "... altering the school environment by forming alternative schools, i.e. schools that separate a certain category of students from the main student body in separate buildings or classes" (Johnson and Barry, 1992, p. 5). In addition, they proposed the use of the arts to address the problems of youth-at-risk and school dropouts (Johnson and Barry, 1992, p. 4). The Oregon School Council reported that a low ratio of students to teachers, highly structured classrooms with behavioural management, positive reinforcement, adult mentors, individualized interventions, social skills instruction, and high quality academics were preferred practices with at-risk youth (Tobin and Sprague, 1999, p. 9).

In Canada, a lack of alternative programs may be seen as a problem in decreasing the amount of at-risk youth that drop out (Employment and Immigration Canada and Statistics Canada, 1991, p. 9). Many Canadian school boards have alternative schools. These schools emphasize flexible and

individualized instruction that helps prepare students for reentry into schools or entry into higher education and the work force. Early intervention is very important and many alternative schools offer practical life skills. Sometimes, people who work with street kids act as mentors and personal counseling can be arranged. Teachers in these schools act as advisors and models of excellence in teaching.

Alternative schools can and should be positive responses to the needs of at-risk youth. The most promising schools have a clear academic focus that "... combines high academic standards with engaging and creative instruction" (Leone and Drakeford, 1999, p. 87). Successful alternative schools have a sense of community, excellent instruction, and the organizational structure to support it.

There is some debate as to whether at-risk youth benefit from alternative schools. It seems that mainstreaming, however, just does not work for some students. When practically every traditional school has failed to help a student progress, there needs to be another possibility. That is why alternative schools exist. Duke and Griesdom (1999) found " ... that a substantial number of students enrolled in an alternative school, prefer to remain there" (p. 92). Studies show that at-risk students' attitudes towards school improve when they are attending alternative schools (Neumann, 1993, as cited in Morris, 1992, p. 113, Tobin and Sprague, 1999, p. 4). One of the reasons for these improvements may be that at-risk youth often see alternative schools as their last chance to graduate from high school.

Any approach to working with at-risk students has to be built on the hope necessary to sustain emotional engagement. When working with at-risk youth, teachers need to know that they will be teaching students who have often been shuffled from school to school and may feel that the world has rejected them. Although many at-risk youth have academic weaknesses, a good proportion of these youth are highly intelligent and intrinsically motivated to give school another chance. When they are encouraged, feel at ease asking questions, and

are given the chance to prove themselves, at-risk youth can learn to value their own interests. Consequently, many of these youth can and do succeed.

3.3 ART EDUCATION AND AT-RISK YOUTH

A number of factors contribute to the academic success of at-risk youth. Skills like making choices, thinking creatively, problem-solving, hands on engagement in learning tasks, and cooperative learning are enhanced by art education. The at-risk learner is not a traditional student. Therefore, an orientation based on the arts: perception, creation, and interpretation can inspire these youth to produce, make changes, and reflect while learning about themselves. "Participation in ... art instruction ... leads students to a new avenue of creative accomplishment (especially for those who have not succeeded in traditional classroom settings)" (DeVore and Gentilcore, 1999, p. 4).

Making and perceiving art can lead at-risk youth to experience feelings of success, which go far beyond their expectations. Through positive social interactions during art experiences, at-risk youth gain self-confidence, which spreads to other areas or subject matters. These experiences may lead to increased student involvement in community and cultural affairs. The skills to produce works of art, reflection on the meaning of art, knowledge about the artists that have created art over time, and the use of technology in art are areas of interest to students. The ability to produce and reflect on art is especially important to those students who want to pursue a vocation in art. Moreover, art experiences help reinforce these students' self-esteem while validating their search for meaning.

The art curriculum should be interactive, hands-on, coupled with positive reinforcement so that the student's ideas and aptitudes are valued. That way, at-risk youth learn about art while learning about themselves. Art teachers need to look at their own contexts, their students' needs, and the resources available. Units should be multi-dimensional, meaning that there are no quick and easy answers to proposed art assignments. Lessons should flow naturally

into one another. Art educators should be specific and clear in giving instructions while leaving space for the students to express themselves on various themes. “In much the same way that preventionists commit to involving youth in alternative prevention projects and activities, artists ... must also commit to engaging and to creating with youth opportunities to develop and to grow; opportunities to enhance resiliency” (Baxley, 1993, p. 9). Art programs can attract students who are at risk of dropping out because these programs motivate at-risk youth and give them productive experiences they might not otherwise have.

Art education plays an important role in the lives of at-risk youth because it promotes resiliency and is one of the few classes where they can express themselves visually and verbally on relevant topics. The art program in the alternative school where I taught involved teaching lessons that were adapted to suit the concerns of the students while inspiring them to research about various artists, styles, formal elements, and techniques. For example, the students brainstormed themes for their studio art production such as: sports and entertainment, music, abuse, the rich vs. the poor etc.

Art teachers have the potential to “ ... introduce youth to different viewpoints, beliefs ... and help them recognize that there are many similarities, shared concerns and aspirations among many people from seemingly different backgrounds” (National Endowment for the Arts, 1998, p. 18). Furthermore, the arts help build competencies that protect youth from harmful behaviours such as drug abuse and violence. Themes, thoughts, and feelings that are difficult to confront may be less intimidating to express through art than through open discussions (Murfee, 1997, p. 14). “Subjects that young people find difficult to confront, such as drug use, violence and teenage pregnancy can be made accessible when addressed and explored through the arts and humanities” (p. 14).

In addition to being a preventative tool, art is an active rather than passive learning experience that engages all the senses. All “ ... students do not learn in the same linear cognitive ways that we usually train education students to

expect” (King and LaPierre, 1990, p. 46). Art educators need to be aware of individual learning styles when working with at-risk youth. Students may have kinesthetic, interpersonal, analytic, random, or creative styles. By describing a model of instruction for spatially preferenced thinkers, King and LaPierre, (1990) provide teachers with the means for working with students that are labeled high-risk. “The awareness of the spatial thinking process can contribute to the educational field a better understanding of the unseen imagery that exists in the mind as a reasoning tool” (King and LaPierre, 1990, p. 45).

The process of thinking through action ... such as creating with one’s own hands, the flow of movement, and the compilation of knowledge based on discipline, technique, and experience---is what makes art so special The arts are familiar with the concept of ‘change’ as a force that empowers the act of expressions and creative solutions. Teaching through the arts inculcates empathy with an individual struggling with the learning process. (King and LaPierre, 1990, p. iii)

At-risk youth can use art as a way of reflecting on their lived experiences. Since art encourages risk-taking behaviours, these youth have the opportunity to embrace new possibilities and to try and make sense of the complexities of the ever-changing world. Art teachers who work in traditional high schools often deal with many high-risk juveniles since the potential dropouts are usually shunted into a class where they cause the fewest administrative problems. Therefore, art educators serve as role models since they guide students to fulfill their academic responsibilities. By making the art class pleasurable, an art teacher can influence a student’s decision to stay in school.

To some youth, art is an enjoyable and relaxing activity, which may or may not lead them to a career in art. To other at-risk youth, art may help mediate their confusion at a particularly difficult time in their lives. Still others take art because they think it is an easy way to get a decent grade. In any case, educators should consider the fact that many at-risk students enjoy art classes and find them less stressful than their other academic subjects.

Having a class to look forward to may actually help increase school attendance. In addition, students who struggle with issues of identity, independence, academic and social competency can begin to gain control and mastery through art.

3.4 ARTS AND HUMANITIES PROGRAMS

Art programs outside of schools have the potential to tap into the feelings of at-risk youth because students need to be self-motivated to show up and they do not need to think about grades. Furthermore, the setting is usually more relaxed, less distant, or formal than the atmosphere in a large school classroom.

Communities vary and so do the many approaches taken in art education. Weitz-Humphreys (1996) examined 600 arts and humanities programs in the United States for the National Endowment for the Arts.

The visual arts “ ... provide a vehicle for translating inner experiences to outward visual images ... ” (Weitz-Humphreys, 1996, p. 18). At-risk youth have a chance to experience meaningful public affirmation, which provides them with some degree of celebrity for a few minutes (Weitz-Humphreys, 1996, p. 18). These at-risk youth become famous to their peers, which is a potent experience for adolescents “ ... whose lives are primarily characterized by anonymity and failure” (Weitz-Humphreys, 1996, p. 18). Art experiences can be particularly important in the lives of at-risk youth. Having their work seen and valued can help them gain a positive perspective on their lives, “ ... a way to imagine a different outcome and to develop critical distance from everyday life” (Weitz-Humphreys, 1996, p. 19).

Much informal evidence argues that the arts can contribute significantly to social well being, enhance community and individual development, and in so doing help reduce the escalating crime and violence that plague our cities. But, in spite of broadly shared beliefs that the arts are more than a luxury, there is precious little scientific evidence to prove this ... (McArthur and Law, 1996, p. 1)

Very few studies report any evidence of collecting evaluation data of arts and humanities programs in the United States. Because of this, it is difficult to confirm that “ ... arts intervention with at-risk youth lead to positive prosocial outcomes ... ” (McArthur and Law, 1996, p. ii). McArthur and Law (1996) found that the evaluation information “ ... was sufficient to support the broad proposition that arts programs can lead to desirable behavior, cognitive, and social outcomes” (p. 26). On the other hand, these authors found “ ... too few evaluations to demonstrate that fine arts interventions foster improved prosocial behaviors in pre-teen, at-risk youth” (p. 26). They believe that data is needed to find out how participation in the arts leads to positive effects: (1) reduced juvenile delinquency, (2) reduced school truancy (3) improved academic achievement, (4) improved communication skills, and (5) increased self-esteem (McArthur and Law, 1996, p. 11).

Effective programs should provide students with opportunities for vocational academic and creative success. The studies indicate that the arts are not merely frills “ ... but are essential for fulfilling the at-risk student’s needs for expression and intellectual development” (Center for Music Research for the Florida Department of Education, Division of Public Schools, 1990, p. 9).

CHAPTER FOUR

AESTHETIC EDUCATION: LITERATURE REVIEW

4.1 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Aesthetics can be defined as:

... ‘the philosophy or theory of taste, or of the perception of the beautiful in the nature of art’. The term was first used about the middle of the 18th century by the German philosopher Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten (1714-62), who applied it to the theory of the liberal arts or the science of perceptible beauty. (Oxford Dictionary of Art Terms, 1997, p. 9)

Aesthetics also refers to “... a philosophy applied to art in an attempt to understand its qualities the study of the creation, appreciation, and the critical thinking of art ...” (The Language of Art From A to Z, 1997, p. 4).

During the 1800’s, it was believed that appreciation could “form character, generate well-designed and produced manufactured goods, and increase the quality of life of the lower class” (Boris, 1986, as cited in Kerlavage, 1992, p. 44). The Picture Study Movement (1900-1930), a successful art appreciation initiative, helped aesthetics gain status as part of an art education curriculum. “Large reproductions were displayed in school halls ... while smaller prints might be distributed to students” (Stankiewicz, 1984, p. 86). In 1902, the purpose of art reproductions in classrooms were (1) to teach something, (2) to arouse the feelings and thus to incite action, or (3) simply to give pleasure (Thompson, p. 599, as cited in Kerlavage, 1992, p. 64).

From 1920 to 1930, art appreciation programs were being redesigned to allow for more interaction between teacher and students and were coupled with production activities. Pictures were suggested not for story quality but because of the technical or expressive qualities of art (Lafarge, 1910, p. 1, as cited in Kerlavage, 1992, p. 75). Texts included interpretations of the subject matter of pictures, which were based on aesthetic or moral understanding (Smith, 1986). During the depression years, Oscar Neale’s text “World Famous Pictures”

(1933) circulated widely in schools within the United States (as cited in Smith, 1986, p. 48). “Neale felt that art works had a moral, ethical and sometimes patriotic function ...” (p. 52).

The goal was not to refine the sensibilities of a few; instead the rhetoric of picture study stressed the value of the picture, particularly the fine-art masterpieces, as a way to introduce all students to the highest ideals of art and the personalities of the greatest artists. (Stankiewicz, 1984, p. 90)

Sir Herbert Read (1893-1968) believed that individuals vary in their ability to appreciate art and that this ability can be deepened or inhibited. He saw aesthetics as a constant force binding people to seek harmonious relationships. To Read, the aesthetic faculty was an intuitive power, involving direct sensuous contact with the environment coupled with a natural response (Read, 1955).

In 1957, a study of junior and high school art specialists from a random selection of school systems found that art history and appreciation of cultural heritage was much less important than creative thinking in the art curriculum (Nygard-Reynolds, 1965). As the years went on, many art educators believed that “... art appreciation should be used in the studio art class to broaden the student’s understanding of what is possible for him [or her] in his [or her] own artwork” (Garson and Russell, 1967).

4.2 RECENT LITERATURE

Gardner and Gardner (1972) found that although children were more likely to group paintings by subject matter, only “... in the adolescent and post-adolescent years do a majority of subjects make a significant number of groupings on the formal aspects of paintings” (p. 55). They also found that the older the subjects, the more flexible they were in switching from one stance to another.

From an anthropological perspective, Young (1982) formed his own definition of aesthetic response as a coping behaviour. “The aesthetic response

is intimately connected with creative processing of information associated with the formal properties of the external world, such as plane, line, form, color, texture, and structure” (p. 5). He concluded that aesthetic response includes the act of perception and rearrangement of the formal properties in artifacts in order to gain control over the environment and he extended this notion to technology (p. 5).

Foss (1980) found that “ ... a work of art cannot have the same meanings for all people With each new framework that is brought by an individual to the art object, a different reality or world and, thus a new aesthetic experience will result” (p. 45).

Flannery (1980, p. 30) said that lived experience “ ... is not universal except that we live in the same ... world and have similar bodies and sensory organs. Lived experience is personal and unique to each person”.

To study aesthetic response, Housen (1983) used a stream of consciousness approach, whereby the subject would talk aloud as he or she viewed a reproduction of art (p. 49). A sample of 90 high school, college, and adult viewers were interviewed and coded. This researcher found that aesthetic development varies significantly by class with the middle class group scoring higher (p. 102). The results include five developmental types of aesthetic understanding:

1. Accountive – egocentric lacking a framework upon which to organize responses
2. Constructive – focusing on properties and techniques
3. Classifying – decoding the message, considering different perspectives
4. Interpretive – focusing on the expressive qualities and cultivating an intuitive reading of the work
5. Reactive– integrates all previous stages

Specifying visual qualities such as the art elements, identifying styles, recalling dates, and stating preferences lead to intelligent viewing yet they do not lead to interpreting the full meaning of a work of art. According to Feinstein (1984), the meaning of art can be of two kinds: literal (has

consensual agreement within a culture) and metaphoric (does not necessarily have consensual agreement within a culture – moves into the personal realm). “The metaphoric thought process promotes the understanding of one thing, concept, or experience in terms of another ... The result is that associations are generated” (Feinstein, 1984, p. 77). Therefore, it is possible to become more sensitive to society’s visual metaphors and “ ... to begin to question the values embedded in them” (Feinstein, 1984, p. 83).

Hamblen (1984b) stressed that historically art has been used “... to record and signify that which is of societal importance” (p. 23). “Multi-cultural, cross-cultural, and a study of a variety of art forms within each of those perspectives reveals the socially relative nature of artistic creation and response” (Hamblen, 1984b, p. 25). In addition, Hamblen (1984a) said that the formulation of art criticism questions based on Bloom’s Taxonomy “ ... can serve to help place art instruction in the mainstream of western educational priorities [Nevertheless, a] major problem with Bloom’s taxonomy that continues to be a source of educational confusion and semantic embarrassment is separation of the affective from the cognitive ... ” (Hamblen, 1984a, p. 43).

Today, many art educators teach students to value the art of non-western cultures along with exemplars of their own heritage. “The development of aesthetic understanding involves an interplay between culturally changing values and a structured method of analysis of those values” (Goldsmith and Feldman, 1988, p. 85).

Today’s high school students are affected by the popular, ethnic, folk, and everyday art they encounter in their lives. Socially-oriented art education requires viewers to comment on the value and belief systems of the consumer cultures (Bersson, 1986). “What we think about, how we think, our beliefs, and our behavior are largely determined by our socio-cultural birthplace and residence” (p. 42). “The pursuit of wealth, material success, and upward mobility, values strongly promoted by capitalism, causes many to perceive art as a leisure-time [sic] pursuit, decorative addition, or symbol of affluence

an unfortunate state of affairs for our profession” (Chapman, 1978, as cited in Bersson, 1986, p. 43).

Kauppinen (1987) classified mass media images in the following categories: (1) instructive, (2) informative, (3) propaganda, (4) commercial (5) news, and (6) entertainment. She pointed out that “... the future of visual imagery in mass media is the territory of art education. It must not be ignored” (Kauppinen, 1987, p. 44).

At-risk youth often lack self-esteem. When educators stimulate discussion about art while encouraging students’ responses, they help these students build their vocabulary and self-confidence. Artistic dialogue helps students to feel more comfortable giving their opinions. Sullivan (1988) proposed that verbalizing emotions, talking about symbolism, myths, or religious concepts (features of the two student interviews conducted in this study) enables students to “... visually read those messages that silently speak to us” (p. 9) in works of art.

Aspects of character and personality can be expressed in artworks ... in ways of which the artist is unaware of. We find them by looking and talking In this way, what is expressed may be more than can be grasped by one person at any one time; it may require the group to articulate it over time. (Parsons, 1990, p. 145)

Parsons, (1990) said that “... one cannot insert a Renoir or Impressionist painting in the curriculum and expect it to be the same for every student” (p. 146). He was interested in the cognitive, affective, judgmental, and experiential aspects of aesthetic development. Parsons (1987) interviewed more than 300 participants from elementary schools to college over a period of ten years (p. 18). Parsons’ stages are structured according to changes in understanding of five basic issues: (1) subject matter, (2) expression, (3) medium, (4) form/style, and (5) judgment (Parsons, 1987).

If you have ever heard of philosophy as the study of the true, the good and the beautiful, you recognize aesthetics as the third of these disciplines. The others are (pure and applied) science [sic] and

ethics ... Theoretical aesthetics, then should produce a set of categories that may be used to describe aesthetic phenomena and to explain how judgments of value may be justified in terms of such categories. (Kaelin, 1990, p. 33)

Weltzl-Fairchild (1992) was interested in the different approaches people take while perceiving art (response styles) and how different types of artwork may lend themselves to different categories of responses. Therefore, she developed her own categories or domains: (1) domain of art, (2) domain of picture (3) domain of self. In a later study, Weltzl-Fairchild (1995, p. 23) reported three styles of response: (1) concrete, a direct and idiosyncratic approach, (2) empathetic, when a respondent identifies easily, relating personal stories using metaphors, and (3) intellectual, referring to knowledge of art concepts and a sense of morality – believing that pictures should communicate a message.

4.3 CURRENT STUDIES

Defining such terms as “aesthetics”, “the aesthetic experience” and “aesthetic response” necessitates layering a multiplicity of meanings because there are so many ways to look at art. People form opinions that change over time. Different people have different perspectives and various forms of art require different ways of perceiving. The two at-risk youth that were interviewed perceived works of art in various ways which can depend on many factors: (1) their previous exposure to art, (2) their cultural background and knowledge about other cultures, (2) if and how they have been influenced by the media, i.e. television, films, music, (3) their own life experiences, and (4) how they see society.

Erickson (1994) found that young people and adults were more capable of interpreting a work of art from the stance of an individual in the past viewing the work. She found that elementary students, secondary students, and adults referred to four general categories: (1) artist, (2) viewer, (3) culture, and (4) perception.

It is important to carry at-risk students further, to build on their knowledge, interests and what motivates them. In this way, a dialogue is created, leading to aesthetic growth.

Simpson (1996, p. 56) emphasized, “... personalized response, conjectures arrived at through lived experiences”. Students can be asked what it would be like if they were inside the artwork and whether they have ever been in similar situations or felt the same way. She stated that “teaching students to view art as a contextual whole involves teaching them the meaning through their own as well as others’ work” (Simpson, 1996, p. 55).

Venable-Bradford (1998) believes that encounters with art are influenced by past visual experiences, which include personal experiences. Students need to question their own intuitions, ideas, and judgments about art, which are not entrenched. They need “to grapple with their own ideas about art” (p. 7). Venable-Bradford (1998, p. 7) claims that trained and untrained viewers of art make connections between what they have experienced in their own lives and the artwork they see. For example, Homer’s “Gulf Stream” (p. 7) may bring up tales of the movie “Jaws” (p. 7). “Obviously these responses may indicate a less than thorough understanding of the artwork yet ... these youthful experiences make what is seen understandable, worthwhile ...” (p. 7).

Horner (1986, 1989, 2000) starts with the proposition that all understanding is shaped by the person who is engaged in an act of response to an art object, picture, book, or other work. Therefore, it is important to become aware of one’s feelings and cognition when viewing a work of art. He was influenced by the work of Winnicott (1971) a British psychiatrist (as cited in Horner, 1986, p. 34).

“Meta Modernist responding is a process of first inner imaging and then outer imaging ... The interaction ... constitutes the ground for a dialogue of self-revelation, a dialogue that once fluent, is the lifeblood of learning” (Horner, 2000, p. 69).

Horner’s (2000) model has eight parts that can be grouped in two main categories: the inner and outer part of the experience. The external sequence

consists of describing, structuring, interpreting, and retro-activating. It resembles Feldman's (1970) structural approach, except that the last phase does not lead to evaluative judgments about the work but a layering of different points of view. Horner's (2000) model contrasts with Feldman's (1970) conception of the aesthetic encounter, which lends great weight to the art object and little to the viewer (Weltzl-Fairchild, 1992, p. 54).

The internal sequence (Horner, 2000) can be described as follows:

1. Forgetting: The first phase or "layer" is " ... an initial trance-like engagement with an extension object/event; it is a process that invites beholders to bring their own expectations ... memories and associations ... values ... context [into the responding process]" (Horner, 2000, p. 71). "One way to assist ourselves [or others] to become fully engaged as beholders, fully responsive to our inner sensations and feelings, is to regard the process as a journey, an adventure" (Horner, 2000, p. 72).

2. Remembering:

The viewer starts to remember the inner experience and to articulate the dream journey that has been experienced. Meaning emerges at the intersection where expectation schemata of a viewer's desire meet with those of an author's desire the only 'correct' response has to be the one remembered by an individual. No one else could have been present inside the experience. (Horner, 1989, p. 10)

3. Reflecting: The viewer begins to reflect on what has occurred and to articulate it in a solitary way or through dialogue. By studying works of art, viewers can expand their imagination and form opinions leading to insights about themselves or others. "Stepping outside ensues a separation; the fusion that was 'one' has split to become the 'one' and the 'other' ... We will be able to update our inner image by reflecting on our outer self in the mirror" (1989, p. 12).

4. Revealing: The viewer can now step back and gain a new perspective on the overall experience by erasing, adding parts, or suggesting alternatives.

“The outcome may range anywhere from a subtle reworking of a mood to a new work of art paying homage or offering a revision” (Horner, 2000, p. 79). Therefore, if the previous journey was acceptable, not many changes would be suggested by the viewer. Nevertheless, if the inner image did not fit well with the outer image, there may be more suggestions.

Although research on how at-risk adolescents approach aesthetics and art criticism is scarce, O’Thearling and Bickley Green (1996) summarized the responses of 11 at-risk students to the question: what is art?

What or whom is it that makes an activity or product become art? Is it determined by the artist? Does the artist create the art or is it in the eye-of-the beholder? Does one’s society sanction a particular kind of creativity and therefore determine what art is? (p. 22)

O’Thearling and Bickley Green, (1996) found that 74% of the college students believed that art is an expression of the self or artist but only 27% of at-risk youth had this opinion. In terms of the college students, 16% thought that art was determined by the viewer while 5% thought that art was determined by society. None of the at-risk students saw art as being determined by the viewer or society and 27% did not know (p. 23). Furthermore, the highest percentage, 46% of at-risk youth believed that art is an object/form, i.e. sculpture or painting, or a particular content area or subject, i.e. math or history (p. 22).

Students’ initial reactions may very well change once they have taken time to view works of art seriously and from different perspectives. Traditionally, art criticism has been treated as a set of procedures students are to follow in criticizing art. Geahigan (1998, p. 294) found that art educators who relied on Feldman’s (1970) structural approach, using words such as: description, analysis, interpretation, and evaluation were unable to separate these strands of thought. Geahigan (1998, p. 305) suggested three strategies to help students become aware of problems of meaning and of value in works of art. He

proposed that students could be: (1) confronted with contrary opinions, (2) asked to compare related works, and (3) exposed to provocative works.

A study by Freedman and Wood (1999) indicates that popular visual culture may influence high school students' understanding of art. Learning about imagery in general may be structured differently than developmental research in which only fine art examples are used. Evidently, " ... it is probably safe to assume that high school students generally understand the purpose of advertisements. In contrast, students at this age may not understand why a particular museum painting was produced" (Freedman and Wood, 1999, p. 129).

In their survey, Freedman and Wood (1999) asked twenty-five 16 to 19 year-olds: (1) what does the image remind you of ? and (2) what is the purpose of the image? Responses to the first question were then categorized under the headings: personalization, popular culture, and high culture. For the second question, the categories were: to depict people or a scene, to illustrate a concept or idea, to decide on an aesthetic purpose, to elicit an affective response, and to convince or persuade (Freedman and Wood, 1999, p. 133).

Freedman and Wood (1999) found that students " ... believed that the purposes of images, whether fine art or popular culture, were to depict people or a scene, illustrate a concept, or communicate an idea" (p. 135). According to their research, " ... a high degree of literalism exists in secondary students' and post secondary non-art students' responses to art" (p. 128).

Duncum (1999) claims that people's everyday aesthetic experiences are more significant than experiences of high art in forming one's identity (p. 297). The conditions that have given rise to the pre-eminence of every day aesthetics lie especially in new technologies like the internet (p. 300). Art educators should understand that " ... particular images studied one year are likely to be considered out of date the next. The turnover of exemplars to study ... is likely to increase, the current paradigm being the ephemeral quality of many internet sites" (p. 307).

Efland (2004) argues that there is a tendency today to turn away from the aesthetic with a disavowal of the fine arts within visual culture” (p. 242).

If a student’s horizons are limited to the aesthetically familiar, then growth in aesthetic understanding should require aesthetic experience with the less familiar, with art that challenges one’s tolerance for complexity and ambiguity, with art that tells other stories about people and issues that lie outside the range of everyday familiarity. (Efland, 2004, p. 244)

Efland (2004) also states that art education should not have a narrow scope. That is to say, art educators should not be limited to formal matters such as line and colour that were the focus of the modernists, nor to the social context or message that is most often found in post-modernist works. “Visual culture will require balanced attention both to the aesthetic features of the objects undergoing study as well as a deepened knowledge of their context” (Efland, 2004, p. 250).

It is often difficult, especially in large groups, to create a calm atmosphere where dialogue, opinions, and self-expression are welcome. Student inquiry is the key to aesthetic growth since “ ... the vast array of ... independent working styles of contemporary artists defy exact categorization” (Russel, 2004, p. 19). Today, art educators must be prepared to confront issues that affect their students’ lives, such as appropriation of non-western cultures, the use of stereotypical images, popular vs. high art, the influence of technology in art, as well as the question of censorship. A good piece of advice is that art educators should be willing to learn and grow with their students. Teachers should encourage “... partnership through discovery ... to share ideas rather than impose their own thinking on students” (Zander, 2004, p. 50).

CHAPTER FIVE

INTERVIEWS WITH THE TWO AT-RISK YOUTH

5.1 PERSONAL WORKS OF ART

In the first part, the two at-risk participants responded to open-ended questions about their own artwork for 15 minutes. I asked questions pertaining to the techniques that were used, the mood the two at-risk youth were trying to convey, the message or meaning, and whether they felt the artwork was successful.

5.1.1 Responses to First Personal Artwork: Cindy

Cindy's First Work of Art: "Money, Power, Respect" – multi-media collage (Appendix C, p. 126, Figure 1)

Interviewer: Do you want to describe the techniques that you used?

Participant: Well, ah. First, okay. The money. There's this guy in the corner here who's carrying money. It goes to power ... the fire and stuff and how fire has a lot of power and ah respect would be the two clouds in the middle whose hands are joining together.

Interviewer: Well that's more like the message ... so let's talk about the message Do they have meaning separately or all together?

Participant: Separate meanings.

Interviewer's Reflection: When asked to describe the techniques, Cindy described the symbolism of each part, in which she conveyed her thoughts about society. Cindy said that the money or power takes away the respect of life, society. She also said that "respect brings peace ... it's a light colour and the money ... it's sort of a dark thing" (Appendix C, p. 127). Cindy said that

the clouds represent respect and that the man “ ... has the money and the power but does he have the respect?” (Appendix C, p. 127).

Cindy referred to images and music of her own popular culture. For instance, she said the hands represent closeness but the one with “ ... the fingers crossed is just like for rap ... They do a sign, it means “West Coast” (Appendix C, p. 127), a hand signal that comes from the rap music she listens to. In describing her work, Cindy explained “ ... how this is our everyday stuff” (Appendix C, p. 126). She suggested that money and fire are taking power and “ ... taking away the respect of life, society” (Appendix C, p. 127). The teacher who was interviewed felt that this work reflects Cindy’s concerns with “ ... the material trappings of success in life ... ” (Appendix E, p. 162). When interpreting other works of popular culture, Cindy expressed a similar theme: how money, power, or success can affect people’s everyday lives.

5.1.2 Responses to First Personal Artwork: Bob

Bob’s First Work of Art: “Beautiful” – multi-media collage

(Appendix D, p. 145, Figure 2)

Participant: This was done, I’d say ... about two years ago. I’ve used basically a pencil set – HB, 2B and a different one to do ... different areas of shading and ... I called it “Beautiful”. It’s supposed to be a girl and a representation of like what I see as beauty and what everyone else sees as beauty.

Interviewer: What part of it do you think is what you see as beauty and what part of it is what others see as beauty?

Participant: Well, I see the areas in the boxes as beauty because to me that stands out more ... like when you see beauty, like a beautiful person walking on the street and they stand out. It’s just like ... everyone looks the same. It’s

so formal. It's all the same. I want to see different ... I want to see things through like different views.

Interviewer's Reflection: Bob said that some people see themselves as ugly when they are not and that he is afraid to think that this may be real, that people think that beauty is the only thing that matters. This work poses questions about the meaning of beauty. What makes a person stand out from others? Is it the external being or the internal being? It shows that Bob wants to express his own vision of beauty. Although he cannot know how other people define beauty, he says that a face is intricate, well-designed, and not dull. It is unclear what he means though when he says that everyone is so formal or that they all look the same. Asking for clarification would have helped me understand the work from Bob's point of view.

I got sidetracked talking about Bob's experiences using media. I understand that Bob differentiated sections of the face in his drawing (Figure 2) in boxes. He said that he considers the quadrilateral shapes that pop out to be the beautiful parts of the face although these areas seem more frightening than attractive to me. Overall, the work shows a certain fragmentation. It is as if the image in a mirror is broken along with the concept of beauty.

5.1.3 Responses to Second Personal Artwork: Cindy

Cindy's Second Work of Art: "Untitled Mixed Media" collage
(Appendix C, p. 128, Figure 3)

Interviewer: Okay. There's here I think references to society just like in your other picture. Does that interest you a lot, to talk about ideas in society or is it more personal?

Participant: It's both; it's mostly society though.

Interviewer: Okay, what do you think represents what you feel as opposed to what society makes you feel or what you think about society? Which parts of it I mean are most about you or are personal?

Participant: The part about me would be the wolf ... because I'm Native Indian and the wolf really inspires me with the dream world. I'm really dreamy and I have a lot of faith and hope and the couples together ... really that's what I look for ... love, and I try to put out more – and racism too is a thing for me. I hate racism and I like to put blacks and whites together ...”

Interviewer's Reflection: Cindy was trying to describe her feelings about society and herself. She said that she starts off with anger, moves to confusion, and then the dreaming world. Technique is important to her. For example, problem-solving, whether or not to put words in a work of art, was important to Cindy. She did not like the fact that she put words in this work, which she said made it look less beautiful. Later, Cindy discovered that she painted illegible words over her work so that people could interpret the work in their own way. I commented that the words were reminiscent of writing on walls. It would have been interesting to find out whether Cindy considers graffiti to be art. This work leads me to ask: what is the relationship between the visual image and words? Which has more impact in today's society? What is the meaning of art to at-risk youth? What kind of messages do they want to convey? Do some at-risk youth have a voice that can only be heard or expressed through art? Do people only pay attention to museum art, which is deemed worthwhile for the public to view?

5.1.4 Responses to Second Personal Artwork: Bob

Bob's Second Work of Art: “Choose Your Own Emptiness” – multi-media collage (Appendix D, p. 146, Figure 4)

Interviewer: Okay, so I'd like to talk a bit about the work you did last year.

Participant: Well, I remember that I wanted to see things really dark and I used hands as a portrayal of showing emptiness and 'cause I find there's nothing in a hand and it shows emptiness to me. Looking at a hand and looking at different contours and that piece in particular showed me that there always could be something in it but there isn't. It's basically talking about life in general ... I used hands as an expression to talk about life ... I feel sometimes that life is so empty and that we all have to do is choose what we want to do with that emptiness 'cause that's all it is.

Interviewer's Reflection: Bob concluded that you can either choose the hard way or the harder way in life and that he just tries to find the easiest way of going about the hard way. He also said that most people who saw the work would not really understand what he was talking about. I told him that the hand looked like a hand begging for money and that the work expressed loneliness, in my opinion. Bob mentioned that it is true that others may have very different interpretations of the work. Bob revealed his point of view, saying that an artist may be unaware of his or her intentions before or while creating a work of art.

The teacher who was interviewed could not decipher any message in this work but said that it was a fantastic 20th century approach to doing things. (Appendix E, p. 163). This leads to questions: How can we judge a work of art when we are unsure how to interpret it? Does the appreciation of art depend on the viewer's opinion, the artist's point of view or someone else's interpretation?

5.1.5 Responses to Third Personal Artwork: Cindy

Cindy's Third Work of Art: "Untitled Abstract Painting"

(Appendix C, p. 130, Figure 5)

Interviewer: Do you often paint in this style?

Participant: Yeah, often. I love abstract pictures where there's trees and stuff. I don't like know ... I like when people can look at something and guess what it is.

Interviewer: Okay and this particular work... was it inspired by something or was it just from your imagination ... was there an idea you were following?

Participant: No, just my imagination. I just start with something and I finish it off. You know?

Interviewer: Okay, did you learn anything about art or your process in art-making through this?

Participant: Textures, different colours and how two colours can make a certain colour.

Interviewer's Reflection: Cindy said that although she put together her favourite colours and it brought out beauty and happiness, society is not always happy. She also said that she chose to add black because " ... black is darkness ... messy and confusing ..." (Appendix C, p. 130). Describing her process, she said that she liked it when people could look at something and guess what it was: representational or abstract. Cindy stated that because people are used to representational work, they would see this work as a "big mess" (Appendix C, p. 131). She reminded me that her abstract work was very meaningful to her when she revealed that she appreciated her own style: "I really do like it I love what I do" (Appendix C, p. 131). Beyond the attraction of the formal qualities, she said that this work shows how people can be really confused.

5.1.6 Responses to Third Personal Artwork: Bob

Bob's Fourth Work of Art: "Man's Face" – drawing
(Appendix D, p. 148, Figure 6)

Participant: That's what I love about art ... You don't know what to draw. I don't know what to paint or anything and then it's like I got an idea. I'll just go with that and I'll work from there. If it looks like crap, you know I'll just keep going and it will evolve into something completely different.

Interviewer: In other words, you don't have a preconceived idea – you go with your mood ...

Participant: It's more spontaneous. Some days, I'll be feeling happy and I'll probably draw more pretty, happy pictures but I find most of my artwork comes from being more down and thinking about society – it's not very happy.

Interviewer: So, what are the qualities in a work that makes it happy or makes it sad? Is it the shapes or the art elements or is it ...?

Participant: It's the person behind the art ... I mean if I drew this and I was sad while drawing it and someone else saw it and thought it was really a happy picture, they wouldn't even know the half of it.

Interviewer's Reflection: Perhaps I should have asked Bob why he thinks society is not a happy place since Cindy expressed a very similar point of view. Bob believes that you need to understand the person who made the art to really understand the work. He also said that the reason people do not like art is because they do not understand it. Bob said that to understand art " ... you have to be an artist yourself and not just an observer ... you have to get dirty get your hands into some paint" (Appendix D, p. 149). Afterwards, he said, "you never know exactly what it means unless you know the person

[artist]” (Appendix D, p. 149). Bob accepts his own interpretation of works of art, even though his opinion may be contrary to popular belief. He stated, “ ... as long as it makes sense to me, I’m fine with that” (Appendix D, p. 149).

5.2 RESPONSES TO TWO WORKS IN PAIRS

In the second part of the interview, which lasted 15 minutes, the two students responded to art reproductions in contrasting pairs. First, they chose the works they wanted to talk about and then placed them around the room in pairs. They were asked to contrast and compare: likes vs. dislikes, modern vs. historical, representational vs. abstract etc. In the second part of this study, the two adolescents got emotionally involved in the aesthetic experience. Their responses were characteristic of Parsons’ (1987) stages 3 to 4 and Housen’s (1983) stages 2 to 4 of understanding art. This part of the study helped expose the two at-risk students to a wide variety of works of art while expanding the two students’ aesthetic understanding. Exposing them to works with different artistic styles, from various cultures, and times helped stimulate their curiosity about art.

5.2.1 CINDY: CONTRASTS AND COMPARISONS

Pair #1: “A Buddhist Altarpiece” by Unidentified Artist and “Points in a Bow” by Wassily Kandinsky (Figure 7)

Cindy preferred Kandinsky’s work because she said that it brought her into another world. She found “A Buddhist Altarpiece” to be “ ... a little too plain ...” (Appendix C, p. 132) but she liked to try to figure out the narrative behind the subject matter: “I like the girls and how they’re placed and stuff and trying to figure out why they are here ... ” (Appendix C, p. 132).

Pair# 2: “The Great Hall of Bulls”, Lascaux, France and “Abstract Form” by Franz Marc (Figure 8)

Cindy resisted looking intently at “The Great Hall of Bulls” at first because she found it boring and strange (Appendix C, p. 133). Nevertheless, Cindy said that she would like to know more about it. Upon further questioning, she discovered the work was done in “caveman style” (Appendix C, p. 133) to which I responded that it is a real primitive painting. Cindy said that she preferred the modern painting. Commenting on her appreciation of the colours, she said that it’s the type of work she would put up on her wall.

Pair #3: “Assyrian War Chariot” and “Bar at the Folie B erg re” by  douard Manet (Figure 9)

Surprisingly, this time Cindy preferred the historical work because as she said, “ ... it’s stuff we don’t see everyday” (Appendix C, p.133). She stated that she did not want to know more about the historic context of the work. Cindy liked its formal qualities, that it was done in stone, and she was interested in the details. She said that “Assyrian War Chariot” inspired her in her own art-making.

Pair #4: “A Blind Bluff” by Cassius Marcellus Coolidge and “Composition” by Jackson Pollock (Figure 10)

Cindy preferred the poster of the dogs playing poker because she found “A Blind Bluff” humorous. She said that “Composition” was depressing and easier to create. According to Cindy, Pollock was “ ... just free-styling it” (Appendix C, p.134) as opposed to Coolidge who had a clearer vision. Nevertheless, Cindy concluded that it is just as valid to create a spontaneous work of art as it is to produce one that is well-planned.

Pair #5: “Lei Niho Palaoa” by Unidentified Artist and “Guernica” by Picasso (Figure 11)

Cindy liked both works equally. She described a monster that she saw in “Guernica” with “ ... a weird head, one eye in the middle and one way on the side ... ” (Appendix C, p. 137). A discussion about what can be considered as art ensued. Cindy said, “ ... when I think of art, I think of painting and not ... taking pictures of paintings and drawings” (Appendix C, p. 136). To her, the necklace is different but she considers clothing and other things in a different category. Cindy suggested this category might be called “designing” (Appendix C, p. 137).

Pair #6: “Emminem” by Unidentified Photographer and “Flowers” by Andy Warhol (Figure 12)

Cindy preferred the popular “Emminem” poster to the work by Warhol, saying that “Flowers” is boring, empty, and has no meaning. Cindy stated that she looks for meaning in works of art. Having studied Andy Warhol in an art class, Cindy declared that the only work she liked was the one with all the cola cans “ ... ’cause it was so famous” (Appendix C, p. 139) although she most probably meant to say cola bottles or soup cans.

Pair #7: “Battle of Alexander at Issus” by Albrecht Altdorfer and “Still Life With Goldfish” by Henri Matisse (Figure 13)

Cindy preferred the historical work by Altdorfer, saying “it’s complicated. It’s like something new every time you look at it” (Appendix C, p. 139). She described the work by Altdorfer as being really interesting, deep, and medieval while the painting by Matisse appeared child-like to Cindy. In fact, she had nothing to say about “Still Life With Goldfish”. Unlike “Assyrian War Chariot”, the work by Altdorfer inspired Cindy to want to learn about historical times. She focused on the sun in the work by Altdorfer, asking, “ ... did you see the sun?” (Appendix C, p. 141). Thereafter, Cindy responded to her own

question: “Yeah, I like that. It’s shining and these people are just fighting and stuff ... ” (Appendix C, p. 141).

5.2.2 BOB: CONTRASTS AND COMPARISONS

Pair #1: “Flowers” by Andy Warhol and “Guernica” by Pablo Picasso (Figure 14)

Bob liked both works equally. He noticed that the work by Andy Warhol really stood out. Bob talked about the techniques that he thought might have been used in the work: the colours, the overlapping, and the forms. Suspecting it was not a painting, he guessed that “Flowers” was a collage. It is really a lithograph. Bob appreciated “Flowers” by Warhol a lot, in contrast to Cindy who rejected it, saying it had no meaning. To Bob, “Flowers” is an expression of many thoughts and feelings and it is a nice piece. Bob tried to discern the technique. He said that he would have to see the real work to really understand the technique. Talking about the work inspired Bob since he has seen several exhibitions before. Bob noticed the writing on the reproduction and realized that it was on exhibit in New York in 1964.

Pair #2: “The Great Hall of Bulls” Lascaux, France and “Chant de Fête” by Paul Émile Borduas (Figure 15)

Bob said that he put these two works together because they contrasted in terms of the time in which they were created. He preferred the work by Borduas and really liked the techniques used in this abstract painting. Bob observed “ ... the colours – how they smeared properly, it flows nicely ... ” (Appendix D, p. 150). He found that although the colours are bright, it still gives off a dark feeling. Bob realized that the Lascaux painting is a historical painting done on a wall “ ... a really long time ago and guessed that “ ... they used berries, charcoal” (Appendix D, p. 151). Bob’s statement shows his understanding of what media would have been available then.

Pair #3: “Bar at the Folie B  g  re” by   douard Manet and “Ship” by an Unidentified Artist (Figure 16)

Bob liked the work by Manet better because of the reflection in the mirror and how “ ... the person in front is suppose to distract you from everything ... but when you look beyond, you can see everything else; it’s like wow” (Appendix D, p. 153). Bob also said that he likes the techniques used to create the ship such as the texture of the wood and how the smoke is drawn. Observing the techniques used in “Ship”, Bob reflected on how he finds line drawings tedious and how he would like to use line to explore areas in his artwork more often.

Pair #4: “A Blind Bluff” by Cassius Marcellus Coolidge and “Composition” by Jackson Pollock (Figure 17)

Bob appreciated the abstract work by Pollock and commented that he likes the colours: “ ... that sort of blue that doesn’t stand out...and there wasn’t any varnish done hands on that the thought came to him before he or she did it. I guess Jackson’s a guy” (Appendix D, p. 154). Bob was inspired by Pollock’s process and believed that Pollock might not have even liked his own work, although others may have liked it. Bob thought that Pollock might not have realized that he would become famous.

Asked whether he considered the work “A Blind Bluff” to be art, Bob replied, “ ... everything can be art, like if you want it to be but whether it is good art or bad art, I mean, it doesn’t really depend on me” (Appendix D, p. 155). Bob stated that the poster showing the dogs playing poker may have taken longer but he wondered what the message was because he just found it strange. I gave my interpretation first, saying that the work may be a farce on art. Bob added that the work “ ... is kind of mocking the whole idea of art and the way people see things all these people always talking about this fancy

art: what do you think about this – dogs playing poker?” (Appendix D, p. 155).

Pair #5: “Dancing Ganesha” by Unidentified Artist, Karnataka, India and “Velocipede” by Don Proch (Figure 18)

Bob liked the work by Don Proch better because he tends to prefer modern and abstract art. He appreciated the techniques used in the sculpture by Don Proch. Bob noticed the details like the chrome and the fact that it is a life size figure, placed on a bike, which is on a mirror, with a foot dipped into water. He observed the foot going in and out of the water. The metallic hair and the mask impressed Bob too. He had a lot to say about the Indian sculpture, which he liked less. “I know in the Indian culture, they have great respect for elephants ...” (Appendix D, p. 156). Bob described the sculpture as having both animal and human characteristics. He emphasized that there is so much art based on Buddhism and it gets tiresome when everything keeps repeating. Bob stated: “It’s not free It’s like you have to do it like this or else it will be an insult to our culture; you know?” (Appendix D, p. 157).

5.3 FINAL JOURNEY INTO ONE WORK OF ART

The third part of the interview was based on Horner’s (2000) teaching model, which consisted of taking an inward journey (Horner 2000) into one work of art of their choice. For this study, I chose Horner’s internal sequence: forgetting, remembering, reflecting, and revealing as an approach in the third part the interviews with the two at-risk youth. For a summary of Horner’s (2000) inner imaging model, see pp. 33 - 34 of this study.

For a viewer, an outer image object feeds an inner image (imagination) that in turn feeds an outer image Subjects who are acting as viewers need most of all to feed the inner imaging process and to pay less attention to the outer imaging follow-up. (Horner, 2000, p. 62).

Interview Questions:

1. Forgetting – Let us pretend you are a part of this work of art; where would you place yourself?

Other sample questions: If you could enter this journey, what path would you take? Where would you start? What pulls you in and/or pushes you away? (Horner, 2000, p. 74).

2. Remembering – What would you see around you? What sounds would you hear? What would you say?

Other sample questions: Can you tell us/me the story of your journey through space, time? Can you narrate the event that you have just experienced? Was it an easy image to enter? Where did you enter from? If you were not able to enter, can you describe your struggle? (Horner, 1989, p. 11).

3. Reflecting – How does this work make you feel?

Other sample questions: How do you (out there) respond when feeling/hearing/seeing the other you inside the work? Can the two of you dialogue? Which one of you has the last word? (Horner, 1989, p. 13).

4. Revealing – In this work, if you could ask a question what would it be? Would you want to draw or paint something like this? Why or why not?

Other sample questions: Could you imagine undoing or changing this work? How much would you erase/keep? Would you keep the same topic, technique? How would your work differ from the original one? Would this affect your perception of the original work? If so, in which ways? (Horner, 2000, p. 79).

5.3.1 FINAL JOURNEY INTO ONE WORK OF ART: CINDY

McWhinnie (1971, p. 25) reviewed studies on preference and found that individuals with art training prefer complex figures. Even though Cindy and Bob had limited exposure to art, they chose complex works of art to explore in

imaginative ways. Their choices led them to insights about society and about themselves.

Cindy chose a historical work, “Battle of Alexander at Issus”, by Albrecht Altdorfer (Figure 19) to enter into or become a part of in her inward “journey” (Horner, 2000). At the beginning, Cindy said that if she were in this work of art, she would be in the centre and move everyone away to make place and then take a path to the sun. Cindy then changed her mind and started at the mountain, where she wanted to “just relax, away from the corruption” (Appendix C, p. 142). Cindy would then jump into the water and swim to the sun. Cindy spoke about the value of the work. As she reflected on the differences between the 21st century and the Middle Ages, she realized how lucky she is to be living in a place where there is peace.

The sky seemed to represent a sign of hope to Cindy. She noted that if she were there, at the time depicted in the painting, she would not have noticed how beautiful the sky was. Cindy expressed that people should also be beautiful – avoid fighting and be peaceful. She would have liked to have been able to draw something like this because of the intricate details but she felt it would be simpler to draw the sky. Cindy decided that it is good to compare yourself to other artists; however, it is also good to be satisfied with your own artwork, to let other people see and interpret what you feel.

5.3.2 FINAL JOURNEY INTO ONE WORK OF ART: BOB

Bob chose to take a “journey” (Horner, 2000) into Picasso’s “Guernica”. (Figure 19). He said that the work shows many emotions such as frustration, sadness, anger, and confusion. Bob took the stance of an objective onlooker. He could then ask questions that would lead him to a greater understanding of the work, from a formal, expressive, or political point of view. Bob wanted to become the bird in the work of art because, as he stated, “... it look’s as though it’s just part of the wall” (Appendix D, p. 158).

Bob said that it looked as though they are all trapped in a condensed room, some dead; some trying to get away (Appendix D, p. 157). He stressed that he

would place himself at the back of this work of art if he could, looking at everything and he would ask everyone "... what's wrong?" (Appendix D, p. 158). I then suggested that being away from the action, the turmoil, Bob might feel that he could be more objective and have an outsider's view without becoming a victim himself. Although, how can we witness the desperation in "Guernica" and not be affected?

Bob described his journey, beginning where the bird is under the light and proceeding to the person screaming from the back. He commented that the lines on the horse attracted his attention because everything else looked the same. Bob noticed how the linear pattern created a rhythm: "... when something's flowing and then it just stops ... it's a completely different other art form ... and then it will just go back to normal" (Appendix D, p. 159). Asked if he thought it was a political statement, Bob replied, "... I'm guessing that the flag had to do with some sort of political statement and he probably did not want to put any symbol on the flag. It might even be sort of like a rescue flag, maybe" (Appendix D, p. 160). When asked if he saw any hope in this painting, Bob answered negatively, "there's no way out so you're going to have to eventually live with it" (Appendix D, p. 160).

CHAPTER SIX

INTERVIEW WITH A TEACHER

6.1 TWO PARTS OF THE INTERVIEW

The interview took place at the alternative school where I taught art. It was done on audiotape for approximately 45 minutes. The purpose was to gain a better understanding of the role art in the education of at-risk youth and how these students adjust to an alternative school. The two parts of the interview consisted of questions dealing with:

1. The teacher's perceptions of the students' artwork and the role of art in the education of at-risk youth
2. The teacher's experiences teaching at-risk youth and the role of the alternative school

The teacher's responses led to insights concerning the overall aims of an alternative school, the students' dilemmas, the role of art education, as well as the challenging and satisfying moments that were encountered in teaching at-risk youth. For the purpose of this study, the pseudonym Mr. Frank is used.

6.2 PART ONE: ART EDUCATION AND AT-RISK YOUTH

Questions:

1. Looking at the student's work of art, what do you see and how does it make you feel?
2. What does the work mean in your opinion?
3. What do you think it means to the students who created it?
4. How does art contribute to these students' educational progress?
5. What do you think are the positive and/or negative attitudes associated with art education and at-risk youth?
6. What are your thoughts concerning art in the high school curriculum?

Answers:

Mr. Frank found Cindy's first work to be evocative (Figure 1). He suggested that either someone in the work or the artist herself was concerned with what he called "the material trappings of success in life ..." (Appendix E, p. 162).

Cindy's second work was harder for the teacher to understand and he thought that the words that were scrawled on the surface of the work in black paint could have been clearer "which would help" (Appendix E, p. 162). Mr. Frank also believed that this student was concerned with "giving life" (see Appendix E, p. 162).

This teacher deciphered Cindy's abstract work in his own way, suggesting that the beautiful colours made him think of "elongated bodies" or "angels falling from heaven" (Appendix E, p. 162). Mr. Frank said that there was nothing "wishy-washy" (Appendix E, p. 162) in the abstract work. Although the symbolism was not really conveyed to him, he liked the work of art very much.

In Bob's work (Figure 2), Mr. Frank looked for words like "I am", which Bob took the trouble to scratch out and the word "beautiful" (Appendix E, p. 162), which seemed to be there to help people understand the work. Mr. Frank described that he saw "fang-like teeth" (Appendix E, p. 162) and he believed the work speaks about "inner beauty/outer beauty, inner turmoil/outer turmoil" (Appendix E, p. 163). Mr. Frank's interpretation was very similar to the message Bob seems to have been trying to get across – that beauty was not all that mattered.

Bob's second work "Choose Your Own Emptiness" (Figure 4) did not say much to the teacher. Mr. Frank concluded that knowing the artist's point of view would have helped him sound like a more intelligent critic. The teacher said that he was not able to judge what the works meant to the students who created them. This teacher said that he was not really good at being a critic; moreover, he enjoyed looking at art without necessarily being able to understand it.

Mr. Frank stated, “ many of the worst students on an academic basis, in art seem to be the most creative” (Appendix E, p. 163). Because these youth get recognition from their peers when their artwork is admired, the teacher felt that art raises the students’ prestige, just as excelling at athletics would. He also said that the students come into the school with clear attitudes about art. They either hate it or spend a lot of time doodling, painting etc. The latter take art while the former reject it. Furthermore, Mr. Frank stated that some do not like art because they cannot do it and others do not like how art exposes them. It is unsure what the teacher meant by exposure. For example, does art expose the students’ feelings and opinions or does art expose personal artistic styles that the at-risk students may or may not be proud of ?

Mr. Frank suspected that some students take art simply for marks and because it is part of the curriculum. In art class, these students are not forced to do work they do not want to do, as long as they produce a sufficient body of work to merit a passing grade.

Mr. Frank admitted that he believes that art “ ... is not strictly speaking academic” (Appendix E, p. 164). In essence, he emphasized that any kind of positive academic or successful experience helps restore the students’ self-worth and enables them to give more of themselves.

Reflecting on this part of the interview, some questions remain in my mind. What would Mr. Frank find significant about the two students’ responses to their own works of art? Is understanding art necessary in order to make a judgment about a work’s value? Why is art not viewed as an academic subject ?

6.3 PART TWO: ALTERNATIVE SCHOOLS AND AT-RISK YOUTH

Questions:

1. When did you start working with at-risk students? How did you perceive them at the beginning and have your views changed since then?
2. What are some of the behaviours that lead to school failure and how do you deal with aggression?

3. What did you learn about these students that helped you handle these situations more effectively?
4. Discuss some specific challenges and how you handled them.
5. What were some of your most memorable experiences?
6. Talk about successes and/or failures you encountered in your teaching experiences with at-risk youth.
7. What do you think contributes most to the high school dropout problem?

Answers:

Mr. Frank started working with at-risk youth in a resident community association in 1976, helping them with simple academic tasks and finding jobs. The school board created outlet alternative schools until there was a network of 40 or 50 teachers and 500 to 600 students per year. Mr. Frank was given the challenge of teaching the students who usually did not show up, better habits. Mr. Frank said that the community was a big help because these students often needed to be followed up after school. He stated that his philosophy is to bring together everyone in the student's life to deal with an issue.

Mr. Frank explained that at the beginning, the community wanted to get the older kids off the streets so that other kids would follow them and go to school. The goal was to make at-risk youth accountable and to help them develop job skills. Recently, the aim was to create a positive atmosphere at the alternative school, where students are helped to graduate.

Mr. Frank believes that some students misbehave because they have undiagnosed learning disabilities, which leads to marginalization. He said that his school's duty is to pick up the pieces and comfort these students; otherwise, they often end up in court or with domestic, social, or drug problems. Mr. Frank also found that financial security or support at home helps these situations. His Master's degree in Special Education was useful in teaching him how to relate to the students.

Listening and fine-tuning what you are going to say to them is key, according to Mr. Frank. He believes that one of the problems in society is

being weak on accountability and pushing rights rather than responsibilities. Mr. Frank thinks that teachers should help prepare students academically for C.E.G.E.P. and students need to understand that they cannot constantly act out. In addition, Mr. Frank stated that at-risk students often need time out of school to work and grow up, leaving room for the students who show up in class and whose needs often get ignored.

When Mr. Frank began teaching, he did not have any resources. Therefore, he learnt that the human-to-human approach worked to get resources and to know what your academic mission is. It took time to develop the autonomy of the alternative school.

Helping students who were hopeless get their act together in one or two years was the most meaningful experience that Mr. Frank recalled. He was also proud when students showed improvements in self-esteem and graduated or came very close to it. Through the alternative school, students were introduced to a wider world since the general knowledge they came in with was very limited. Mr. Frank has had problems with parents who in fact undermined their child's education, by allowing these students to make excuses for not attending school. Nevertheless, he said that he knows it is counter-productive to be angry with these parents.

Explaining that there is a broad spectrum of alternative schools, some dealing with high functioning students, Mr. Frank said that there are alternative schools for those who are artistic or self-starters as well. He knew that there are also other schools like his, where there are small classes and where individual attention across grade levels is stressed. This allows the at-risk youth to take a bit longer in some areas, so that they can have success in a non-threatening environment. Mr. Frank stated that his school takes students who cannot make it in a regular high school, not people who simply decide they do not want to go.

This experienced teacher also talked about school failure, the inability to do well in a regular school, the parent/adolescent crisis, alcohol/drug addictions, divorce, and emotional breakdown. Mr. Frank realized that often

these students were nice and happy in elementary school but got into the wrong crowd in high school. He sensed that when you carry the reputation of getting in trouble, you find the next place you go to shows decreased tolerance.

According to Mr. Frank, early intervention is necessary along with follow-up. He also claimed that it was unreasonable to think that an average teacher could stay on top of all the special needs of students in classes of twenty-six or twenty-eight, without the benefit of other resources. In fact, this teacher stated that he was against total inclusion. Unless people would be willing to pump in the resources, he sees inclusion as a way of cutting costs. Mr. Frank said that he believes that the role of inclusion is often ideologically driven even though it may not work for all students with special needs. He thinks it is detrimental to society to let at-risk youth drop out and that the deciding factor may be getting them past grade nine. Mr. Frank tells his students that after they have passed grade nine, they have the knowledge to graduate, as long as they have the emotional maturity and work habits, which are just as important.

In the second part of the interview, we can see that what at-risk youth do outside of school clearly influences their behaviour in school. Working with this teacher helped me understand that relating to students who may have their minds elsewhere is an essential part of a successful education plan. It is important to acknowledge the student's world and help these youth solve problems, step by step, at their own pace.

CHAPTER SEVEN

DATA ANALYSIS

7.1 RESULTS

The data in the previous section was summarized. The teacher's responses serve to substantiate the research on art education and at-risk youth as well as the research on alternative schools and at-risk youth.

To analyze the data on the two at-risk youth, the responses were put into categories, which emanated from the three parts of the interviews. The data analysis leads to some conclusions about how the two at-risk youth responded to art.

Comparisons are made with the findings of Weltzl-Fairchild (1992), O'Thearling and Bickley Green (1996), Chanda (1998), Geahigan (1998), and Freedman and Wood (1999) who have created their own classifications based on aesthetic responses to works of art.

7.2 EMERGING THEMES

The responses were put into the following categories:

1. Art and Artists
2. Formal and Technical Qualities
3. Historical Context
4. Multi-Cultural Context
5. Modern/Contemporary Contexts
6. Popular Culture
7. Personal Responses
8. Messages About Society

7.2.1 Art and Artists

Cindy and Bob talked about their creative processes in making art. Cindy liked to explore mixing paint colours and blending them to the edges of an

image, which she had glued onto her work. Bob spoke about the importance of black, white, and gray and how they can be used to create contrast.

From the way Bob talked about previous exhibits he had been to, it seemed that Bob had been exposed to art in galleries or museums. It is uncertain whether Cindy had seen many works of art before. Both were eager to give their opinions about art. In the second part of the interview, the two students gave reasons as to why they liked certain works more than others.

Cindy and Bob thought that it was important that a work of art should have a message or that it should mean something to the artist and to others. For example, Bob said that the artist might be trying to convey a certain feeling but viewers have their own interpretations, which may be very different. Cindy stated that she actively looks for meaning in pictures. The two at-risk youth found significant meaning and symbolism within their own works. They also attempted to understand complex works of art in the last part of their interviews. Furthermore, both students showed how their concern with the underlying meaning of art affected their points of view about their own artwork.

Both at-risk youth liked to talk about the connections they saw between their own art-making experiences and many of the works they examined. For example, Cindy compared the mood and the colours of the abstract painting by Franz Marc to her own style of abstract painting. “Emminen” (Figure 12) brought out the theme of consumerism and Cindy expressed a similar theme in her work, entitled “Money, Power, Respect” (Figure 1).

Bob spoke about how he used the palette knife as a tool, referring to a work by Borduas. In addition, the techniques used in Picasso’s “Guernica” (Figure 19) made Bob realize how the art elements can be used in a Cubist style to abstract or fragment an otherwise representational depiction of people, animals, or objects. Similarly, Bob’s drawing skills led him to find his own way of perceiving different views, in his drawing “Beautiful” (Figure 2).

Both students were concerned with why certain artists became well-known and they wanted to understand what the artist was thinking while

making the work. Cindy was more impressed by the status of the artist than by the technical qualities of the work. She said that she did not like Andy Warhol's works and did not see a message in Warhol's "Flowers" (Figure 12) although the fact that the artist was famous impressed her. Bob was trying to figure out whether it is the artist or others that decide if an artist becomes famous. He wondered who decides what is good or bad art. Bob said that the artist might not even like his own work while someone else will. In addition, he clearly believes that the mark of a well-known artist is that his or her work is shown in a gallery.

7.2.2 Formal and Technical Qualities

Cindy and Bob were very engaged in talking about the art elements: line, texture, colour etc. Both students used art elements to represent feelings. For example, Bob used shapes and lines to bring out certain feelings, in the features of a face. Similarly, Cindy used colour to show that some colours make her feel happy; others are dark and show that society is not always a happy place (Figure 5).

To Cindy brighter colours represent happy, uplifting feelings, as in "Abstract Form" by Franz Marc (Figure 8), "The beautiful colours – just trying to figure out what he was thinking, it's like a very happy picture" (Appendix C, p. 132). In comparison, according to Bob, Borduas used bright colours to express a dark feeling in "Chant de Fête" (Figure 15). He said, "... as bright as the colours may be, I still find it's really dark and gives off a dark feeling" (Appendix D, p. 151).

Cindy usually liked works that were colourful but she did not find any meaning in Warhol's "Flowers" (Figure 12). She dismissed the print, saying it was nice but she did not see any reason for depicting flowers and grass. Unlike Cindy, Bob liked the colours in Warhol's work, how they stood out, as well as the overlapping which he believed was the result of a collage. By looking at a reproduction of "Flowers", Bob found it hard to tell what techniques were used, although he was able to determine when and where it

was exhibited. Bob was able to describe the positive and negative spaces in “Bar at the Folie B erg re” (Figure 16), focusing on the reflections in the mirror. He analyzed the formal qualities in “Velocipede” (Figure 18): how the mask guided us down to the chest with lines going across it, leading the viewer to see something else in the work (Appendix D, p.156).

Both students were inspired by the use of line in works of art. For example, Cindy liked the way lines were inscribed into rock in the ancient “Assyrian War Chariot” (Figure 9). Bob liked the way line was rendered in “Ship” (Figure 16) and how the textures of wood or smoke could be created realistically with line.

Bob and Cindy used words such as “technique”, “colour mixing” “smearing”, “line”, or “detail” etc. to describe the formal qualities that attracted them to some of the works. More probing could have led to a better understanding of their knowledge of the techniques that were used. Cindy admired the technical work of the artist who produced “A Blind Bluff” (Figure 10) because she felt it took a lot of work and planning to produce it. She said that you could learn a lot by observing the work of other artists. Bob did not understand or appreciate the message in “A Blind Bluff” (Figure 17) and therefore neglected talking about the technical qualities, although he appreciated the time it must have taken to produce the work. Bob was inspired by the work he was comparing it to, “Composition” (Figure 17), and admired Pollock’s artistic process. Bob also thought that Pollock was a very productive artist because he said that Pollock probably was determined to do many paintings, one after another. Cindy appreciated works that were “complicated” (Appendix C, p. 134). Speaking about “Battle of Alexander at Issus” (Figure 13), she said: “I like that one ’cause it’s complicated. It’s like something new every time you look at it” (Appendix C, p. 139).

7.2.3 Historical Context

In the third part of their interviews, both youth chose complex historical works and tried to imagine what it would be like to live in earlier times. They

were interested in finding out about these artists' way of life and their thought processes. Curiously, Cindy and Bob became more interested in historical works by the end of the interview since they became aware of subtle qualities, observing the works for a length of time. In the second part of the interview, Cindy chose three historical works to compare with modern pieces: "The Great Hall of Bulls" (Figure 8), "Assyrian War Chariot" (Figure 9) and "Battle of Alexander at Issus" (Figure 13). She found "The Great Hall of Bulls" to be boring, not very colourful, and strange. Cindy thought that it was painted in a "caveman style" (Appendix C, p. 133) until she was told that it was a primitive painting on a real cave wall. She liked "Assyrian War Chariot" (Figure 9) because it was original, something she had not seen before, and the fact that the engraving was done on stone. Cindy's reflections on the historical work "Battle of Alexander at Issus" (Figure 13) led her to discover how lucky she is to be living in peace rather than in times of war, as portrayed in this work. Cindy appreciated the details in this representational work. She said that the only element in this image that she would feel comfortable attempting to draw would be the sky.

Bob was more interested than Cindy in "The Great Hall of Bulls" (Figure 8), wondering what media could have been used in primitive times to create the work – berries and charcoal. He said, "it's so fascinating to see how their perception of art was back then, compared to more recent art techniques" (Appendix D, p. 151).

7.2.4. Multi-Cultural Context

Cindy talked about "A Buddhist Altarpiece" (Figure 7). She liked it less than an abstract work "Points in a Bow" (Figure 7) by Kandinsky. "A Buddhist Altarpiece" was too plain according to Cindy but she liked the placement of the girls in the work. Cindy tried to figure out why they were there. After some debating, she liked the Polynesian necklace "Lei Niho Palao" just as much as "Guernica" by Picasso (Figure 11). Cindy liked the fact that it was different and decided that the necklace is art although it should be

considered in another category. She called the category “designing” (Appendix C, p. 137).

Bob believes that works of art have different meanings to different people. He spoke about “Dancing Ganesha” (Figure 18), which he liked less than “Velocipede” by Don Proch (Figure 18). Bob thought that “Dancing Ganesha” (Figure 18) had religious connotations and was part of the Indian culture. He was interested in the artifact’s cultural significance. Bob said that the work was very important to the person who made it and that there is a lot of symbolic meaning attached to it. He said that the Indian culture has a lot of respect for elephants. Bob stated, however, that there is so much Buddhist art and that this type of art does not interest him. According to Bob, it gets tiresome when everything keeps repeating. He also believes that artists whose work respects their own culture are less free. According to Bob, they cannot produce whatever they want. Bob said that these artists would have to follow guidelines; otherwise, their work may be considered an insult to their culture. Bob’s expression in his own work as well as his appreciation of freedom in society may be viewed as characteristic of the democratic, western values of his own culture.

Cindy was able to identify her own Native American culture in the artwork she created with the symbol of a wolf (Figure 3). She also expressed her dreams and views about discrimination in a multi-cultural society. Anyone teaching art should be concerned with how art functions as a “cultural artifact” (Chalmers, 1981, p. 12), as evidence for future generations of how individuals adapt to their “physical or social environments” (p. 12).

7.2.5 Modern/Contemporary Contexts

Both students were inspired by abstract modern art. Their comments reflect the fact that the works they chose had an emotional impact on them. Accordingly, both responded enthusiastically to modern and contemporary works of art. Although Bob agreed that Indian art has purpose and meaning, he was much more moved by modern and contemporary art. Bob preferred the

abstract painting by Borduas to the ancient one he compared it with: “The Great Hall of Bulls” (Figure 8). Speaking about the work by Borduas (Figure 15), Bob said: “I prefer more of the abstract art – like this one more” (Appendix D, p.151). When responding to “Velocipede” (Figure 18), he also said: “Probably this one ’cause I’m more of a modern art sort of person” (Appendix D, p. 156). Bob found every detail to be interesting. He especially liked the movement and the metallic hair.

Cindy really liked modern abstract art with the exception of Pollock’s “Composition” (Figure 10) that she found too depressing. The colours in a work influenced her response. For example, Kandinsky’s and Marc’s colourful works appealed to her. She mentioned that she would like to know what these artists were thinking about and that she would like to display works like “Abstract Form” by Franz Marc (Figure 8) in her room. Cindy named the colours she liked: “ ... pink, the red, the purple. The pink going into the green ... going into the yellow. It’s just all colourful” (Appendix C, p. 133).

Cindy formed an opinion about how society perceives modern art. For example, she believes that most people would think that abstract art is messy and that people prefer works that are easily recognizable. Cindy liked the representational modern works by Manet and Matisse far less than abstract works of art whereas Bob liked representational work very much, such as “Bar at The Folie B erg re” (Figure 16) and “Ship” (Figure 16). Bob was in awe in front of “Bar at the Folie B erg re” by Manet, unlike Cindy, who found it to be “too normal” (Appendix C, p. 133). Bob enjoyed how the artist was able to depict the reflections in the mirror. He believes that modern abstract art today has to do with geometric shapes: “triangles, circles and things ...” (Appendix D, p. 153). When gazing at an abstract work of art, Bob spoke about the quality of the paint, how it flowed.

Both Cindy and Bob appreciated the work “Guernica” (Figure 11, Figure 14) by Picasso. Cindy said that she saw a monster and feelings of torment within it. She also said that Picasso thinks too much (Appendix C, p. 137). Bob said that Picasso expressed so many different feelings. Bob said that he

would like to be on the sidelines asking the people or the elements in this work why they are so unhappy. He was also interested in trying to understand the notion of Picasso's style as well as the historical and political context of society, at that time. Bob guessed that "... the flag had to do with some sort of political statement and he [Picasso] probably didn't want to put any symbol on the flag" (Appendix D, p. 160).

7.2.6 Popular Culture

Both students chose to talk about "A Blind Bluff" (Figure 10), a work done by Cassius Marcellus Coolidge. Cindy found it humorous and was impressed by the artist's technical ability. Conversely, Bob did not seem to express any appreciation for the humour in this work. He wondered why this work should be considered famous and what the message was. At the end of the dialogue, Bob deduced that the depiction of a gold frame around the work might actually make fun out of high art or well-known works of fine art. Bob said that some guy was probably thinking that people are always talking about fancy art. He said that the purpose was probably to confuse people and to make people talk about it: "what do you think about this – dogs playing poker?" (Appendix D, p. 155). Bob did not choose any other works of popular culture to talk about, although Cindy did.

When Cindy responded to the image of the popular singer Eminem, she said that she does not consider a poster, a photograph, or a reproduction to be art. After some discussion, she realized that it was the content of the reproduction or poster that was art rather than the form itself. Cindy discovered that photography or design are different categories of art.

Cindy thought that "Eminem" (Figure 12) contains a message that money has not changed this singer's everyday life since he still takes the garbage out. According to her, "a lot of kids my age listen to that and they should understand – they should see this picture and see that it's not just him having the money and being as they say 'bling bling' having the car and stuff like that ... he's also a guy like the rest ..." (Appendix C, p. 138).

Cindy said that she does not like Eminem's songs, that he is too "corrupt" (Appendix C, p. 138) but I failed to get clarification as to what the word "corrupt" meant to Cindy. Even though Cindy was not asked what the purpose of the poster was, she did not seem to see this poster as a way to advertise for the popular music performer. Cindy ultimately conveyed the message she interpreted in the work: how money may affect people in society.

To Broudy, (1972, p.111, as cited in Zimmerman, 1983, p. 41), popular art "... means (a) art that is widely accepted and (b) art that requires no special training for its appreciation." He stated: "Enjoyment is a sufficient validator in popular art but not in serious works of art" (Broudy, 1975, p. 7, as cited in Zimmerman, 1983, p. 41).

R.A. Smith and C.M. Smith (1970) found that popular artists "... often do not subscribe to high standards to begin with" (p. 51) and that popular art or what they called "pseudo-art" relies on immediate sensual appeal and falls short on meaning (p. 51).

Undoubtedly, these two at-risk youth found that popular artists did have amazing technical abilities, as well as something to say. After all, graphic artists may not be well-known but their skills are highly appreciated in their field. Even Bob who was more critical of "A Blind Bluff" (Figure 10) was able to appreciate the time and effort it took to create the work of art and tried to understand the message in it. Although to some people, enjoyment is a sufficient validator of popular art, these two at-risk youth deconstructed works of popular art. They were able to question the value and meaning of popular art, according to their own beliefs as well as the beliefs of their subculture.

7.2.7 Personal Responses

The area of responding to art can be attractive to at-risk youth who are seeking answers to questions about their own identity and the society they are living in. It seems that this subculture often gets answers through peers, the media, and less often other sources like art.

“Students now have multiple and overlapping identities (for example, ethnic, socioeconomic, and sexual identities) and live within complex social environments that make artistic inquiry particularly helpful as part of their self-exploration and expression” (Freedman, 2003, p. 40).

Bob and Cindy used hands as personal symbols in their artwork. To Bob, a hand facing upwards symbolizes the inner emptiness in life (Figure 4) whereas to Cindy, a hand represents “West Coast” (Appendix C, p. 127), a sign of her adolescent subculture. According to Cindy, rappers fold their fingers in a certain way that means West Coast as depicted in her work (Figure 1).

The wolf in Cindy’s work represents her ties to her Native American background (Figure 3). “The part about me would be the wolf ... because I’m Native American and the wolf really inspires me ... ” (Appendix C, p. 128). Cindy expressed her personal feelings like anger or a dream-like state. “I’m really dreamy and I have a lot of faith and hope – and the couples together ... really that’s what I look for ... love, and I try to put that out more ...” (Appendix C, p. 128).

Bob gave some insight into himself when he described the difference between his concept of beauty while considering other peoples’ beliefs (Figure 12). He said that he hopes that beauty is not the only thing that matters to some people. Bob seems self-assured about his work, saying that he is not concerned how others view it, as long as he is pleased with it. Bob expressed that he produces his best work when he’s feeling a bit down, as illustrated in the contour drawings of hands on a backdrop of somber colours, showing his feelings of emptiness (Figure 4). Both at-risk youth liked to discuss their art-making processes in great depth, in terms of techniques, ideas, and their inspirations. They worked from imagination, liked transformation, change, and conveying their ideas and opinions through visual art.

7.2.8 Messages about Society

In their own ways, both at-risk students said that society is not always a happy place. The two youth referred to many people in society: young, old, of

various ethnic backgrounds etc. rather than just their subculture, when expressing statements about society. Cindy said that her work speaks about herself less than it speaks about society. She was very open about her personal beliefs. For instance, Cindy said that she looks for peace and love and that she hates racism, “racism too is a thing for me. I hate racism and I like to put blacks and whites together ... ” (Figure 3, Appendix C, p. 128). In one of her works, (Figure 3), Cindy created a collage and scrawled blurry words to convey a message. In another work, she dribbled paint across a brightly coloured abstract surface to express the ugliness of society. The teacher who was interviewed said that he believes this student was concerned with “giving life” (Appendix E, p.162).

Through her artwork, Cindy expressed that society should be less violent. She was interested in the reasons for the wars of the Middle Ages, saying that she is lucky to be living in a more peaceful place and time.

When looking at “Emminem” (Figure 12), Cindy responded that money should not change the way people lead their everyday lives. She used Eminem as an example of a role model for her youth subculture. Cindy suggested that rich people should not feel superior to others; they should be able to lower their standards to fit in with everyday people. According to Cindy, “it’s not just him having the money ... he’s also a guy like the rest ...” (Appendix C, p.138). Later, Cindy explained, “here he is carrying the garbage. It’s not something a singer should do and it’s good that he can put himself down to that level just to show people ... even though he has a lot of money, he’s a person ... and that’s what I like he has problems just like everyone else” (Appendix C, p. 138). Cindy listens to rap music, which influences her feelings about the concepts of money, power, and respect. In one of her personal works (Figure 1), Cindy communicated the message that a person may have money and power but she questions whether that person has respect. “It’s sort of taking away the respect of life, society. Money’s taking power and so is fire ...” (Appendix C, p. 127). Mr. Frank noted that Cindy’s personal artwork showed her concern with “the material trappings of society”,

(Appendix E, p. 162), which refers to capitalism, consumerism, or the concern for making money. Nevertheless, it is not known why Mr. Frank feels that Cindy may feel trapped by material objects.

In one of Bob's works (Figure 4), he expressed the feeling of emptiness that can exist in life. The teacher/participant said that Bob had some idea that escaped the teacher. Basically, Bob conveyed that life is what you make of it; it can be empty or you can fill up that emptiness. "I feel sometimes that life is so empty and that we all have to choose what we want to do with that emptiness 'cause that's all it is" (Appendix D, p. 146). He did not see any hope or way out of the turmoil and torture depicted in Picasso's "Guernica" (Figure 11). Bob was also interested in finding out if there was a political statement in this work since he saw a rescue flag without a symbol on it. He commented on society's issue with beauty, saying, "... some people will see themselves as the most ugly person when in fact they're not" (Appendix D, p. 145). Bob is afraid that some people might think that beauty is everything (Appendix D, p. 146).

7.3 DISCUSSION

Weltzl-Fairchild's (1992) model of fusing with the work of art includes: dream, play, metaphor, and concept. This state is initially non-verbal as respondents search for words to express emotions. The two respondents in my study had different styles of responding (Weltzl-Fairchild, 1995, p. 24). Cindy was more inclined to respond in an empathetic way. She enjoyed sensing different feelings or moods in abstract works. Cindy was spontaneous and talked about a dream-like state or another world that artists can create. Bob responded on an intellectual level. He seemed self-assured, thinking of concepts and ideas that came to mind when viewing works of art. In this study, both at-risk youth paused and spent time looking in silence, before responding with emotions or ideas. They both felt free to express themselves. Most importantly, they were enthusiastic about verbalizing the artistic statements they intended to convey through their own artwork, which enabled

them to discover their motivation for creating works of art. Cindy and Bob were interested in finding out what it was like living in historical times and were inspired by the techniques and materials that were used during those times.

When trying to assess the value of art in terms of ourselves and society, of course, it is important to know what you consider to be the meaning of art. O'Thearling and Bickley Green (1996) asked 11 at-risk youth the question: what is art? (p. 22). The power to make art was not seen to be within the artist and never within the viewer or society.

The value of personal expression ... housed in art, is the precise avenue to an understanding of oneself and others. Yet, this avenue is not even understood to exist to roughly two-thirds of at-risk youth. None see art within the category of the eye-of-the beholder or determined by society. Approximately a third of the group had no idea of the definition of art and another believed art is within the object itself (If a painting of a table is art, then the art comes from the table itself). (p. 23)

In contrast, Bob found that art is determined by the artist or society, that an artist creates work as self-expression. Bob stated, "the only thing that is important is if I understand my own artwork" (Appendix D, p. 149). He concluded: "Sometimes an artist might not even like his own artwork and someone else will" (Appendix D, p. 154). The purpose of art to Cindy is to communicate a message. For example, the photograph of Eminem, who is seen taking out the garbage, may suggest to Cindy that having a lot of money does not necessarily make life easier or solve a person's problems (Figure 12, Appendix C, p. 138).

Unlike the 11 at-risk students in the study by O'Thearling and Bickley Green (1996), these two at-risk youth defined art in many ways. Bob believes that art is determined by the artist or society. He implied that an artist creates works to please him or herself because he or she enjoys making art, even though other people will inevitably have different views of the artist's work.

To Bob, it does not really matter what the viewer sees, as long as he or she is satisfied with this perception. Bob also said that he does not decide whether artwork is good or bad. Therefore, he may believe that both the artist and society make judgments about the value of art. To Cindy, art is determined more by society than by the artist. She cares about how an artist communicates a message or meaning to an audience and how the public perceives the artist's work. She likes art that has meaning and she wants to convey messages through her own work.

Throughout the interview, it was obvious that the two at-risk youth did not view themselves as powerless to effect a change in their environment. They saw themselves as protagonists in their own stories, unlike the 11 at-risk youth who took part in the study by O'Thearling and Bickley Green (1996, p. 23). Why then is there a contradiction between the findings of O'Thearling and Bickley Green (1996) and the results of this study? The answer consists of the following:

1. The size of the samples were so small in both studies that generalizations about the characteristic ways at-risk youth approach art or aesthetics can only be hypothesized without further research.

2. In the previous study, criticism was developed in response to the self but also in response to "the expressions of others" (p. 20), which may infer that other people such as peers influenced the 11 at-risk youth. In this study, however, the students were not influenced by peers but were influenced by the interviewer's questions.

3. In this study, the students were exposed to a variety of art forms, ranging from prehistoric to non-western, contemporary, and popular culture. In contrast to my study, O'Thearling and Bickley Green's, (1996) inquiry was stimulated through the inspection of art monuments (p. 20).

4. O'Thearling and Bickley Green (1996) focused on how at-risk youth define art while my study addresses another question: How do two at-risk youth respond to art and what considerations should art educators attend to when teaching aesthetics and art criticism to such students?

In an in-depth interview, the two at-risk youth were able to interpret art from multiple perspectives, such as: the artist, the viewer, society, the content, media, art form etc. This study confirms that “... at risk [*sic*] students have limited vocabulary ... Visual images ... are vivid wedges that can stimulate their minds, creating curiosity and questions where none existed before” (O’Thearling and Bickley Green, p. 24). The two at-risk youth used certain terms that are commonly used in their subculture or social group, such as “strange”, “corrupt”, “bling bling”, “West Coast” etc. The meanings of these terms were often unclear in the context of the discussion and needed further clarification. Cindy and Bob practiced using the language of art when talking about the formal qualities of works of art. Cindy was open-minded, examining works that she thought were unusual or work that she would not normally see in her everyday life, such as “Assyrian War Chariot” (figure 9) or “Lei Niho Palaoa” (Figure 11). When Cindy was uncertain how to express herself, she was able to speak up, such as when she asked, “what do you call those types of pictures where you just see what it is?” (Appendix C, p. 130). At times, words were ambiguous. For example, what makes a work “intriguing” was not clearly defined. When Cindy described Pollock’s “Composition” (Figure 10), or the songs by Eminem, she used the words “too corrupt” (Appendix C, p. 135 and p. 138). Although I assume that Cindy may have meant tainted or destructive when talking about Eminem’s songs, she described Pollock’s work as “too depressing” and “too corrupted” (Appendix C, pp. 134 -135).

Both students used the same word in different ways. Cindy seemed to like a work if she considered it “strange” or abnormal, such as “Assyrian War Chariot” (Figure 9). She said, “I like to go for something more strange, so I’d go for the historic one because it’s stuff we don’t see everyday” (Appendix C, p. 133). On the other hand, Bob did not like things to be strange or confusing, such as the message in “A Blind Bluff” (Figure 17). He said, “I want to know what it is ’cause I mean like – it’s just strange” (Appendix D, p. 153).

Both youth were concerned with the formal qualities of a work of art, i.e. line, colour etc. but they understood that the definition of art encompasses

more than just the form. Unlike the participants in the study by O'Thearling and Bickley Green (1996), Cindy and Bob did not consider form and media literally but in a metaphoric way. They asked themselves how the form, i.e. painting, sculpture etc.; art elements, i.e. colour, texture etc.; media, i.e. paint, ink etc.; and tools, i.e. pencil, palette knife etc. affect the mood or the message.

Therefore, the results of this study contradict the findings of O'Thearling and Bickley Green (1996). If the 11 at-risk youth were given more categories or if they had to think of their own answers to the question: "... what is art?" (p. 22), would these respondents have replied in the same way?

Cindy and Bob were interested in knowing what the artists were thinking at the time the works were done. Both spent a longer time looking at a work of art when they did not have to compare it with another. Bob was open to finding out about the historical or cultural contexts of the works of art. As the interview progressed, Cindy began to question these factors as well. Chanda (1998) stressed the importance of social art history or what the work reveals about people during a specific period. Students can be taught to reflect on "(a) the economic or social systems that caused the work to be created, (b) a cultural crisis or triumphs possibly illustrated in the work, or (c) the relationship between the social mood and the artist or work of art" (p. 23). Chanda, (1998, p. 24) believes: "Many teachers still focus on the old structure of art history, using themes, biographies, and chronologies; concentrating on remembering names, dates ... or disseminating oversimplified versions of expert knowledge."

Geahigan (1998, p. 302) said: "Knowledge about the artist and the physical and cultural context in which the work was made is important." There are many ways to look at art. "Critics historically have sought to understand works of art and assess their worth and merit Judgments of value rest upon prior understanding of it and we must first understand a work of art, before we can assess its value" (p. 295). According to Geahigan (1998, p. 302), "... intellectual engagement ... will only occur when someone senses a problem of meaning or value." Cindy and Bob questioned the meaning in the

works they talked about. The two at-risk students had only a limited amount of time to discuss their personal responses but felt free to give their honest reactions to works of art. They both made statements about society through their art and wanted to convey meaning about their own lives to others through the works of art they created. Bob used hands as a symbol to describe the emptiness in life (Figure 4). To Cindy, hands, clouds and fire symbolize how money, power, and respect form part of society (Figure 1).

Looking back at the second part of their interviews, when the two at-risk youth were told to choose, compare, and contrast two works of art, the results may have been different. If the two students had compared related works of art, they may have found commonalities or subtle differences, furthering their understanding of both of the works of art.

Nonetheless, because there was such a contrast between the works the two at-risk youth chose to compare, the two students were able to form opinions about their preferences and think about “contrary opinions” (Geahigan, 1998, p. 305). They needed to support statements about their own interpretations of the works. By contrasting different styles and themes, the works provoked discussion. These two students reacted spontaneously but were able to form opinions and make value judgments.

It is interesting to note that works of art that the interviewer considers “provocative” (Geahigan, 1998, p. 305) may lead to unconventional responses in viewers. “Works that challenge their beliefs about art and their value systems will elicit the interest and attention of students” (Geahigan, 1998, p. 305). The two at-risk youth were more inquisitive about certain works than others. Both participants chose to respond to: (1) “The Great Hall of Bulls” (2) “Bar at the Folie B  g  re” (3) “A Blind Bluff”, (4) “Composition”, (5) “Flowers”, and (6) “Guernica”(see Table 4, p. 95).

Status symbols in art or in popular culture were an issue that came to the forefront and were often “... the subjective basis for their response to a work of art: the ideas, attitudes, beliefs, and values they bring to bear in confronting works of art” (Geahigan, 1998, p. 306).

To Cindy, Eminem is a status symbol within her subculture. She believes the poster could persuade her peers to believe that Eminem is just an ordinary person like everyone else. This finding supports Freedman and Wood's (1999) statement that "almost half of the student responses indicated that popular culture imagery was meant to influence" (p. 135). Both at-risk youth were critical of popular art, especially if they wondered how or why the artist became famous. For example, Bob reacted strongly to "A Blind Bluff" (Figure 17), saying that the work was meant to shock the public and has no message. Bob knew that Jackson Pollock's works were famous because they were exhibited in museums. Furthermore, the only thing that was interesting about Andy Warhol to Cindy was that his works were famous.

Freedman and Wood (1999) found that their sample of teens "... believed that the purposes of images, whether fine art or popular culture, were to depict people or a scene, illustrate a concept or communicate an idea" (p. 134). Although all four of the fine art images had religious, cultural, and /or socio-economic messages, Freedman and Wood's (1999) sample found them to be "mere illustrations of people, events or ideas" (p. 134). In contrast, Cindy and Bob did not respond in a superficial way. For example, Cindy expressed her thoughts about war and peace while responding to "Battle of Alexander at Issus". Bob tried to understand the significance of traditional symbolism in Indian art, when reflecting on "Dancing Ganesha".

The two students were more selective in what they considered to be art than the students Freedman and Wood (1999) interviewed. For example, both youth tried to differentiate artistic styles and asked whether certain categories like crafts or photography are considered art.

Unlike Freedman and Wood's (1999) group of adolescents, Cindy and Bob were able to think of works of art as "part of a social field of meaning", not only "as being in the domain of an individual artist" (p. 134). The two at-risk participants I interviewed did "construct new meaning" as was found to be the case in the study by Freedman and Wood (1999, p. 137). Cindy and Bob felt their artwork had meaning, which was often aimed at influencing

individuals or society. Moreover, Bob and Cindy were very concerned about the impact of art, on themselves, their peers, and especially on society.

CHAPTER EIGHT

ANSWERS TO THESIS QUESTIONS

8.1 REFLECTIONS

Interviews promote communication when they are conversations that allow two people to explore their own ideas and learn from each other's insights.

In order to promote reflective teacher education, a clear conceptual grasp is required of what the process of reflection involves what students might usefully reflect about, and how their reflection is going to be influenced by the nature of the tasks and the kind of context in which they work. (Calderhead, 1989, p. 49)

Answering the thesis question consists of attending to two factors: considering how at-risk youth respond to art as well as considering how to teach aesthetics and art criticism to such youth. Critics interpret art according to their own opinions. Therefore, it is not surprising that the results of this reflexive study are subjective. By interviewing the participants and analyzing the data, I was able to assess the structure, sequencing, and methods of interviewing for this study. I hope that this study will be a useful guide that will help promote the teaching of aesthetics and art criticism to at-risk youth.

8.1.1 How Two At-Risk Youth Respond to Art

The two at-risk youth responded to art by (1) decoding and verbalizing the messages they perceived in the works, (2) interpreting the feelings they sensed were conveyed by the works, (3) getting more interested in the historical and/or cultural significance of the work, (4) recognizing and appreciating the choices of art techniques, and the formal qualities of the works.

It is still not clear whether the responses of these two at-risk youth are typical of other at-risk adolescents and distinct from other adolescents who do not carry this label. Since the term at-risk covers a lot of territory, it would seem that at-risk students share common characteristics with other adolescents.

At the same time, they may have other distinct qualities that set them apart. In addition, they are individuals who face difficult issues in their lives. It seems that without further research, it would be hard to tell whether at-risk youth share similar attitudes towards school, nonconformity, popular culture, and society. It is uncertain whether the views of at-risk youth affect their way of perceiving and reflecting on art.

The two at-risk youth were able to switch stances from talking about formal and representational qualities quite easily, as in the study by Gardner and Gardner (1972). They talked about a variety of other topics while responding. By analyzing the responses of the two at-risk teenagers, emerging themes became apparent: (1) art and artists, (2) formal and technical qualities, (3) historical context, (4) multi-cultural context, (5) modern/contemporary contexts, (6) popular culture, (7) personal responses, and (8) messages about society.

The two participants were eager to engage in discussion about other people's artwork and felt comfortable expressing themselves about their own work. They were both quite opinionated and critical about what they considered important within each work and about art in general. They were cooperative and motivated, which means that they found the discussion relevant, not boring.

Both students expressed that the message behind a work of art was of great importance when interpreting art, referring to the artist's personal views or to issues in society. They engaged the interviewer into discussions about the meaning of art. Although Cindy identified more with abstract/modern works, Bob enjoyed talking about representational/contemporary works of art. Nevertheless, they were both willing to take the time to investigate, interpret, and learn from various forms of art, i.e. drawing, painting, sculpture, photography, jewellery etc. Cindy and Bob also became more interested in learning about the context and times in which the historical and multi-cultural works were created.

The mood in a work of art was important to both at-risk youth since this subject often came out in discussion. The two students, however, discovered that the formal elements, i.e. line, colour, shape, etc., could create the mood in a work of art. When talking about modern art, they reflected on the formal properties or the techniques that appealed to them and how the use of the art elements affected their emotions. For example, Cindy found that two abstract works had totally different moods. To her, Pollock's "Composition" (Figure 10) was depressing while Marc's "Abstract Form" (Figure 8) had a happier mood. Bob liked the fact that Borduas was able to express a dark feeling even though the abstract work was brightly coloured (Appendix D, p. 151).

Cindy and Bob spoke about how their feelings affected their art-making processes. Bob said, "... everyone has their own feelings about art" and that they interpret it in different ways (Appendix D, p. 149). In her own work, Cindy said that she likes to put forth feelings of love. She also realized that her works are about the confusion in society.

The two at-risk youth each had a gloomy view of society. Cindy said, "... I saw that society is not always happy..." (Appendix C, p. 130). In Bob's case, most of his artwork came from:

... being more down and thinking about society – like it's not very happy I mean if I drew this and I was sad while drawing it and someone else saw it and thought it was a really happy picture; they wouldn't even know the half of it. (Appendix D, p. 148)

Expressing beliefs about society may be important to other youth as well. A sixteen year-old, on a museum tour of the Institute of Contemporary Art in Philadelphia, expressed his own sentiment about society. He felt that an artist used his art as an escape from the harsh reality of the real world and that he does the same (Witmer and Borst, 1999, p. 5).

Both students were indecisive in commenting on works of art when they liked both works just as much. At times, the two at-risk youth made assumptions, especially when they were unsure of their responses or were lacking information about the form, technique, or historical context. For

example, Bob assumed that Warhol's "Flowers" (Figure 14) was a collage with a painted background, when it is actually a lithograph. He may have been confused about the differences between an art element, i.e. line, and an art form, i.e. painting, when responding to "Guernica" (Figure 19, Appendix D, p. 159). Cindy assumed that "The Great Hall of Bulls" (Figure 8) was done in caveman style, when it is an actual prehistoric painting on a cave wall. Acknowledging viewers' opinions based on personal taste or personal beliefs is important in art education because it enables people to share different points of view. When students make up information that they believe to be true, however, educators should be available with the correct facts.

What at-risk students learn about art might depend more on association than analysis. It is true that the two at-risk students in this study spoke about status symbols. They seemed to look up to famous people within the art world and within popular culture. Peer pressure within their social group or what they relate to in the media may be contributing factors. In any case, to these two youth, being famous, popular, or well-known was synonymous with being successful within a historical or popular context. Furthermore, the two at-risk youth were more critical of works of art when they considered that the artist was famous. Cindy was impressed by Andy Warhol's fame even though she did not like most of his work whereas Bob asked whether "A Blind Bluff" (Figure 17) contained a message that contributed to the work's status.

Both at-risk youth were open about their art-making processes and were inspired by the work of many artists. Bob was inspired by Jackson Pollock's creative and productive art-making process. When something Bob drew did not turn out as expected, he realized that he could transform the work into something else. "That's what I love about art – because you can just go with your thoughts If it looks like crap, you know I'll keep going and it will evolve into something completely different" (Appendix D, p. 148). Describing his process of drawing "Man's Face" (Figure 6) he explained, "it's just some person I saw in my mind for a second and I thought, aw, that's interesting and I just sort of went with it, you know" (Appendix, D, p. 148). Cindy was

attracted to the brightly coloured abstract works of Kandinsky and Marc. She likes to blend colours and does not want people to look at her work and get lost.

Cindy and Bob tended to compare their art-making processes to that of the artists whose work they had seen. For example, when discussing “Ship” (Figure 16), Bob said that he found working with lines very tedious but was inspired to try to use lines more often in his work (Appendix D, p. 152). He also said that he likes to use a palette knife like Borduas: “it’s the best tool and it makes art so easy compared to using a brush” (Appendix D, p. 151). The details in “Assyrian War Chariot” inspired Cindy (Figure 9). She also said that doing detailed representational work is not her style. Cindy realized that she was more critical of her own work than other artwork she has seen but can learn from others because “ ... other work is more beautiful. I guess and I don’t know – I can learn from them” (Appendix C, p. 131). Both at-risk youth identified with ideas or emotions that they perceived in the works of art. Furthermore, they were articulate about their own intentions, struggles, feelings, dilemmas, and knowledge of art.

Expressing a message and creating significantly meaningful works of art were the most important factors relating to how these two youth responded to art. Concepts and ideas contributed to the way in which the two at-risk youth approached art since they were more engaged in responding to works of art that they considered having significant meanings or messages about society. For example, Cindy chose “Battle of Alexander at Issus” while Bob chose “Guernica” (Figure 19) to talk about in the last part of their interviews. Cindy asked what thoughts were going through the artists’ minds while Bob tried to understand the creative process of producing and exhibiting art. In addition, both youth had specific ideas about what they wanted to express or convey through their own collages, paintings, or drawings.

Many of the messages about society that the two youth tried to convey through their work were also perceived in some of the works that they saw. For example, the topic of money, power, and respect was part of Cindy’s

interpretation of “Emminem” (Figure 12). Bob’s deconstruction of a person’s face may have influenced his understanding of “Guernica” (Figure 14) and the process of Cubism. Cindy and Bob were able to differentiate between the purpose of art according to various cultures and the artists’ intentions. They were able to form opinions, to judge and rate works, according to their perceptions of the purpose and function of art.

Just as two heads are often better than one in thinking through a problem, two languages (visual and verbal) and two perspectives (artist/creator and artist/critic) are better than one when making art. Artists can come to decode their own work, through talking or writing, with precision Perhaps ability to represent ideas and things in visual language separates artists from the rest of the species, and the ability to represent ideas in both visual and verbal languages may separate the artists who are effective communicators from the rest. (Eubanks, 2003, p. 17)

The two at-risk youth showed that they were capable of intelligent and original observations about how art affects society and how their own artistic expression affects their personal views. Both participants were able to benefit by the interviews because the dialogue led them to appreciate art and to take art seriously, as their aesthetic understanding grew deeper. These findings show that certain works of art inspired two at-risk youth, that they disliked others, and were capable of explaining their preferences.

By expressing themselves about art and especially about their own art-making processes, at-risk youth can begin to feel at ease giving their personal opinions. While viewing art, they may begin to reflect on issues about the art world, about society, and about themselves in complex ways.

8.1.2 Considerations for Teaching Aesthetics to At-Risk Youth

In fine arts classes, students are active participants in the learning process rather than passive recipients of information because they are actively engaged in perceiving and creating works of art. Responding to art has proven to help

the two at-risk youth understand and reflect on values and beliefs. It helped them learn to appreciate their own individuality, which helps build self-esteem, inspiring and motivating them to continue making and interpreting art. The two at-risk students were curious about the artists' messages or intentions, questioning their own motivation and personal tastes in terms of art. There may be no right or wrong answer to the question: what is art? Interpretations even vary amongst philosophers. Consequently, at-risk youth should be encouraged to express their own visions, while learning about artists' views.

Learning to make, understand and appreciate art can help at-risk youth gain self-confidence while they master skills they often never knew they had. The teacher who was interviewed for this study shed some light on why art is important to at-risk youth. He said that student artwork, which is displayed in the school, helps boost these youth's self-esteem, by giving them status within their peer group. Exposure is important to many of these youth. Responding to art can lead to clarity of thoughts, feelings, and a sense of pride in valuing one's own accomplishments. By generating discussion around art, at-risk youth get to express their opinions and learn to tolerate other people's opinions when they disagree with them. Although they like to criticize art, at-risk youth can be particularly vulnerable to criticism and positive reinforcement is always the best approach.

I think that vulnerable kids who are at-risk benefit by more right brain activity ... because frequently their artistic side is very, very strong and it's their math and other side that's weak. So, it just gives them a chance to achieve success, and any kind of positive academic or successful experience usually engenders more worth and greater willingness to give more – so we keep it as part of our curriculum. (Appendix E, p. 163)

The interviewer's approach can definitely influence the respondent. The choice of words, questions, interruptions, and pauses make a huge difference. For example, Bob may have responded differently to "A Blind Bluff" (Figure 17) had I paused and not given my opinion abruptly. Nonetheless, Bob agreed

with me, saying that the gold frame around “A Blind Bluff” (Figure 17) is “kind of mocking the whole idea of art and the way people see things” (Appendix D, p. 155).

I hope that this study can help teachers understand what can be expected when at-risk youth respond to art. With higher expectations, teachers can get more feedback from at-risk students; however, they should encourage responses based upon the students’ current set of circumstances and beliefs.

Structure and Sequencing of the Interviews

This study could have been expanded. I could have added a preliminary interview whereby I could have asked the at-risk youth general questions about art: what they would like to know about art and how they feel or think about it. At-risk students may be better able to answer questions that they are familiar with or have confronted before, after having some time to reflect. It would also be helpful to conduct a follow-up interview, in order to clarify unknown topics that may have escaped the interviewer or the participant and that remain in question. Upon reflection, I realize that clarification was needed in many instances. Along with asking the students’ about the reasons for their preferences and why they chose to put certain works of art in pairs, I could have asked them why they discounted certain works altogether. It may have also been helpful to prepare for the interviews by choosing works of art and answering my own questions in advance.

Sometimes, the structure or the sequencing of response activities can affect the learning outcome in aesthetics or art criticism. If I had used Horner’s (2000) journey in the first part of the interview, the respondents may have realized that there are many entry points into a work of art. Using another model to ask questions about the works of art could have led to other insights and imaginative inquiries. If the two at-risk youth had reflected on other artists’ works before analyzing their own artwork, they may have tried to compare their work to the work of these artists. Instead, they shared their unconstrained, intuitive, personal reactions to their own works of art.

Questioning Strategies

1. Preparing many questions that are clear, concise, and unambiguous helps at-risk students focus on a topic and gives them a chance to express themselves in a variety of ways.
2. Avoid asking two or more questions within one question. Embedding questions within a question only leads to confusion.
3. Do not ask leading questions, i.e. questions where the answer is obvious.
4. In aesthetics, open-ended questions are best. They allow the respondent greater freedom of choice in responding and they lead to divergent thinking skills or multiple solutions. It is less useful to ask yes/no questions since students should be encouraged to interpret the works in their own ways.
5. Remember, perceptions may change depending on the viewer's frame of mind, the work of art being viewed, and the environment.
6. Interviews are not classroom lectures. At-risk youth will tune out if you are not direct and concise when speaking to them.
7. Do not answer your own questions. Wait until you hear the respondent's complete answer before exchanging points of view.
8. Do not go off topic or get distracted if the respondent does. Redirect the interview when necessary.
9. Give the respondent time to reflect on the question in silence. A pause is good for both the interviewer and participant to have time to think of what has been said. It also allows the participant to elaborate and allows the interviewer to react or respond with other ideas.
10. At times, deviate from your outline of questions but do not go off on a tangent. If the respondent shows interest in a certain area, go with it. Be consistent but be prepared to change the order of the questions.

11. At-risk youth may make controversial comments or switch topics in mid-sentence, due to distractions. It is useful to use probing questions to help move them beyond their original response or to help keep them on track, i.e. how does that relate to ... ?
12. Encourage the participants to ask questions as well and to try to find the answers themselves. Instead of leading the viewers into vague or confusing questions, it is preferable to urge them to take the lead, to share the direction of the discussion. In an interview about art, becoming “co-inquirers” is useful (Wilks, 1995, p. 36).
13. Questions students ask about the world or themselves within their own works or while viewing the works of well-known artists are very important. If such questions are overlooked, at-risk students may not feel validated in their beliefs, which can lead to self-doubt and low self-esteem. Inquiry can begin from diverse places but should eventually incorporate social and personal perspectives. Some of the questions that these students may ask are: “What is the world like? Why is it the way it What more can I learn from [art]? And what can I say about the world and myself [through art]?” (Walker, 2003, p. 6).
14. Do your research in advance. If the participant asks questions and you do not know the answer, be honest. Rather than giving false information, guide the student to appropriate resources and texts. Discuss the matter when you are more prepared.

Dialogue

Dialogue about art can take many forms. Viewers can exchange memories and associations, while maintaining an internal dialogue with the work itself, as it elicits questions and responses within the viewer. “The internal dialogue within the viewer reveals the very particular perspective from which he or she

looks, and this unique perspective is made explicit through external dialogue” (Wilson-McKay and Monteverde, 2003, p. 45).

Dialogue is effective because it allows people to give immediate and honest feedback. Interviews can make people nervous. Look at the situation as a friendly conversation and be willing to be spontaneous. It is the best way to learn. Get the important questions out right away. This leaves time for dialogue about what attracts or bothers the respondent about the work of art as well as any other topics that come to the respondent’s mind.

It is good to summarize the discussion periodically, taking care to present the opposing perspectives, not just the dominant ideas (Lankford, 1990). An issue-centered approach to dialogic inquiry works well. Typically, at-risk students can be asked to “confront problems of art to try to explain and justify the creation and form of those paintings using as points of reference their own experience with art, value and belief systems, and imaginative and rational aptitudes” (Lankford, 1990, p. 51).

General Considerations

Art teachers can positively influence students who are feeling vulnerable and on the verge of dropping out of high school. Teachers need to realize that they have a role to play in helping motivate at-risk youth to stick with it and to stay in school. Students who are actively learning are making their own meaning and constructing their own knowledge. Therefore, teachers who simply dispense information are not helping students challenge their preconceived notions or revise their worldviews. According to constructivist theory, learning is “an interpretative recursive, building process by active learners interacting with the physical and social worlds” (Twomey and Fosnot, 1996, p. 30).

8.2 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

8.2.1 General Research on At-Risk Youth

Additional studies are needed to clearly identify risk factors and the factors contributing to the decrease in the dropout rate. Studies are also needed to measure the effectiveness of "... current interventions such as the multimillion dollar Stay in School federal program" (Crocker, 2000, as cited in [SCHRC], 2000, p. 15). Just because there are less dropouts, those that do drop out need to be encouraged to use the services that the government is providing. If risk factors are multiplied, how does the layering of risk factors affect the outcome of at-risk youth? Studies are needed to find out how the concept of resiliency can help reduce these risk factors ([SCHRC], 2000, p. 53). Interviews with teachers and administrators who have knowledge and experience working with at-risk youth can be very beneficial. In practical terms, finding ways to get potential dropouts off the streets and into the schools is a challenging task that needs to be pursued.

8.2.2 Further Research on Aesthetic Response and At-Risk Youth

Several teaching models including Feldman's (1970) approach were found to be useful and new models could be developed and investigated in further research:

1. Housen's (1983) stream of consciousness approach, whereby the participants give their own opinions about a work of art without being influenced by a mediator could have been helpful in this study. More research will be able to confirm whether this approach leads to less distractions or interruptions of at-risk youth's aesthetic experiences.

2. Horner's (2000) model, used in the final part of the two students' interviews led to a metaphoric and imaginative way of perceiving art. The two at-risk youth could actually feel that they were part of the works of art. Therefore, they could imagine how it might feel to live in a different time or in an imaginary space when viewing historical or abstract works.

3. “Dialogic looking” whereby participants engage in a multi-level inquiry includes dialogue amongst peers, an internal dialogue and a dialogue with the work itself (Wilson-McKay and Monteverde, 2003, p. 40).

An area of research that needs to be explored is the evaluation of educational reforms that incorporate art programs for at-risk youth. Creative career options should be promoted since many present day careers and businesses require skilled artists.

I hope that this study and others like it will help broaden the scope of research into at-risk youth’s concepts and feelings about art, how they view their own art-making processes, as well as how art can contribute to their lives. Although this thesis clarifies some issues pertaining to at-risk youth and aesthetic response, there should be further research on the following questions:

1. Is there a connection between the way at-risk youth respond to their own works of art and to the works of others?
2. What do different styles and forms of art convey to these students?
3. Does art response contribute to at-risk adolescents’ developmental and educational progress and if so, in which ways?
4. Are there differences between the ways at-risk youth respond to art and other adolescents their age?
5. Do these students’ opinions about art reflect their attitudes towards school and life?

8.3 CONCLUSION

This study finds that within 45-minute interviews, two at-risk youth showed that they have the potential to progress in their understanding of art and in their communication skills. They responded to art in ways that fall under certain topics: (1) art and artists, (2) formal and technical qualities, (3) historical context, (4) multi-cultural context, (5) modern/contemporary contexts, (6) popular culture, (7) personal responses, and (8) messages about society.

The two at-risk youth were able to explore their own identities, through this study. By having to respond to their own personal artwork and the artwork of others, Cindy and Bob discovered that they could make art that refers to their own ideas or feelings while conveying messages about society. Both at-risk youth discussed works of non-western or popular culture in a critical, rather than superficial way. For example, they talked about symbolism when expressing their understanding of many cultures, including their own.

Cindy and Bob wanted to understand what different artists thought and how these artists' ideas and feelings might have influenced their work. The two at-risk youth realized how an artist might know or feel much more than he or she is able to say in words. They were generally concerned with the visual impact of art as a means of communication.

Seeing artists' works inspired Cindy and Bob in their own creative processes. Both of these students learnt more about art, about society, and about themselves through their aesthetic experiences. They concluded that their own artistic style could be different from others and still have value. Valuing one's own abilities can translate into higher self-esteem.

At times, I tried to put myself in the position of the two at-risk participants. Trying to perceive art from their perspectives, helped me relate to them on their level. Educators who want to include aesthetics and art criticism in their art curriculum should challenge students to take new directions when perceiving and reflecting on art. Through discussing art from multiple points of view, the two at-risk youth were able to gain more appreciation for elements in the artwork that they may have overlooked. I learnt that when a teacher acts as a mentor: motivating, giving advice, encouraging students' ideas, gathering and supplying resources, he or she provides the support that many at-risk youth rarely ask for but really need.

TABLE 1-TOTAL AMOUNT OF REPRODUCTIONS SHOWN

	TITLE	ARTIST AND COUNTRY OF ORIGIN	STYLE AND FUNCTION
1	The Great Hall of Bulls	Unidentified Lascaux, France	Paleolithic Art Symbolic
2	Assyrian War Chariot	Unidentified Assyria	Prehistoric, B.C. Symbolic
3	Still Life With Goldfish	Henri Matisse France	Fauve
4	Bar at the Folie Bérgère	Édouard Manet France	Impressionism
5	A Buddhist Altarpiece	Unidentified India	Historical, A.D. 800 Religious/Symbolic Sirpur, Madhya Pradesh
6	Dancing Ganesha	Unidentified India	Historical, 16th century Religious/Symbolic Karnataka
7	Lei Niho Palaoa	Unidentified Polynesia	Historical/19th century Craft/Ceremonial
8	Battle of Alexander at Issus	Albrecht Altdorfer Bavaria	Classicism, 16th century
9	Ship	Unidentified	Representational

10	Points in a Bow	Wassily Kandinsky Russia	German Expressionism
11	Abstract Form	Franz Marc Germany	German Expressionism
12	Guernica	Pablo Picasso Spain	Cubism
13	Chant de Fête	Paul Émile Borduas Canada	Automatism
14	Composition	Jackson Pollock United States	Abstract Expressionism
15	Flowers	Andy Warhol United States	Pop Art
16	Velocipede	Don Proch Canada	Postmodern
17	A Blind Bluff	Cassius Marcellus Coolidge United States	Early 20th century Fine Art/ PopCulture
18	Emminem	Unidentified	Contemporary Pop Culture
19	Dragon Ball	Unidentified	Contemporary Pop Culture

TABLE 2

**CINDY'S CHOSEN PAIRS OF REPRODUCTIONS
AND HER PREFERENCES**

*** = Preference**

= No Preference

1	A Buddhist Altarpiece		Points in a Bow	*
2	The Great Hall of the Bulls		Abstract Form	*
3	Assyrian War Chariot	*	Bar at the Folie B�rg�re	
4	A Blind Bluff	*	Composition	
5	Lei Niho Palaoa		Guernica	
6	Emminem	*	Flowers	
7	Battle of Alexander at Issus	*	Still Life With Goldfish	

TABLE 3

**BOB'S CHOSEN PAIRS OF REPRODUCTIONS
AND HIS PREFERENCES**

1	Flowers	*	Guernica	
2	The Great Hall of Bulls		Chant de F�te	*
3	Bar at the Folie B�rg�re	*	Ship	
4	A Blind Bluff		Composition	*
5	Dancing Ganesha		Velocipede	*

TABLE 4

COMMON CHOICES BETWEEN CINDY AND BOB

CINDY

BOB

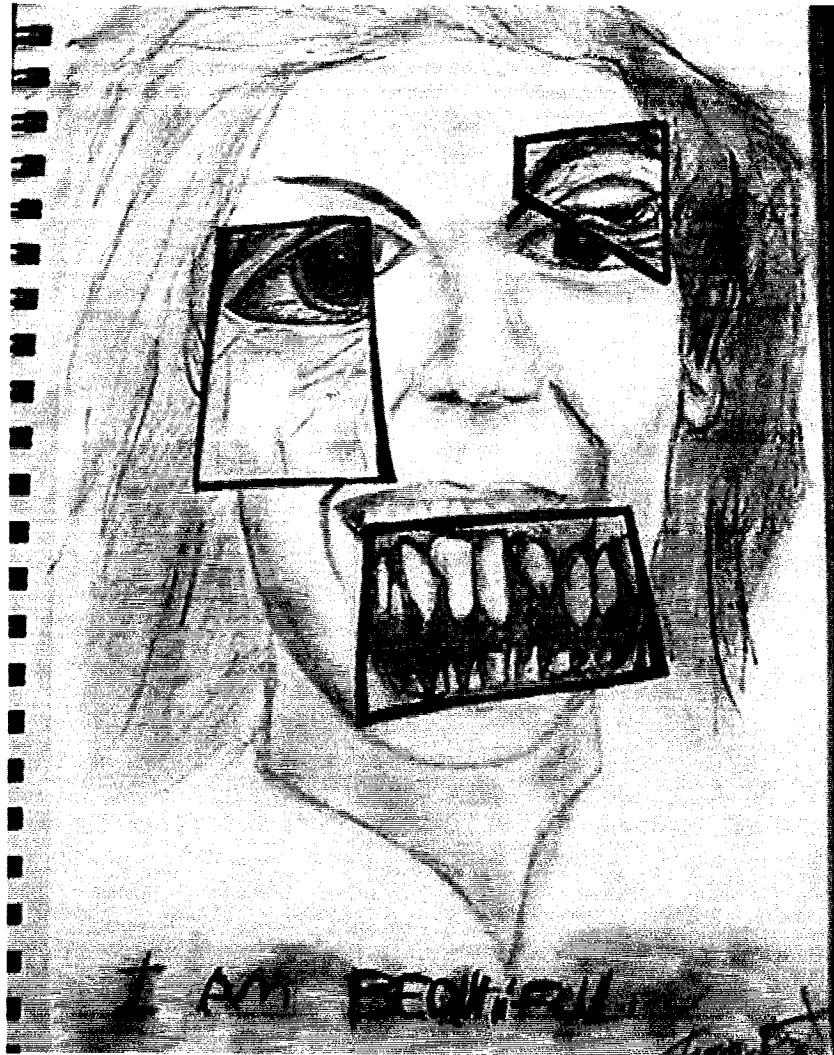
1	The Great Hall of Bulls	The Great Hall of Bulls
2	Bar at The Folie B�rg�re	Bar at The Folie B�rg�re
3	A Blind Bluff	A Blind Bluff
4	Composition	Composition
5	Guernica	Guernica
6	Flowers	Flowers

FIGURES

PERSONAL WORKS OF ART



(Figure 1) Cindy's "Money, Power, Respect"



(Figure 2) Bob's "Beautiful"



(Figure 3) Cindy's "Untitled Mixed Media"



(Figure 4) Bob's "Choose Your Own Emptiness"

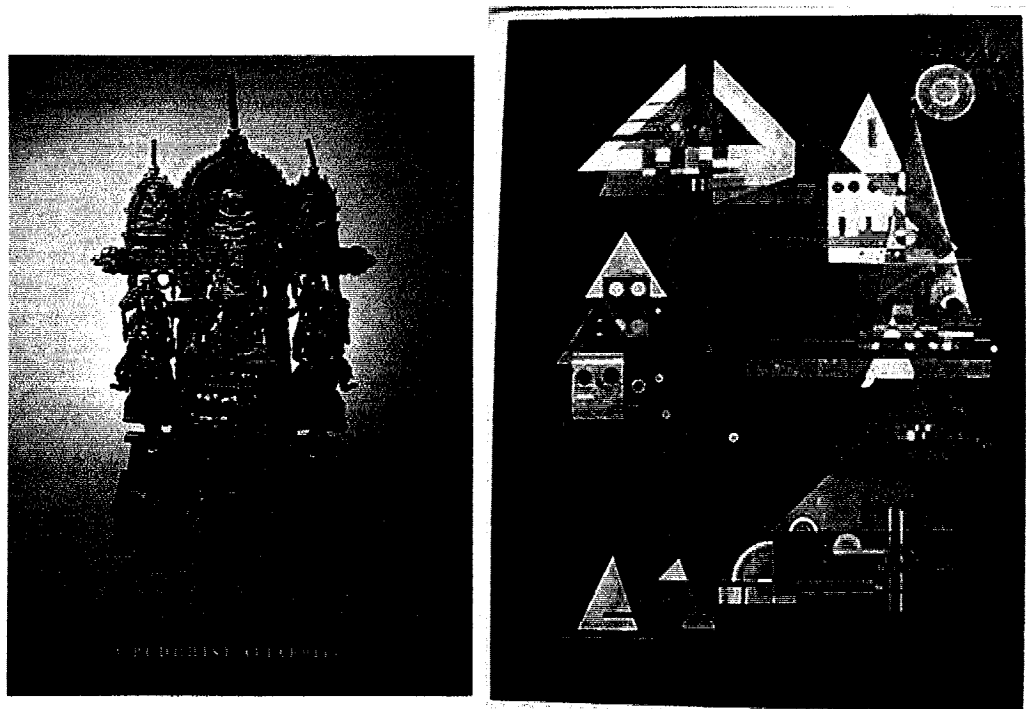


(Figure 5) Cindy's "Untitled Abstract Painting"



(Figure 6) Bob's "Man's Face"

CINDY'S PAIRS



A Buddhist Altarpiece – 800 A.D. Points in a Bow – Wassily Kandinsky

(Figure 7)



The Great Hall of Bulls – Lascaux, France, 15,000 -13,000 B.C.



Abstract Form – Franz Marc

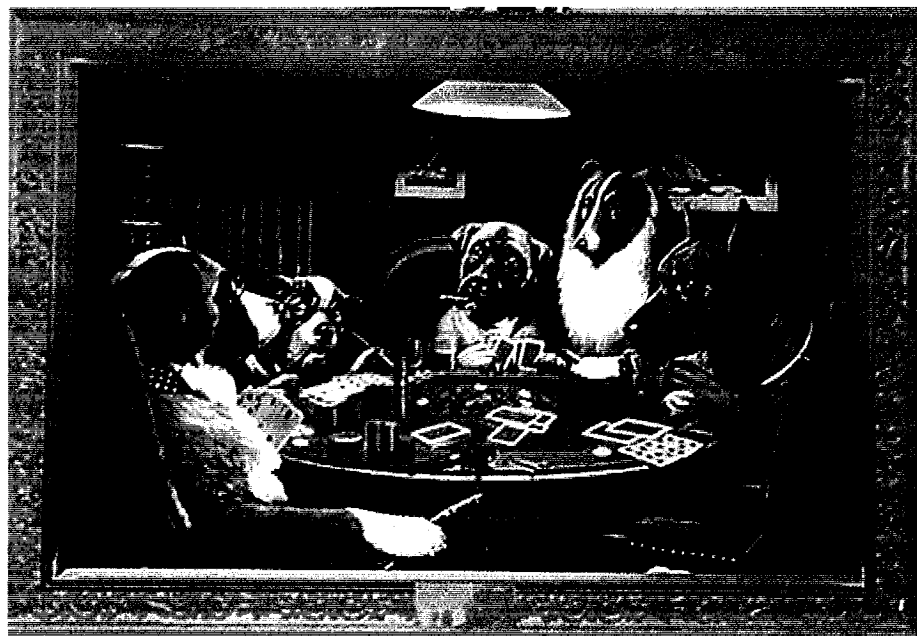
(Figure 8)



Assyrian War Chariot – Ancient Iraq



Bar at the Folie Bèrgère – Édouard Manet
(Figure 9)



A Blind Bluff – Cassius Marcellus Coolidge

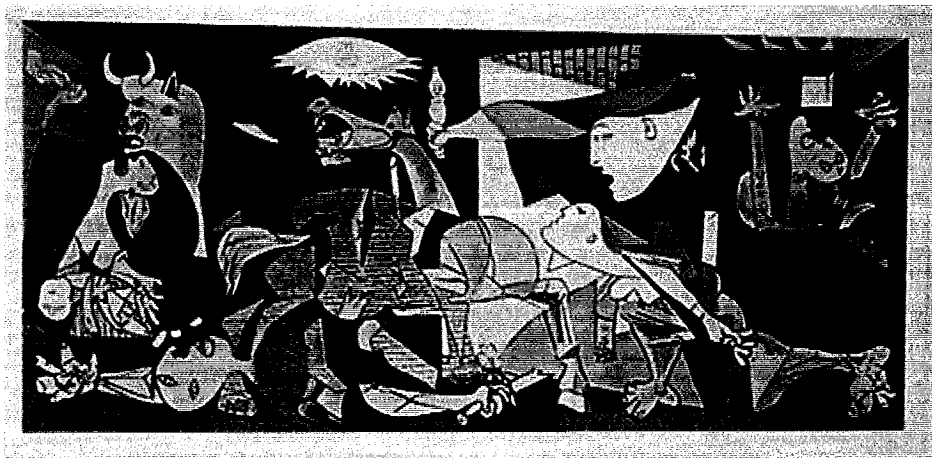


Composition – Jackson Pollock
(Figure 10)



LEI NIHO PALAOA

Lei Niho Palaoa – Polynesia

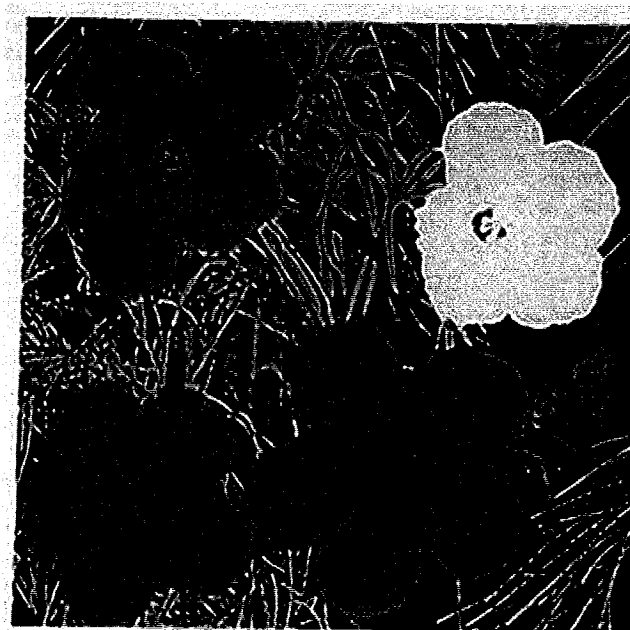


Guernica – Pablo Picasso

(Figure 11)



Emminem – Unidentified Photographer



Andy Warhol
The Warhol 20th Anniversary Book (1980) New York, NY

Flowers – Andy Warhol
(Figure 12)

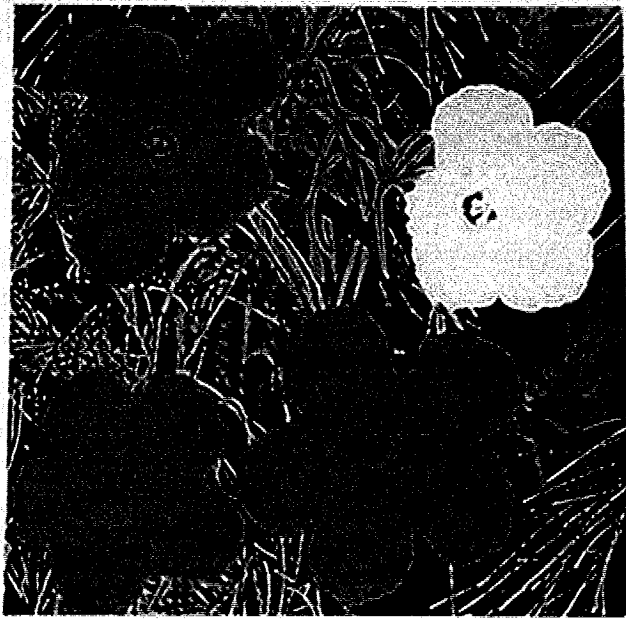


Battle of Alexander at Issus – Albrecht Altdorfer



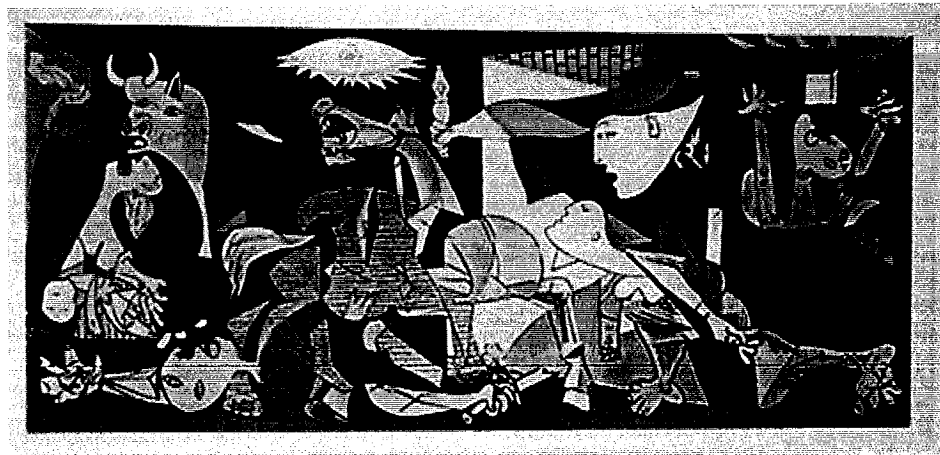
Still Life with Goldfish – Henri Matisse
(Figure 13)

BOB'S PAIRS



Andy Warhol
Flowers. Screenprint on paper, 1967. 11 x 14 in. New York.

Flowers – Andy Warhol

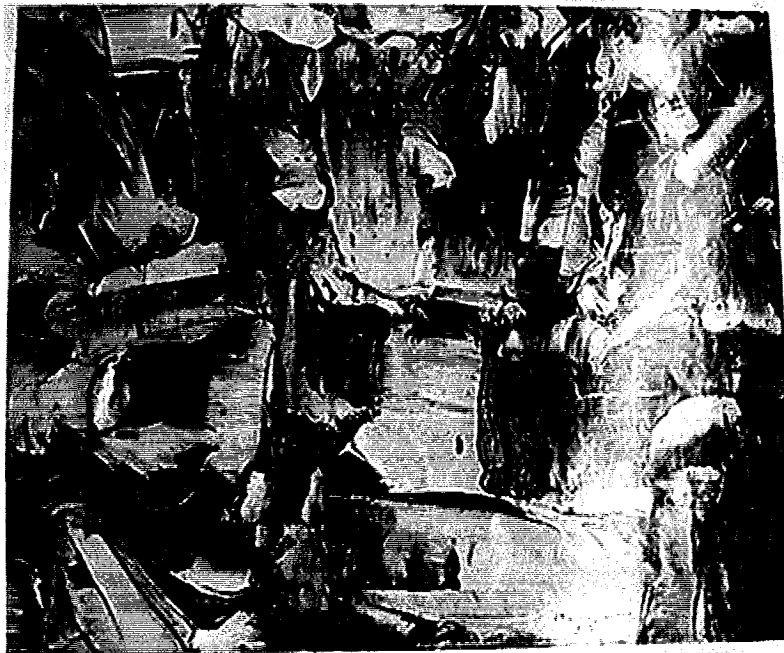


Guernica – Pablo Picasso

(Figure 14)



The Great Hall of Bulls – Lascaux, France, 15,000 -13,000 B.C.

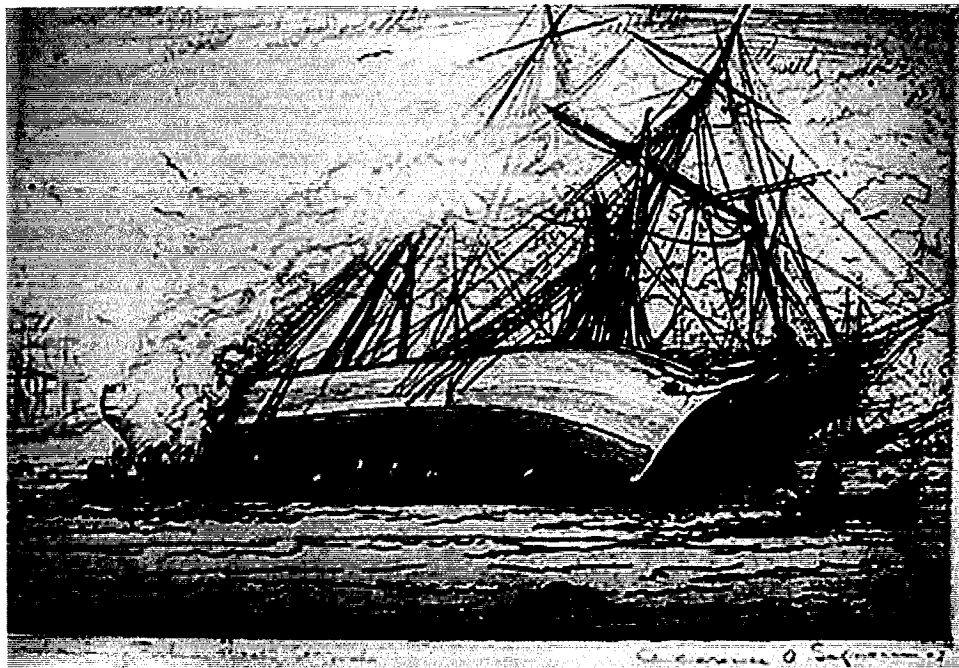


Chant de Fête – Paul Émile Borduas

(Figure 15)



Bar at the Folie Bèrgère – Édouard Manet



Ship – Unidentified Artist (Image de L'Art Secondary 5)

(Figure 16)

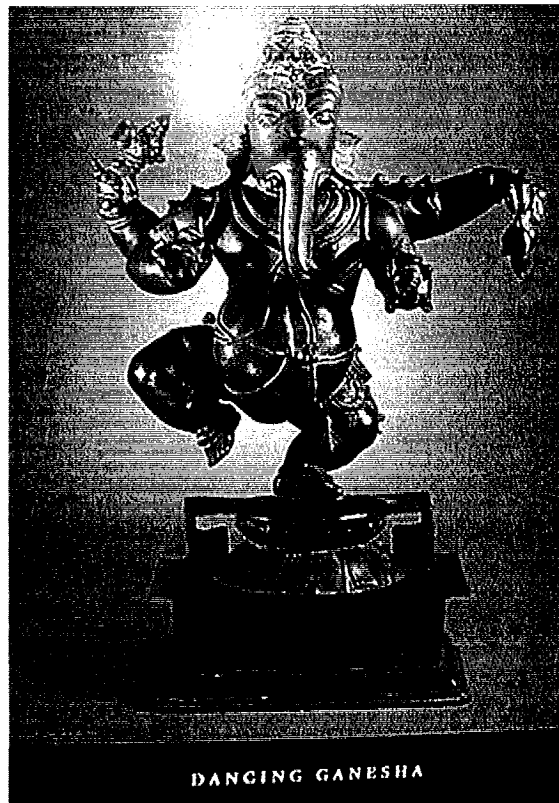


A Blind Bluff – Cassius Marcellus Coolidge



Composition – Jackson Pollock

(Figure 17)



Dancing Ganesha – Unidentified Artist, India



Velocipede – Don Proch

(Figure 18)

FINAL JOURNEY



Cindy's Choice: Battle of Alexander at Issus – Albrecht Altdorfer



Bob's Choice: Guernica – Pablo Picasso

(Figure 19)

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APPENDIX A

CONSENT FORM TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

This is to state that I agree to participate in a program of research conducted by Judy Dimentberg as part of her Master of Art Education research under the supervision of Professor David Pariser at Concordia University.

A. PURPOSE

I have been informed that the purpose of the research is as follows: to gain an understanding of the relationship between art-making and aesthetic response through an interview at an alternative high school.

B. PROCEDURES

I have been informed that the research will be conducted one Friday afternoon at 1:15 - 2:00 p.m. during the month of February at ----- High School, in the art classroom. I understand that I will be asked to schedule a date in accordance with the art teacher/researcher.

I understand that during the forty-five minute interview, the participant's verbal responses will be recorded on audiotape. I also understand that the participant's name and identity will be concealed and that the confidentiality will be secured through the following methods: by using pseudonyms in any published or unpublished written research that will derive from this study.

C. CONDITIONS OF PARTICIPATION

1. I understand that I am free to withdraw my consent and discontinue my participation at anytime without negative consequences.
2. I understand that my participation in this study is CONFIDENTIAL (my identity will not be revealed in the study results).
3. I understand that the data as well as my works of art (the works that the participant brings to the interview) may be photographed and published.
4. I understand the purpose of this study and know that there is no hidden motive of which I have not been informed.

I AM OF LEGAL AGE, EIGHTEEN YEARS OR OLDER; AND, AFTER CAREFULLY STUDYING THE ABOVE, I UNDERSTAND THIS AGREEMENT. I FREELY CONSENT AND AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY.

Name of the Participant: _____

Signature: _____

Witness Signature: _____

Date: _____

APPENDIX B

Sample Multi-Media Art Lesson Plan

Teacher: Judy Dimentberg

Theme: Communication

Concept: Hands can communicate formal (known) messages through sign language or informal messages through body language. These meanings tend to vary between cultures and sub-cultures. Nevertheless, some hand gestures symbolize the same kind of ideas in most peoples' minds, such as an outstretched hand being equated with stopping or a clenched fist, associated with power or strength.

I Drawing Exercise: Individual Work

Procedure: Using the technique of contour drawing, create two different hands gestures and think of what they might symbolize to you and to others.

Media: You have a choice of pencil or pen and ink.

Criteria: You must use the technique of contour drawing

- a) Vary hand positions. (Try different finger positions, transitions in open to closed positions)
- b) One position should be facing inward, the other outward.
- c) Optional: One can be holding something.

II Motivation: Individual and Cooperative work, oral and written response

Concept: What do each of your hand drawings express?

Procedure: Write this down on the sticky side of your post-it notes and attach, face down to each of your drawings

Walk or lean over to the person on your right and write a comment or word on the post-it note that explains what their closest hand gesture might express to you. Walk or lean over to the person on your left and do the same thing.

Next, come back to your original drawing. There should be a word or comment on each post-it note. Were these words or comments similar to yours? Keep your post-it notes with your work until the final critique.

III Art Expression: Partner Work

Procedure: Choose a partner and cooperate. You will be working on a multi-media art project, incorporating some of the hands along with other media, in order to convey a message.

Step 1. Decide together on a message and 2 - 4 hands to use in the project. The hand positions may inspire the message or the message may lead you to choose certain hands.

Step 2. Discuss different messages, causes or concerns you would like to convey. Some examples of topic areas could be: the environment, religion, politics, education, health, science, technology, sports or leisure activities, friends or any other topics.

Step 3. Cut out the hands you have chosen to use in your project and write down a comment about the message you have agreed to try and express.

Step 4: Before choosing the materials to complete your multi-media project, read and follow the criteria and tips. If you have any questions just ask.

IV Criteria:

- Completely fill in the negative and positive space (using either areas of colour, pattern, magazine or newspaper textures, lettering or images, ink wash or other graphic medium). N.B. Images that are chosen should be related and help convey your overall message.
- Up to two words may be used (drawn, painted or cut out letters).
- You must use two or more types of media.

V Tips:

- Harmonize areas by blending transitions or medium, values and textures unless there is a specific reason why you want to create a clash or clashes.
- Avoid using extraneous materials or overloading the composition with imagery that does not relate to the meaning.
- Cooperate with your partner. Establish a plan before beginning but leave room for flexibility, creativity and spontaneity.

Step 5. Now choose what media you will need to complete your work and decide how to proceed with your partner.

VI Media Choices: Paint, ink (brush or pen), pencil, coloured pencils, crayons, markers, newspapers, and magazines

APPENDIX C

TRANSCRIPT OF CINDY'S INTERVIEW

PART I

PERSONAL RESPONSE TO ONE'S OWN WORKS OF ART

First Personal Work

Interviewer: Okay so, thanks for coming today which one would you like to talk about?

Participant: The "Money, Power, Respect"

I: All right. So, where did you create this work?

P: In school and I had a partner that helped me. We put a lot of our ideas together and we came up with this.

I: And so, do you want to describe the techniques that you used?

P: Well, ah. First okay, "the money". There's a guy in the corner here who's carrying money. It goes to power. The "power" would represent the fire and stuff and how fire has a lot of power and ah "respect" would be the two clouds in the middle whose two hands are joining together. That's how I describe this. Anything else?

I: Well that's more like the message behind the work - so let's talk about the message then. You were talking about the clouds and fire and words. Do they have meaning separately or is it all together? Do they need to be together or is it separate components that have separate meanings?

P: Separate meanings.

I: Can you describe why you chose that?

P: O.K. Well, I listen to rap music and usually they talk about money, power, respect and that's what gave me the idea to do this; how this is our everyday stuff.

I: You mean the everyday stuff we deal with in society ... and there's some very interesting techniques that you used here, such as painting and collage. Were those your ideas? How did you get the idea and where did you start?

P: I started with “respect” which brings peace...it’s a light colour and then “money” which is sort of a dark thing. I decided to paint black around it and the “power”. The fire I guess represents the power. I really ...

I: So the colours and the shapes come together to symbolize what you are trying to say ... and what about in the corner, the man? I mean he has, there’s definitely ...

P: He has the money and the power (pause) but does he have the respect?

I: Before, when you first made this, there was a car on his back representing the power too.

P: Him carrying the car is like power.

I: Okay and it’s very interesting and also ...

P: The colours of the flames too ...

I: Uhummm (pause) and it’s like burning away the money or burning away the power and respect.

P: It’s sort of taking away the respect of life, society. Money’s like taking power and so is fire...

I: ... and the hands, what do they represent?

P: Just closeness. This one with the fingers crossed is just like for rap. They do a sign. It means West Coast.

I: Very interesting.

P: My partner decided to do that.

I: Okay. So, you worked with a partner and your partner did a part and you did a part?

P: Yeah. We put our heads together.

I: Okay. Are you happy with this work?

P: Yeah, I like it. It’s an interesting topic and the hands are beautiful. I love the fire and the flames. If only the guy would have the car on his back, then you would see the picture more.

I: Oh, what happened to the car?

P: I lost it.

I: Oh. It fell off. Okay.

Second Personal Work

I: Okay, when did you do this work?

P: This year.

I: You did this in class...

P: Okay, with this picture, this collage, I was trying to describe society or even myself and stuff like the anger. It all starts off with the anger and then moves on to confusion until like the dreaming world.

I: The people who are sleeping and the faces...the way they are – is that the dream?

P: On the right side you'll see a white couple and underneath them, they'll have a white child – oh no, yeah okay. Hold on, the white couple would have a black child, on top – and on the black couple's side, they have a white child. On top there's this couple dreaming together and then you'll see the dreaming world ... Sort of, I don't know ...

I: Okay. There's here I think references to society just like in your other picture. Does that interest you a lot – to talk about ideas in society or is it more personal?

P: It's both; it's mostly society though.

I: Okay what do you think represents what you feel as opposed to what society makes you feel or what you think about society? Which parts of it I mean are most about you or are personal?

P: The part about me would be the wolf ... because I'm Native Indian and the wolf really inspires me with the dream world. I'm really dreamy and I have a lot of faith and hope – and the couples together ... really that's what I look for ... love, and I try to put that out more – and racism too is a thing for me. I hate racism and I like to put blacks and whites together ... and here down below you'll see like children ... blacks and whites.

I: Very interesting. I wouldn't have noticed that but now that you talk about it, I see it more and more. There's also a lot of very interesting painting that's going on around it. The painting and the colours, how do they influence the work?

P: Well, I try to go with the pictures and bring out the colours from the pictures and move it on to the (how can I say that?)

I: The outskirts?

P: Yeah, outskirts. I try to blend all the colours together that come from the pictures.

I: So you work with the colours in the images and you make them ...

P: I find that very important.

I: Very interesting and there's some ...

P: Some writing.

I: Yeah. Is that what it is?

P: Yeah, writing ... I don't ... I shouldn't have done that, now that I see it.

I: Why?

P: Because writing on pictures shouldn't be done. If it didn't have the writing, I find it would be more ... beautiful.

I: But what about the messages that you were trying to get across. Do you think that ...?

P: Putting the words down ...

I: Helps with the message as opposed to just being beautiful?

P: I think that's why I did that. I wrote the message for people to understand. I didn't want them to look at it and be lost and not understand.

I: And the message that's in there is sort of blurry. Yeah, so is it specific words or a specific message, or is it just for someone to interpret in their own way?

P: Someone to interpret in their own way.

I: Okay, like writing on the wall.

P: Yeah, exactly.

I: Very interesting. We have one more work that you brought in. How would you describe this work?

Third Personal Work

P: This one's complicated. I did this last year.

I: Okay.

P: I guess I put all my favorite colours together, colours that would look beautiful. I guess it just brought something out (pause) like happiness and then I just thought about society again...and I saw that society is not always happy and people don't always see happy colours, so that's why I put the black – messy black 'cause black is dark and darkness is messy and confusing, so I guess that's why I did that.

I: Do you often paint in this style?

P: Yeah often. I love abstract pictures where there's trees and stuff. I don't like know. I guess I like when people can look at something and guess what it is.

I: Okay and this particular work was it inspired by something or was it just from your imagination or because you did this in school? Was there an idea you were following behind?

P: No, just my imagination. I just start with something and I finish it off. You know?

I: Okay, did you learn anything about art or your own process in art making through this?

P: Textures and different colours and how two colours can make a certain colour.

I: For instance, which colours would you say that you learned about?

P: Oh, I don't remember, let's see.

I: So if somebody else was to look at this work, how would you think they would describe it? What do you think somebody else would get from this work?

P: Well, people are so used to seeing pictures. What do you call those types of pictures where you just see what it is?

I: Representational?

P: Yeah. They're so used to seeing stuff like that so ... I don't know. They'd think it's just a big mess.

I: But, to you it means something.

P: Yeah it means something to me. I really do like it.

I: You do like it.

P: Yeah. I love what I do.

I: Oh. Great-umm. So, we were saying that the other work brought up things about society. Is there anything in abstract work like this that would bring up something in society – an issue, or is it just shapes and colours?

P: I guess it can show how people can be really confused.

I: Okay, good.

P: That's what abstract does to me. That's why I love it 'cause it, just, I don't know.

I: Is there something in this picture that you're afraid to see or don't want to see or do you like everything about the picture? You can choose anyone that you want amongst the three that you did.

P: Like what I did that I didn't like?

I: Yeah, like something that popped into your head after you did it – something that you would like to reflect on that you see now?

P: Yeah, this one. I wrote the words ... I wish I would never have done that.

I: When you look at the work of art, do you look at it differently when it's your own work or when it's someone else's work. Are you more critical of your own work?

P: More of my own work.

I: Oh, why is that?

P: 'Cause other work is more beautiful. I guess and I don't know – I can learn from them.

PART II

RESPONDING TO REPRODUCTIONS IN PAIRS

1. “A Buddhist Altarpiece”– Unidentified Artist and “Points in a Bow”– Wassily Kandinsky

I: Okay. Well, now we’re going to look at other people’s work, so just hold on...Oh. So as I was telling you before, we’re going to walk around and I have sets of two different reproductions. They are all in a different style and so you’re going to choose from two of them. Tell me which one appeals to you more than the other and you can maybe talk a bit about why you chose this one as opposed to the other one.

P: I choose the second one here because...

I: Kandinsky?

P: Kandinsky?

I: That’s the artist.

P: Okay. Because it’s more of an artwork than ‘A Buddhist altarpiece’ ’cause like I love the painting and the colours and that one’s a little too plain for me. About this one, I like the girls and how they’re placed and stuff and trying to figure out why they are here but that one’s a lot better because it’s bringing me into their world and trying to figure out what they’re thinking and like I said before, I like the colours.

I: The colours are really appealing to you in the Kandinsky one.

P: Yeah

2. “The Great Hall of Bulls” and “Abstract Form” – Franz Marc

I: Okay. What about these? There are two here: “The Large Hall of Bulls” and this one by Franz Marc, which is a composition.

P: Of course the abstract – Franz Marc. The beautiful colours – just trying to figure out what he was thinking, it’s like a very happy picture.

I: Interesting. What makes it happy to you?

P: The colours.

I: Which colours?

P: The pink, the red, the purple. The pink going into the green – the green going into yellow. It's just all colourful.

I: Let's go on.

P: You don't want to know about that one?

I: Oh yes, I do want to know about this one.

P: It's nice but it's too boring. It doesn't have that many colours, it's strange.

I: Do you know anything about this painting?

P: No, nothing at all.

I: Do you know which came before in history?

P: I thought that one came before because it looks more historic and caveman style.

I: Okay, good observation because it is a caveman painting on a cave wall.

P: Ooh.

I: After knowing that it is a cave painting, you still prefer your first choice?

P: Yeah 'cause that's something I would put up on my wall.

3. "Assyrian War Chariot" – Unidentified Artist and "Bar at the Folie B erg re" –  douard Manet

I: Okay there's two works here. One of them is the "Bar at the Folie B erg re" by  douard Manet and the other one is the "War Chariot". It's also a prehistoric work on a wall.

P: With this one, the  douard Manet, it's got a lot of colours and everything but it's too normal. I like to go for something more strange, so I'd go for the historic one because it's stuff we don't see everyday and with the lady there, this is stuff we always see. The colours are nice but I'll go for the historic one.

I: Is that because it intrigues you? You want to know more about it or it's something about the shape and composition?

P: I don't want to know more about it.

I: But what is it about this one that you prefer to the other one? Just because it's not everyday ...

P: Ash. It looks like it was done on a stone or something. I find that interesting and how it's all detailed.

I: Does that have to do with something you're interested in making in art?

P: Yeah it inspires me.

4. "A Blind Bluff"– Cassius Marcellus Coolidge and "Composition" – Jackson Pollock

I: Okay good. So here, we have two works of art as well.

P: This is also hard – because I like the dogs. It's kind of funny to see the dogs playing poker and the colours are beautiful and all but this abstract one doesn't inspire me as much as the dogs.

I: Really?

P: Really.

I: It's funny because before you were saying that the abstract inspired you a lot - so what makes it uninspiring then?

P: I don't know. I don't like this one too much it's...

I: What about it don't you like?

P: It's a little too depressing, I think. I don't know, it's a little "not happy" and I like to see happy stuff.

I: Do you think that it was easier for the artist to make this one or the other one?

P: I think the abstract one was easier because they're just free-styling it.

I: And the other one?

P: The "Dogs" ... it takes longer ... it's like you have to plan it before you draw it. You have to know the colours and it's complicated.

I: How do you think the artist decided what they were going to make?

P: I have no idea.

I: Do you think the artist pre-planned their decision in making this?

P: Yeah. I wonder why he did It ... dogs playing poker. I don't know What was he thinking? I want to know.

I: Do you find it humorous at all?

P: Yeah, very humorous. I love it. It's happy.

I: So, do you think it's important for an artist, for you now, since you did say you do have an appreciation for abstract work ... Do you think it's important for a work to have a lot of pre-planning or is it just as valid to do something spontaneous?

P: It's just as valid to do something spontaneous.

I: Oh, but here you did not choose the abstract for different reasons.

P: 'Cause I prefer the "Dogs".

I: Oh, because of the humour?

P: Yeah.

I: Oh, great!

P: Something about my work ...

I: Okay, sure.

P: With my work, I like to do depressing stuff but turning it into happiness.

I: And how do you do that?

P: I'll start it off. I'll put bright colours and then I'll add a little bit of darkness to it, just to show it's not all happy, it's also sad.

I: So It's not all happy and gay ...

P: This one I find a little bit too corrupted.

I: Oh. You noticed that about this artist – Jackson Pollock. That's very interesting because he did have a difficult life and he did drink a lot so it's good that you picked that up from the work. It's very interesting.

5. “Lei Niho Palaoa” – Unidentified Artist and “Guernica” – Pablo Picasso

P: Oh, this one. I think I like both of them, but it's not really art. It's just a picture.

I: Well, they're all photographs, reproductions of artwork. None of them are real art by the way but they are photographs of real works of art.

P: When I think of art, I think of painting and not pictures – not taking pictures – paintings and drawings.

I: But let's just try and clarify this. We're not looking at the photograph as a work of art. We're looking at what's inside of it, so they photographed something in there which is I think a Native ... necklace made out of bone and material.

P: Well, I like both of them.

I: It's Polynesian from Hawaii.

P: I like the abstract one too.

I: You like both of them.

P: Yeah I like both of them

I: This one is by Pablo Picasso.

P: Picasso?

I: Have you heard of him?

P: Yeah, I like his stuff. It's interesting.

I: Would you be able to ...

P: Make something of it?

I: Yes.

P: To make something of it - it would take time.

I: Would you be able to make something of this work right now by interpreting it or saying something about it – what do you think of it?

P: Ah ... I think he thinks too much.

I: What makes you say that?

P: Ah ... I don't know ... because there's a monster or something like that with a weird head – one eye in the middle and one way on the side. He does his pictures like ... the face is sort of messed up and I don't know why I said he thinks too much.

I: You think he analyzes too much. He takes too many aspects of society and tries to distort them?

P: Yeah ... ummm ... I'm speechless right now.

I: Well, if you knew a little bit about the background of the painting, it might help you. It was done to represent the Second World War¹ the fighting and the destruction and he does use a lot of bulls' heads. That's more or less a bull's head... but they do look very monstrous.

P: The people look like they are getting tortured.

I: That's right, they do. It was interesting about what you said before ... the first one, the Polynesian one, not being a work of art. What makes you say it's not really ... besides it being something that you wear?

P: Oh well. It is a work of art but I would think of art ... it's art cause it's created into a necklace and we don't usually see that and I like that it's different.

I: Would you say that fashion or things that you wear or people design are just as valid as works of art than as say a painting by an artist, a fine artist?

P: Well, me I don't really consider like clothing and stuff like that art.

I: Okay, it's different.

P: Yeah, it's a different type of art.

I: It's in a different category.

P: Yeah, it's like designing.

¹ I later corrected myself and informed her that it really represented the bombing of the Basque village of Guernica during the Spanish Civil War, although it was painted during WWII.

6. “Emminem” – Photographer and “Flowers” – Andy Warhol

I: Right, okay, good. There are two works here. They’re very different as well. Which one would you like to talk about more than the other?

P: I guess the “Emminem”. First I’ll talk about the way he writes his name.

I: Okay.

P: ... And how he’ll write the “E” backwards like why does he do that? It’s interesting and where did he come up with the name “Emminem”, him and himself. He’s a singer and everything and here he is carrying garbage. It’s not something a singer should do and it’s good that he can put himself down to that level just to show people that he’s not just a singer – that even though he has a lot of money, he’s a person himself and that’s what I like.

I: Okay.

P: Does that make any sense?

I: Yes it does... he’s not just a star to you. You can see from this image that he’s like an everyday person.

P: He has problems just like everyone else.

I: And you like his music?

P: Not really.

I: Not really?

P: He’s too corrupt.

I: Okay, but this image appeals to you.

P: Yeah, ’cause a lot of kids my age listen to that and they should understand – they should see this picture and see that it’s not just him having the money and being as they say “bling bling” having the car and stuff like ... he’s also a guy just like the rest of us. I don’t know ...

I: Okay, so that’s how you view this picture and the other one, do you ...

P: I don’t like it.

I: No, what don’t you like about it?

P: The orange and the pink fluorescent colours? No, it's not nice.

I: No?

P: No.

I: Do you know anything about the artist?

P: Yeah, we studied about him and I never really liked anything he did.

I: ... By Andy Warhol? We also saw a movie about his life ... you may ... remember and so you didn't like any of his work?

P: I thought the only thing that was interesting was printing all the coca-cola cans – like that was interesting. I liked that 'cause it was so famous ... I guess.

I: ... And so it impresses you when someone becomes famous and when someone makes a big deal about this person. Besides that, when you look at this particular image, what doesn't appeal to you? Is it the fluorescent colours?

P: It's boring. It's empty. I don't know. It's just flowers and grass.

I: Oh. There's no particular meaning for you in this picture.

P: Exactly. I like to look for meanings in pictures.

7. “Battle of Alexander and Issus” – Albrecht Altdorfer and “Still Life with Goldfish” – Henri Matisse

I: Okay, good. So, we have one more set of pictures and there's two here. One is by Matisse and one is by an artist called Albrecht Altdorfer. Okay.

P: This one is all right. I like that one cause it's complicated. It's like something new every time you look at it. It's not boring. It's really interesting. It's deep. It's medieval. I like that.

I: So you said a lot of things and what was the main important aspect of this picture that really intrigues you?

P: How, like I can look at it every time and can see something different. I'll see something new. I like that.

I: Okay, and the other one, the Matisse?

P: It looks like a young child drew it.

I: It looks like a young child drew ...

P: Uhummm.

I: So that aspect doesn't appeal to you?

P: I can't even talk about it 'cause it's not ... I don't know. I have nothing to say about it. It's like we see flowers and I don't know. It's nice and colourful and everything but I have nothing to say about it, really.

I: Okay and does this one ... it's a historical work ... does it make you think more than the other one or does it make you question things more?

P: Yeah. I love the colours too.

I: Do you know anything about the history of the painting?

P: Not at all.

I: Would you like to find out more?

P: Yeah. That would be nice. Medieval is interesting.

I: It's an interesting period and the Renaissance times and umm...

P: Everything is so detailed, wow.

I: Yeah and there were a lot of wars in that time.

P: What time was that?

I: It was from 1480 to 1538, so it was right before the Renaissance period. It was a little bit after the medieval times because the medieval period went on until about the 14th century...which is like the 1300's and this was done between the 1400's and the 1500's.² so we can say this is more or less before the Renaissance and there must have been a revolution that he was depicting here. Oh, there were a lot of countries taking over, empires taking over different empires at that time. It could be anyone that was in power. There was a lot going on with Christianity becoming the main religion and a lot of different revolutions and crusades.

P: Did you see the sun?

² This painting dates back to 1529. The Middle Ages occurred about (1000 to 1400 A. D.). I should have refrained from lecturing, since my aim was to elicit responses. This painting was painted during the reformation period but the artist was reflecting on the victory of Alexander the Great in 333 B.C. over the Persian army of King Darius III.

I: The sun?

P: Yeah I like that. It's shining and all these people are just fighting and stuff, I don't know.

FINAL JOURNEY INTO ONE WORK CHOSEN BY THE PARTICIPANT

Work Chosen: "Battle of Alexander at Issus"- Albrecht Altdorfer

I: So, it's interesting. So if you had to choose one of these from everything that we've looked at to talk about, which one would you choose?

P: To talk about and find out more about?

I: Yeah, well we could go into to it ... we don't have that much more time left but for a few minutes, we can go into more depth about it. Which one would you like?

P: You would like me to talk about ...

I: Well, I can lead you into it.

P: First. I was going to pick the abstract one, with the nice colours, the happy ...

I: Oh. Do you want to do ...?

P: Umm, but I look at this medieval one and there's more to talk about.

I: You want to do this one?

P: Yeah.

I: Okay.

I: Let's just pretend you are a part of this painting or you can actually enter into that time period or you can enter into this work of art – where would you place yourself in the work of art?

P: Umm. I can say anything?

I: Yeah.

P: I would place myself in the center of everything and try to ...

I: Can you point to the place in the work that you think that you would like to be?

P: Around here, just to move everyone away and make it peace again. I don't know.

I: Okay. Make there be peace. What would you see around you? What sounds would you hear? What smells would you smell?

P: I would smell smelly people. I would hear yelling and fighting, crying and umm ... a whole bunch of raucous.

I: If you could take a path from there in the work of art — where would you go?

P: I would lead to the sun.

I: You would try and lead towards the sun?

P: Yeah.

I: But to get to the sun, which path would you take? Could you show me with your finger how you would get there?

P: Well I don't know. That thing about me being in the middle of this crowd, I don't know about that. I think on the mountain. I changed my thing.

I: Okay.

P: Okay, then I would go jump in the water, swim all the way to the sun and just relax, away from the corruption.

I: In the sun or on the mountains?

P: Just being close to the sun, keeping warm and ... in the water, I'd stay.

I: How does this work of art make you feel?

P: It makes me feel ... umm ... how lucky I am to be living in this type of ... no ... wait, how would I say that ... in this generation and not that one and how it would have been so hard for me to live through this time and I consider myself lucky. Is that the question?

I: Okay ... that's a very good answer. I'm wondering about the top part in the sky.

P: Wow, that's beautiful.

I: If you were there would you see that in the sky? What makes it intriguing, interesting? If you were in this work of art, would you reach for that in the sky?

P: I wouldn't even notice the sky. I would have been too focused on the people and the fighting that I wouldn't have even noticed the sky and how beautiful it is and how beautiful we should be – they should be.

I: Why do you think the artist added another element that was very imaginary in the sky – that idea of being able to pull down a drape over it or ...

P: To show that there is hope, I guess.

I: Uhum, okay. What makes you say that it gives hope?

P: Ah. Obviously the people don't notice the sky and if they're fighting like that, if they'd just take one look at the sky, I'm sure they would realize a lot umm, how we should be peaceful and how they shouldn't fight and ...

I: Okay, great and would you want to draw or paint something like this?

P: I wouldn't be able to. I don't think I could draw people and houses in nice details like that.

I: Would you want to though?

P: I'd love to do stuff like that ... but it's not my thing ... I know it. I knew it from the beginning.

I: Okay.

P: I'd draw the sky.

I: Okay, you think you'd be able to manage making a sky similar to this ...

P: It's more simple.

I: Do you think it's good to compare yourself to different artists or it's good to use your ...?

P: It's good to compare yourself to different people.

I: Oh.

P: I find ...

I: But in the end, are you satisfied with what you can do as an artist?

P: Yeah.

I: That's great, that's very important.

P: Let people see what I feel and ...

I: Well I thank you very much for this interview.

P: You're welcome.

I: I really think we had a very good time and I don't want to make you late, so thanks a lot, bye.

APPENDIX D

TRANSCRIPT OF BOB'S INTERVIEW

PART I – RESPONSE TO ONE'S OWN PERSONAL ART WORK

First Personal Work

Interviewer: Okay. So thank you for coming to the interview. Basically, when did you create this work?

Participant: This was done, I'd say ... about two years ago. I've used basically a pencil set – H, 2B and different ones to do ... different areas of shading and ...I called it "Beautiful". It's supposed to be a girl and a representation of like what I see as beauty and what everyone else sees as beauty.

I: What part of it do you think is what you see as beauty and what part of it is what other people see as beauty?

P: Well, I see the areas in the boxes as beauty because to me that stands out more ... like when you see beauty, like a beautiful person walking on the street and they stand out. It's just like ... everyone looks the same. It's so formal. It's all the same. I want to see different ... I want to see things through like different views.

I: So umm ... the parts in the boxes are how you view it – not how society views it. That's really interesting. There's some ... I interpret a little violence in it. Is that a reflection of how you see some parts of society as portraying beauty? What gave you the idea of making it more ... well for instance ... the mouth, the teeth? That really to me shows ...

P: Well I try to make things stand out and I want to just view things differently because to me, I see things and it's so much more intricate and well-designed and there's so much more to it than just a dull face. There's so much more to view and to understand and to think about.

I: And does it also have to do with the interior of the person...the emotions that were not just all beautiful on the outside that there we have some...you know the feelings of the person?

P: I mean, there's always ... some people will see themselves as the most ugly person when in fact they're not and I just like to think of things that way.

I: This is work you did outside of school. This is work you were working on at home and do you always do drawing or do you work in different media

P: Well, I've worked in almost all different types of art media, I guess. I've done some painting, clay ... carving with wood actually. I've done a lot of different things. I try to explore every area and try to find one that best fits me.

I: So ... what do you find best suits you?

P: Well, I mostly like abstract painting and like abstract drawings ... and some days I'll do a lot of colour and some days it will be very dark. It depends on how like I'm feeling that day.

I: Okay. You said you did sculpture. You were quite excited about it last year when you were with me in art class. Is there a particular sculpture that inspires you or are there particular works of sculpture that you like ... or types – modern vs. historical?

P: Well I'm not really into the modern sculptures. I like a lot of Giacometti's work. I think that his sculptures were really well made and umm, I like the techniques he used – sort of abstract, kind of like the tall man and all these different things. I enjoy looking at that and thinking about it.

I: Okay, so in this drawing, we described what you see, how you think society portrays it. Is there anything you think you're afraid to see in this work?

P: Well. I'm afraid to think that this might be real and that people think that beauty is the only thing that really matters. That's the only thing that really scares me.

I: That message comes through in the work.

Second Personal Work

I: Okay, so I'd like to talk a little bit about the work you did last year with me. Can you tell me how you came about doing the work that I assigned in class ... it was based on the contour drawings of hands and going to see the Leon Golub exhibition afterwards and then you made a collage with someone in class – you worked together. It was a cooperative effort, so what do you remember from that work?

P: Well, I remember that I wanted to see things really dark and I used hands as a portrayal of showing emptiness and cause I find there's nothing in a hand and like it just shows emptiness to me. Looking at a hand and looking at different contours and that piece in particular showed me that there always could be something in it but there isn't. It's basically talking about life in general, not... I used the hands as an expression to talk about life. It's called "Choose Your Emptiness" and I feel sometimes that life is so empty and that all we have to do is choose what we want to do with that emptiness 'cause that's all it is.

I: To fill up the gap of the emptiness ... or is it sort of a fatalistic idea that it's going to be empty anyways, even if we fill it up?

P: Yeah ... see you can either choose the hard way or the harder way. So I just try and find the easiest way of going about the hard way. That's what I mean.

I: What you're saying is life is difficult no matter how you look at it? All aspects?

P: Uhum.

I: Okay, and did you think your partner viewed it or other people viewed it in the same way? Do you remember?

P: Well I wouldn't say that because most people who saw the painting wouldn't really understand what I was talking about.

I: That's an interesting aspect about work, that some people might see something totally different in it or nothing at all. Right ... well what I interpreted from that painting was loneliness for some reason – I just felt emptiness and the hand coming up like begging for money. That's really how I saw it and it was very strong work.

P: (Inaudible)

Third Personal Work

I: Let's talk a bit about this drawing which is very beautiful ... the hands. I see that you really evolved in your drawing since last year and I have to say ...

P: Sometimes, I'll be drawing and I'll draw this great piece of someone doing something ... or an action but then sometimes I'll draw really bad and then I'll work from there and it will turn into something abstract but this I guess, I wanted it to look really good and I wanted to do the best hands – basically and like I used a contour pen here and shaded it in.

I: Did you start with the pen and then you used the pencil?

P: Yeah.

I: It was very strong contrast. Is that the way you usually like to work?

P: I like to make things look contrasted like I'll try and use different colours. I'll use a bright colour and then a really dark colour and I'll mix them together, just so that one stands out from the other.

I: So this is more like an exercise in ...

P: Yeah, it is ...

I: Is there something you get from it, like an expressive quality or a message in it?

P: It's just basically to say that hands say so much like there's different signs. There's like "stop" and there's like "angry" and it can express so much, you don't have to say anything. You can just use your hands and that's what I love about the human quality, just the way that we're made is so intriguing to me.

Fourth Personal Work

I: Okay. So, we'll just talk about one more work then ... this one here. If you can just tell me how you came about making it – what gave you the idea?

P: Well, I was just sitting there and I was doing homework and I had a highlighter, and I just started drawing something with a highlighter and I'm like hey – this is pretty good, so basically, I finished it up and then I'm like, I thought something was missing; so, I took a red felt marker and I just started outlining it and I just started realizing how nice it was. Basically, it's just some person I saw in my mind for like a second and I thought, aw, that's interesting and I just sort of went with it, you know. That's what I love about art because you can just go with your thoughts. You're just sitting there and sometimes you're stumped. You don't know what to draw. I don't know what to paint or anything and then it's like I got an idea. I'll just go with that and I'll work from there. If it looks like crap, you know I'll just keep going and it will evolve into something completely different.

I: In other words, you don't have a preconceived idea. You go more with your mood ...

P: It's more spontaneous. Some days, I'll be feeling happy and I'll probably draw some more pretty, happy pictures, but I find most of my art work comes from being more down and thinking about society – like it's not very happy.

I: So what qualities in a work makes it happy or makes it sad? Is it the shapes or the art elements or is it ...?

P: It's the person behind the art that makes it happy or not. I mean if I drew this and I was sad while drawing it and someone else saw it and thought it was a really happy picture; they wouldn't even know the half of it.

I: So, in other words, what you're saying is that...the emotion of the artist doesn't necessarily come through to the person who is responding to it or looking at it. The feeling is there but it doesn't necessarily get transmitted to everybody who sees it. Do you think it's important for an artist to be able to transmit those feelings or what he's trying to say or do you think it's not as important as long as the artist knows about it?

P: The only thing that's important is if I understand my own artwork. If anyone else looks at it and just like ooh – I don't like this and you know and ah the only reason they don't like it is cause they don't understand it. That's the only reason people don't like other art.

I: You think that if they got to understand the artist it would help them? In what way could they learn to better understand the art in your opinion?

P: To better understand it is ... first of all you have to be an artist yourself and just not an observer ... you have to get dirty. Don't be afraid – like don't wear gloves. I mean come on, get your hands into some paint, you know. To understand ... basically I think you have to know the person really. That's the best way to understand. I mean you could always observe but you'll never really truly understand and I think that's the most mysterious part about the entire art scene and you never know exactly what it means unless you know the person.

I: Interesting, so that must affect you as an artist as well when you're looking at work too because you don't necessarily know what the artist is trying to get across – for you as an artist?

P: Well, I see an art piece and someone else says well this is what it's about and then like someone I don't know, like an art teacher will say this is exactly what it's about. I know this you know and I'd say well that doesn't matter, it's not what it means to me. Everyone has their own feelings about art. If I see something and it means completely a different thing than what it really does like as long as it makes sense to me, I'm fine with that.

PART II – RESPONDING TO REPRODUCTIONS IN PAIRS

1. “Flowers” Andy Warhol and “Guernica” – Pablo Picasso

I: Okay. We're to do the second part of the interview now. Basically for this second half we're going to walk around and compare the two works. So talking about these two, which one would you say you liked better and why?

P: Well, that's actually a pretty tough choice for this one cause I really like these two pieces actually. I find that the Andy Warhol one, it really stands out. I like the colours he used and how it kind of overlaps and you can tell that it

wasn't done as a painting. It was done more as a pasting sort of thing. It looks to me that the person who made this just had so many thoughts going through his head at once and so many feelings that he just had to express them all at once and it came out as a nice piece.

I: Okay, so do you know who did the second one?

P: Ah, no I don't.

I: It was Pablo Picasso and it was done during the Second World War.

P: It might have some effects from the war and some ideas about that.

I: The first one – you were talking about pasting ... Does it look to you like the flowers were pasted on?

P: Not the flowers, the background. I think the flowers were probably painted on or at least rendered with one colouring technique but over here it looks like it's overlapping and the green here is kind of coming out.

I: Well, I know that Andy Warhol did a lot of lithography, so I know this must be done with that technique, the lithography. Since there are many colours, he may have painted on the flowers onto the background but I'm not sure. We would have to look at the original work to find that out would we?

P: Because we're just here, looking at a reproduction and actually I've never seen the real work, which was on exhibit in a gallery in New York in 1964. We can see it on the poster. So, we would have to see the real work, which is interesting.

I: Umm...would you like to see any of these works?

P: Oh, yeah, I've been to several art exhibits before and I prefer them being in front of me and I can just go up close and look at what painting techniques he used. What tools he used and it just gives me different ideas. It kind of inspires me you know.

2. "The Great Hall of Bulls" – Lascaux, France and "Chant de Fête" – Paul Émile Borduas

I: Okay. So, the next one over here ... there's two and well you chose them...why did you put these two together?

P: I found that they contrasted well from each other, like how this one's really old and this one's more recent, sort of thing and like I really liked the techniques used in this one. I really liked the fact that the colours – how they

smear properly, it flows nicely ... and this one, it intrigued me. I wasn't really sure what they used and I was just thinking like I guess this was done a really long time ago ... what could they have used? I'm guessing it's done on a wall and I'm guessing they used like berries, charcoal.

I: Good. Yeah.

P: And it's just so fascinating to see how their perception of art was back then, compared to more recent art techniques.

I: Right, right ... and the idea of the bulls and paint on the walls going back to such early times that it would have been a very spiritual process for the people but we will never really know the exact reason why they did it.³ Umm ... so if you had to choose between the two of them ... I know it's difficult ... which type of art would you say you prefer?

P: Well I prefer more of the abstract art, like I like this one more. It just intrigues me more.

I: What intrigues you about it?

P: Just like the colours and the fact that as bright as the colours may be, I still find it's really dark and gives off a dark feeling.

I: Ummm. So, is it also the use of the palette knife and the technique? Do you ever use that in your own art?

P: Yeah, I've used palette knives for umm ... they're best for drawing trees, it's the best tool and it makes art so easy compared to using a brush and everything. You can just take a tree and dip it in black and white.

I: This effect – the colours you get here ... are more with oil paint. Do you use oil paint or do you like to use acrylic?

P: Well, like when I use oil paint, I'll use it on it's own but when I use acrylic, I like to use some sort of acrylic basic, so you can put that on top of the painting after, to make it look nice, cause if you don't, then the acrylic paint just looks dull and bland.

I: You mean like a varnish?

P: Yeah, acrylic basic or ...

I: Do you like using textures like in this work?

³ I could have mentioned the importance of the hunt and how art may have been a way to show prowess or power over the animals.

P: I like mixing many textures together, to like contrast from each other.

I: So this work really appealed to you from what we were talking about before about contrast and everything. Interesting. Okay, over here we have two very different works of art. Talk about which one you want.

3. “Bar at the Folie B erg re”  douard Manet and “Ship” – Unidentified Artist

P: This one here – It’s not the person in the front that intrigues me as much as its background and the reflection in the mirror, like away from the bar ... I like the techniques used to draw the people and just like every person has their own thing, and everyone’s doing something, and it’s really well put out.

I: It’s an interesting idea to focus on the reflection – not just the person in the bar and so do you know who the artist is here? Well, it says ...

P & I:  douard Manet.

I: ... And  douard Manet, he was one of the precursors of Impressionism. He influenced a lot of the Impressionists, so this work is a bar scene, obviously and the work over there is totally different, it’s a print, an etching.

P: It’s a really nice interpretation I find of a nice boat and I guess it’s sort of tipping over and things are like going wrong I guess, and I like the way it’s drawn – like the smoke. I like when it’s done messy but properly so you get the right idea. Some of it would be messy over here and this part here is really nicely done and it really looks like it’s wood.

I: ... And this artist obviously uses line with technical ease and capability so is that something that would inspire you in your own work, using line in the way he has?

P: Well, I try to use line sometimes and stretch them out because although I find it very tedious and I don’t use it that often – I try to use it more cause I want to explore more areas.

I: Of the two works that we’ve looked at, which of the two inspires you more?

P: I like this one more.

I: The Manet?

P: Yeah, the Manet one.

I: The Bar at the Folie B erg re?

P: Uhum.

I: Is there an aspect of it that makes you like it more?

P: Yeah, the reflection – I love that. It’s really well done. I just like say the person at front is supposed to distract you from everything that’s happening but when you look beyond her and you just see everything else; it’s like wow ... it’s really nice.

I: Okay, and it’s also in colour as opposed to the other one beside it that’s in black and white. Do you usually like works in colour more than works in black and white?

P: It depends on the mood entirely.

I: On your mood or the mood of the work?

P: On my mood personally ... because it depends ... I’ll use a lot of colour sometimes but then sometimes I just want to use some black and white, cause black and white works so well together and all the different shades you get black – you get gray and all those different colours. It works really nice.

4. “A Blind Bluff” – Cassius Marcellus Coolidge and “Composition” – Jackson Pollock

I: Interesting, okay, we have more over here. Okay, over here ... we have ... dogs playing poker ... and a Jackson Pollock ...

P: Yeah.

I: Oh, so, of the two of them which one would you say you like more?

P: Obviously I’m going to like the Pollock one more ’cause I don’t know. I’m not really into the entire modern art scene and if there is any modern art that I like, it wouldn’t be something like this. It would be more ... the modern abstract these days is more of like triangles and circles and things like that and I find that’s kind of a lazy way of doing things and I understand that maybe this “Dogs Playing Poker” took a really long time but what’s the message? It has no message. I want to know what it is ’cause I mean like – it’s just strange.

I: Okay. There are some artists like Cezanne who did paintings around a table. There probably might be some reference but I don’t think that this artist even knew about Cezanne or made a reference to people around a table but

we'll never really know if the artist took a reference from another artist or not but what you're really saying is ...

P: Maybe he just made this to confuse people and make people talk about it and that's maybe why it became so popular.⁴

I: Probably – because people who know about art and also people who don't know about art would be intrigued. It's just a humorous picture.

P: ... And the Jackson Pollock one, I like the colours he used. They're not as bright and they're kind of dull. It's interesting, because he used that sort of blue that doesn't stand out and is not as bright and you can tell there wasn't any varnish or anything over it. You can tell that it was just done hands on and then like it's okay, done ... no more.

I: What about that spontaneity do you like, about the fact that it's done hands on and then it's finished?

P: I like the idea that the thought came to him before he or she did it. I guess Jackson's a guy. I like the thought that he thought okay, I'm going to do this and he did it and it was done and he's just standing there, looking at it and it's like ... okay, time for another one, you know. Then, he just goes through them all and just chooses what he likes or what other people like. Sometimes an artist might not even like his own artwork and someone else will.

I: It's an interesting comment. Do you think that this artist was thinking how other people interpreted his work or did he do it for his own ... ?

P: Probably not, because he didn't realize that he would be famous enough to have his painting sitting in front of galleries and so he probably just did it for himself or maybe even for a friend.

I: Often times, the art critics are what make the artwork worth a lot of money. The artist is not necessarily the one who is promoting himself and I think in Jackson Pollock's case, it must have been the art critics that really brought the value of his work up. Mind you, what came before in the art world was not at all like this. He was the one who really developed abstract expressionism in the 50's in the United States. So, it was a big change with what came before. I guess any kind of change – a big change in art creates a commotion and can make the person really well-known. So, this is a contemporary poster. Whatever, you see a lot of these in bars so do you consider it to be art?

⁴ "A Blind Bluff was part of a series of oil paintings entitled "Dogs Playing Poker" by C.M. Coolidge. It was created for a St. Paul, Minn., advertising firm and was sold to a private collector from New-York City in 1903 for \$549, 400 dollars.

P: Well, I mean, everything can be art, like if you want it to be but whether it is good art or bad art, I mean it doesn't depend on me. What I think really doesn't matter, just so long as the person enjoyed what he did. If he enjoys it and he enjoys drawing dogs smoking cigarettes, cigars and playing poker, then that's good for him.

I: Okay, so you don't think it has to do with how society views it and a lot of people think that if we're going to promote art or pay for art, I mean that it should be of some kind of standard. What do you think about that statement?

P: Well, I think that I don't understand how it got so famous.

I: Well, this one isn't really a famous work of art right, it's a poster.

P: Right a poster on a piece of cardboard.

I: But, I think it's talking about that because of the frame around it and the gold. I think it's kind of a farce on art.

P: It's kind of mocking the whole idea of art and the way people see things. Some guy was probably just thinking all these people are always talking about this fancy art: what do you think about this, dogs playing poker?

5. "Dancing Ganesha" – Unidentified Artist and "Velocipede" – Don Proch

I: Okay, for this I'm going to ask you a different question. If these two works could speak to each other, what do you think they would say?

P: Well, this one would probably speak a different language than this one. I'd imagine I could see like this one being much more modern speaking and very ... and that one ... what's this one called?

I: This one – the one you spoke about is called "Velocipede" by Don Proch...and this one is...

P: "Dancing Ganesha"

I: ... And it was made in the 14th to the 16th century.

P: I find it interesting – because different art pieces, they mean different things to certain people. I mean this one here the "Dancing Ganesha", it probably has like a lot of religious background to it. I would imagine it was probably very important to the person that made it. It probably meant a lot to him or her.

I: It's part of the Indian culture and there must be a lot of symbolism.

P: Yeah, 'cause I know in the Indian culture, they have a great respect for elephants and um ... I guess this is an interpretation of an elephant and a human sort of thing.

I: It's playful too. It's dancing.

P: ... And this one. I really like the techniques that were used in it – like um, I don't know how big it is but I would imagine that it's probably I guess life size.

I: Yeah, it is.⁵

P: It's life size isn't it? I just really like the way it's formed 'cause it uses sort of like a chromy and white figure to it and the reflection makes it look very strange.

I: It's also interesting ...

P: It's put on a mirror.

I: This leg, this foot is missing over here. It's almost sinking in.

P: Yeah, it kind of looks as though this is water and it's just reflecting from the water so this foot is just dipped in water and even the half of the bike back here is going inside of the water. It looks like they're sort of coming out. It's really well done.

I: It is. It looks so human-like doesn't it?

P: Uhum, I mean there's the metallic hair. It's interesting.

I: Mask – very effective!

P: ... And how the mask guides down and how all the lines are sort of going across the chest and it goes into ...

I: Amazing use of texture too ... If you could choose one of the works, which one would you choose that you liked better?

⁵ Drawing on fiberglass, chromed steel, chromed leather, mirror – 1976. It measures 6 x 7 ft., 1.8 x 2.1 x .9m.

P: Probably this one 'cause I'm more of a modern art sort of person and I'm not really into the entire sort of art like it doesn't interest me as much, sort of like there's millions of arts about Buddha and things like that and I don't find it as interesting as modern art 'cause they're all based upon the same thing and I find it gets tiresome when everything keeps repeating and repeating.

I: ... And there's probably strict guidelines to follow, it's not as ...

P: It's not as free ... you can't do what you want. It's like if you do this you have to do it like this or else it will be an insult to our culture; you know?

I: Uhum ... but there's a purpose behind it whereas this – we don't really know why we validate it? With this, there is a significant purpose for it.

P: Yeah, there's more meaning to it.

I: So if you had to choose?

P: This one: "Velocipede"

I: So you're more of a modern artist and you appreciate this one.

P: Uhum.

I: Very interesting.

PART III – JOURNEY INTO ONE WORK (PARTICIPANT'S CHOICE)

Work Chosen: "Guernica" – Pablo Picasso

I: Can you describe what you see in this work – "Guernica"?

P: Ah yeah – and I think this is the best thing about art. I see millions of different emotions and I think that when you can get all these emotions into one picture, into one art piece, it turns out great and that's what I like about this one. It's all the different emotions and visuals that each character or drawing in this feels.

I: What kind of feelings do you feel when you see this?

P: I see a lot of frustration, not a lot of them look happy. It looks as though there's a lot of frustration and anger and confusion. That's what I get from it.

I: Uhum. Does this work have significant feeling for you?

P: Well I guess it could. It depends on what I feel like. It looks as though they're all trapped inside of some kind of condensed room. It looks as though they are all trying to get away and some of them are even dead and it looks like the rest are trying to get out or get away from it.

I: If you could be inside this work of art, where would you situate yourself?

P: Probably right in the back, looking at everything, looking at everything around me just happening and actually, I wish I could be in this art 'cause I could go around and I'd talk to everything and just ask them what's the matter.

I: What would you say?

P: I'd ask them what's wrong 'cause it looks like there's something seriously wrong.

I: Well, for example, where would you start and who would you talk to?

P: Well, I'd probably start here I mean where the bird probably is.

I: Under the light.

P: Probably, I'd start around there and talk to the person there.

-P: Yeah the one who's screaming like everyone else.

I: Yeah, with her head back.

P: Yeah, so I'd ask him ... I'd say hey what's wrong ... I mean come on ... everyone in this room is very angry. Some are sad as well like that one. I find that one to be sad.

I: This one?

P: Yeah. I see a lot of sadness, with sadness comes frustration. Imagine being frustrated for so long ...

I: Why would you start by the bird?

P: Because the bird is drawn in some sort of strange abstract way that makes it look as though it's just a part of the wall. It doesn't look like it's standing out like everything else so I'd like to start with that and like it sort of comes in. It just intrigues me how the bird is just standing in the back.

I: Okay, so you wanted to be more objective or not part of the agony that was going on, so you can sort of have a real view of it, not be tortured yourself. Okay, what do you think is the most tortured being in this?

P: I'd probably have to say the guy with no body.

I: Oh, down there.

P: Yeah, sort of this.

I: It almost looks like a mannequin doesn't it because it's square at the bottom?

P: Yeah, there's sort of like an arm coming out sort of thing.

I: That's why I laughed, because it is very sad but the way Picasso depicts it, it has almost a playful manner doesn't it? It's like a love/hate sort of situation.

P: Yeah and ... the way you look at it. Everything is sort of the same until this horse here and there's like these lines – little tiny lines all in the horse and it throws you off everything. It throws off all thoughts that are going along and then it's very ...

I: Linear.

P: Yeah, it's almost strange.

I: Textural pattern that breaks things up?

P: Yeah and I like that a lot in art – when something's flowing and then it just stops and it's a completely different other art form and then it will just go back to normal. I find that's really interesting.

I: So that's formally what you find very interesting about this work. Do you know about the technique that he used?

P: No, not really. I don't know how this was done actually.

I: Well he was very famous for "Cubism". He went through several stages of Cubism and I believe this is the analytical stage of Cubism⁶ and he had painted this and tried to show different views of one object instead of just seeing it from one view. He would try to put the top view, bottom view ...

⁶ It was actually the period that came after synthetic Cubism. Although it was painted, the linear patterns (horse) resemble the texture of the newspaper he used in works of the previous period (synthetic phase).

P: It's like taking everything and putting it in a different angle but it's still together you know.

I: Uhum.

P: Like if you take a person – their eyes are crooked but it's just from a different angle. It's still a person. It's just done very differently. They're all from different angles, which makes things look distorted because he does try to put so many views on to one surface. That's why things look larger and smaller.

I: If this artwork could ask one question, what do you think it would ask?

P: I don't know if it would ask a question. I think it might make a statement or ask to be let out. I think it's trapped and just wants to be free.

I: The whole work itself is trapped?

P: Uhum 'cause it looks as though it's in the inside of a room and it looks as though everyone's trying to get out and they're in pain.

I: ... And is there any way out for the people in the long run?

P: I don't think so.

I: Is there any sign of hope or ...?

P: No, I don't really see any sort of hope in this picture at all. It just looks sort of like he just wanted to show this is what it's like and there's no way out so you're just going to have to eventually live with it.

I: Okay, what about this hand holding the light?

P: Yeah, I was looking at that. It's very strange. It almost looks as though the hand turns into some sort of flag, can you see?

I: Yeah over here.

P: Yeah, it turns into a flag. It's very strange.

I: Do you think it's a political statement?

P: It might be political, considering the time it was done, so I'm guessing that the flag had to do with some sort of political statement and he probably didn't want to put any symbol on the flag. It might even be sort of like a rescue flag, maybe.

I: Yes, when you give up.

P: A surrender.

I: Surrendering, maybe. Well I'm sure the artist knew what he was doing because Picasso was a genius and it was during a very difficult time, during the Second World War. He was probably not allowed to show his political beliefs.

P: Exactly.

I: Anyways, I thank you very much for everything and the whole interview was really interesting. I don't want to make you late so thank you very much.

APPENDIX E

TRANSCRIPT OF TEACHER'S INTERVIEW

Aesthetic Responses to Two Students' Works of Art

Response to Cindy's Works

I: Looking at the student's work what do you see and how does it make you feel? What do the images convey to you individually or as a whole?

P: Well, looking at the first one, "Money, Power, Respect", I see a lot of powerful image almost like flame. I see the hand. It makes me think of the hands of god. They've got the three elements, money, power, respect in equivoice. We've got someone who looks like he's emerging out of rock, so obviously someone is concerned with the material trappings of success in life – back to money and power but there seems to be an equal point of self-respect – a bit moral that I would suppose but I can't say. I'm very intrigued by the person who looks like he's coming out of the rock or else it's holding up the mountain. I'm not sure. This could be the fires of hell. I'm not sure about that either. I like it, very evocative.

This one over here is a huge collage. It looks like a lot of babies, children...I can't make out the words, which would help. I don't know what they're talking about, both sides. I'm not really good at being an art critic but obviously there's a concern with giving life. There could be some sort of extra image. I enjoy looking at it without really being able to understand it.

Well, the third picture looks like elongated bodies of human beings, angels falling from heaven – beautiful colour: greens and mauves, purples, yellows – great ambiance. You know, I really don't get anything out of it, but I enjoy looking at it. If I knew more about the contents, what I'd say would seem a little bit more intelligent – just very powerful strokes, very powerful. The whole thing is very, very powerful. There's nothing wishy-washy about any of the work. It's very personally appealing. All the colours are very bold and vivid – obviously a lot of symbolism to the author or the painter that's not necessarily conveyed to me but I like it.

Response to Bob's Works

P: Okay. Starting with the first pictures that I enjoy, we've got a picture of a young lady. It looks like a very nice face, very nice pencil, obviously very high quality work. In the work you can sort of make out the words "I am beautiful" down at the bottom, although it looks like the artist has gone through some trouble to scratch out "I am". It's called "Beautiful" and it's like overlaid on top of the eyes as if it's magnified and interestingly enough near the teeth, instead of what I can see is a very beautiful smile, I see an overlay of horrible sharp irregular fang-like teeth, which could imply a voracious appetite

inside that's being masked by the outside. So, perhaps the author is trying to say something about inner beauty/outer beauty, inner turmoil/outer turmoil. Interesting drawings anyway. I find I like that one.

The other one's got a collage of words, 'choose your emptiness'—fascinating twentieth century approach to doing things with four hands in different shapes. I can't quite make out what they're pointing to. It looks like a lot of watercolour and there's probably some collage.

"Choose Your Emptiness" would... if I saw pictures of guns, drugs, money, power would be okay. I would say these are all different material trappings but I'm not making out anything here that I can actually link to emptiness, so I'm forced to speculate the author had some sort of idea that escapes me but it does look like it's compartmentalized. The hands are in different shapes, going in different directions. So, that's about it, quite enjoyable. It doesn't really say a whole lot to me.

I: Well, thanks for your input and now I'm going to ask you some general questions. How does art contribute to these students' educational progress?

P: With those students, it's the only right brain activity we have in the school and we've seen for years that right brain activity brings out a whole other side of our students and many of the worst students on an academic basis, in art seem to be the most creative. There's paintings, videos that have been done on a variety of themes. It seems to bring out a whole other intelligence and so they're known as great artists. It gives them a lot of prestige within the school, just as when other poor academic students are athletic heroes in their own schools and it raise their prestige. So, we use it as a link and of course it's something they can use to pursue academically on their own.

I: What do you think are the positive and or negative attitudes associated with art education in at-risk schools?

P: Negative to whom – to students, to teachers to society?

I: It depends, if you think there are positive and or negative attitudes that the students, administration or teachers have...?

P: Our kids come with very clear views. Either they hate art, they don't want to do it, they reject it or they've always liked art and in fact spend a fair amount of time doodling, writing and painting. Those kids take the art, no problem. The others are hostile towards art because either they can't do it or because they feel it exposes them to doing art when they don't like exposure, so they reject it. They do it simply because it's marks, it's part of the curriculum and they're not forced to do anything they don't really want to do, as long as they're more than willing to produce a sufficient body of work to justify their merits. So, that's the negative and positive.

I: What are your thoughts concerning art in the high school curriculum?

P: As far as we're concerned, we like to see the artwork that they do put on the walls. We like to see the kids succeeding in areas that are not strictly speaking academic and society puts a high value on artists except when it comes to paying them for their work. It's cool to be an artist – you just don't work for a lot of money, so I don't think we need to go through a lot of trouble to justify why we teach art in school. I think that vulnerable kids who are at-risk benefit by more right brain activity, especially if they're learning - disabled, because, frequently, their artistic side is very, very strong and it's their math and other side that's weak. So, it just gives them a chance to achieve success and any kind of positive academic or successful experience usually engenders more worth and greater willingness to give more, so we keep it as part of our curriculum.

Questions About the Education of At-Risk Youth

I: When did you start working with at-risk students?

P: I started in 1976, in September. I was working in XX high school, which is now closed, and a community group of people, 8, 9. I asked permission for a detached teacher to be taken out of the regular high school and to work in what was then XX Resident Association. Students would congregate there in the morning. They were pre-chosen, about 16 or 17 and they were given various relatively simple academic tasks. There was a follow-up. The attempt was made to help them find jobs and then slowly that became more institutionalized. The school board began to create outlet schools (names of schools) and so on and so forth, until we both got the huge network of 40 or 50 teachers, 500 or 600 each a year and we've probably worked with thousands and thousands of kids, since we've been involved.

I: How did you perceive these students since the beginning. Did your views change since then?

P: Well, when you're a regular high school teacher you're used to giving a class to the kids who show up not to those who don't show up and I was given the task of working with the kids who don't show up and helping them to show up in a different venue where they would achieve some sort of success or stability or even learn good habits. So, I had to undergo a certain transformation of what I was expected to do as a teacher and uh working with the community and working with people, who help this population in Montreal, well it was indispensable. They provided the motivation because, if the students were acting out during the day, they would sometimes be disciplined at night and if they were doing well during the day, there was follow-up at night – certain positive reinforcement. There was some attempt to

bring all the facets of the child's life together. I found this works very well in life. If you get everyone on the team in one place at one time, then there is no confusion. There is no uh hypocrisy, no attempt to play the story off, playing one side against the other and that's always been part of our philosophy at school. Bring everybody together at one time, in one place and deal with an issue, if someone is not succeeding or doing well.

I: Dealing with every facet, what does that really mean?

P: We're only there with them two or three hours a week, particularly starting, we had a much shorter day than we do now and they might be at a gym center from about four or five in the afternoon until ten or eleven at night, working with people who saw them in a different light and who were able to share insights that I would never be privy to in the sense that I'm not one who dots their turf, who sat down and had a very long chat with them. Those kids were not given to having very long chats with me.

I: With those who were improving, were you able to get more into chatting with them?

P: Well, some of the students. What the community wanted was for me to get the older kids off the street, so that the other kids would go to school. They didn't expect those kids were going to graduate and very, very few of the original kids did but the onus was put on them to be accountable to develop certain skills and go out and look for work. Some of them in fact passed exams, rather recently. A few graduated but the attempt was mostly to create a positive school atmosphere inside the school.

I: What are some of the indications that lead to school failure and how do you deal with aggression?

P: With aggression?

I: Yes.

P: I think that assuming with students that there's no genetic or emotional flaw they begin to develop their social behaviors early. If they do badly in kindergarten, they start to fall behind. They get labeled or they get lost, if their reason for falling behind is that they have undiagnosed learning problems, they're not going to get better, unless their problems are specifically attacked and, so they start to bide their time. They develop unsupportable behaviours. Some become like clowns, some become aggressive, some like to learn to distract while others draw attention to themselves, verbal or non-verbal. These behaviours are very annoying and counterproductive to the regular classroom teacher who can't understand why they have to deal with all this and so the child becomes increasingly more marginalized and by high school begins to

fail at ground level. In elementary school, they found a way to keep the child happy, more or less focused, unless they were truly disturbed. We have those kids but that's a small percentage of society. When they go to high school, where the ministry created a curriculum which is very normative, then they begin to fall behind and if we don't know how to pick up the pieces and comfort them, which is one of the aims of our school's system, then they begin to exhibit very unpleasant social behaviours.

They often end up in court or in trouble with parents, teachers or friends. They get into fights. There's drugs and so on. Sometimes it's a family matter that could cause them to fall behind. It could be an unexpected death in the family, divorce or sickness that throws off the delicate balance. Sometimes, because of work issues, the children have been moved around too much. They lost the thread in their life. You know, the old sort of idea of an army group [sic], moving around from base to base, to base. If you have no friends, if you have no base, no continuity, all that at a time when all that is extremely important, then you begin to fall out of the regular school because all that is too hard to keep up with. That can lead to issues with drugs, certainly with truancy and sometimes with crime. Sometimes, kids get into trouble because of the drug issue. Usually, the kids who are getting drugs are already marginalized and already at-risk. Socio-economic circumstances have something to do with it. Obviously, the greater the support at home, educationally, financially and so on and so forth, the easier it is for a child having trouble to be attended to. If the support levels are not there then the child may fall through the crack and there's no pillow on the floor to bounce back on. The child tends to hit not roll – hit and get shattered psychologically one way or another.

I: What did you learn about these students that helped you handle situations more effectively?

P: The students that I've taught at [name of school]?

I: Yes.

P: Well, I did a Masters in Special Ed. years ago; so, I dealt with psychology, cognitive learning: people like Erickson, Piaget and Kohlberg. I found that very useful in trying to assess where students are. With your practice, you begin to listen. It's like a doctor. When you begin to diagnose a thousand illnesses, you've seen ninety-nine percent of what there is to see. When you recognize it, then you know how to prescribe and play with the prescriptions – make sure you don't over or under do it. With a teacher, when you've heard most of the truancy excuses, most of the preventatives and most of the drawbacks, you begin to fine tune what you are going to say to a child, where they are on the spectrum. Are they a child needing a lot of emotional support, are they needing educational support? Do they need family support? Are they needing a kick in the you know what?

You know every child is different, but people do fit as consumers, as students, as political animals, we fit into a noose. Well, I'm dealing with students who are by and large going on seventeen, eighteen. They're getting to the edge of their academic acceptance within the youth sector. Students I believe have choices. I believe people should be accountable. I think one of the problems in society today is that we've become very weak in the accountability department and we've been pushing rights and not necessarily the responsibilities of everyone. Teachers have their hands often hand-cuffed in terms of things that can be done. So, I look at it this way.

I: Do you mean the administration?

P: No, I'm just talking about educational laws – the way we treat children. We seem to have developed a society that keeps kids in school without necessarily having plans for them. We no longer provide jobs for students who cannot succeed in school so we wish to keep them off the streets.

I don't think that school is a good place to keep kids off the streets. I think playgrounds are where you should put them. You give the kid a basketball, if you want to keep them off the streets – you keep them physically fit and entertained.

Academics follow the certain areas. If we're going to try and get certain numbers of students into C.E.G.E.P., they have to perform in a certain way. They don't have to go to C.E.G.E.P. and we shouldn't make them feel they won't be fully functioning human beings in society if they don't go to C.E.G.E.P., but I think, if a student is constantly acting out, showing no desire to be accountable, to improve, I don't feel they have to be in my school. I think they're taking up space. I'd rather replace them with someone else. In the old days, I could do that to a child and they could come back at nineteen, wiser and older and resume their education. Now, according to the Education Act, they have to go to adult ed., which is not going to offer them the same type of individual attention, but that's been taken out of my hands. It's not something I thought was smart but the government wanted to save a lot of money and adult education was cheaper than this type. So, consequently, if I look at our students and one student out of thirty-five is taking up fifteen percent of the school's time instead of three, I figure you're taking up time from four, five other people. Unless you can justify why you're doing that, maybe you should find another place to go. There's nothing wrong with telling a child to go and work for a few years and grow up. Why should they inflict their difficulties on all of us?

There's other good, hard-working students who show up in class, whose needs get ignored by these other students who take up a lot of space and time for no good reason and I think that those other children should get attended to academically, emotionally. They should be praised. They should be encouraged. They should be helped. They should not be ignored. Too often, quiet, obedient children get ignored.

I: Can you discuss some specific concrete challenges and how you handled them, some specific examples from your teaching experiences with at-risk youth?

P: When I began we never had any money and I didn't have a wealth of opportunity. So, it's one thing to say you want to be helpful but if you don't have the appropriate textbooks or materials, you can't teach baseball with pencils. You can to a certain level but then it becomes unsatisfying. So, we didn't have money, I didn't know where to get it, and I didn't know how to throw my weight around. That came later, when we started them off in full schools with principals who started to change the command of the budgets. When I began, on the good grace and the faith of the people I worked with, what we did was the human-to-human thing not the resource-to-resource thing. So you have to know where to get your resources. You have to know how to set up your team; you have to know what your academic mission is and all that took time. It took us four to five years when we started. The three of us started in a reception center in a school that was hideous to look at. It had no environment. It was inappropriate but because we were the only deal in town, it showed faith and it worked. Within a few years, however, we were offering far more academic subjects and we had academic materials such as the sciences and so on, so that we would actually replace big high school for thirty or thirty-five kids a year, developing the autonomy of the school.

I: What were some of your most meaningful experiences?

P: I guess helping kids when I realized their lives were in the toilet when they started and they put it all together in one or two years. They graduated or came very close to graduation and showed a tremendous improvement in their own self-respect, self-esteem.

They began to dream they could get out of their small, crowded environment, begin to look at the wider world. First of all, they were introduced to a wider world. The general knowledge they came in with was extremely limited and I'm often shocked at how little substance – not very much. What we did was introduce them to the world at large: geography, politics, art and helped them make choices that sometimes took them beyond.

Sometimes these children were the first to get a diploma. So they were breaking the ground and had to face pressures. Not all parents necessarily live to further their children. Some people, because of their own need, pull their own children back. It's messages. I've often learned to be very wary of some parents. They talk the great talk but don't walk the great walk. They don't support and in fact undermine their own children. Those people tend to enrage me. I have a hard time controlling my anger when I'm dealing with them but I know it would be counter-productive. It would be counter-productive at any rate.

I: How does a parent undermine a student?

P: Very simple. You say that you don't want your child to come to school and then take them and leave for home. You say that that they have to baby-sit or this or that or let them make five or six medical appointments on school time and you whine that you can't find any other time for hair appointments, doctors', dentist or job appointments. What you're doing effectively is letting a child undercut his or her own academic development. If you make excuses for your child's weakness what you're doing is weakening your own child and frequently I've seen parents themselves exhibiting those weaknesses and I don't really have the capacity to help the child move beyond and don't really trust that we will. So, a child gets caught and suffers. They got to justify their own failures. They're not moving. That's frustrating. I've seen some students that despite their best efforts did not have the academic wherewithal to graduate. That made it very sad but sometimes what we did for them was so important on the affective level for their personal well being that they ended up much happier and were very, very thankful for the experience. It made it all worthwhile.

Some kids came in just needing a few things in three or four months and they got it. We knew we just did the job, a tiny repair job. We didn't build a house, just kind of fixed the hole in the roof. It was fun to know we could do that for some students and help them – kids who would not be educated by anyone else for whatever reason.

I: How do you feel about the students who couldn't graduate for whatever reason?

P: Well, another teacher I know has always said that high school diplomas are not for everybody. If they were, they wouldn't be worth having. If everybody could get into the NHL, nobody would watch hockey. So, consequently, we have to accept that some kids, academically may not be able to get by. What we try to do then is to make sure they have back up. There is adult ed. or help them find a job.

I: What is the meaning of an alternative school in your opinion?

P: Well there's a very wide spectrum of alternative schools. We could have schools that deal with students that are pretty high functioning – all of them want to go to C.E.G.E.P., school and university, have high averages. We have schools that try and deal with students that are very artistic and self-starters. Then we have our school. It's part of a system that takes kids from grades 9 to 11, gives them small classes: 12, 13, 14, 15 and provides them with as much individual attention as they can get – sometimes across grades. The child is not necessarily doing one grade at a time. They might be doing mix and match

individual programs, so that they can take a little bit longer in some areas. We provide them with a way of having success in a non-threatening environment.

I: I'm confused when you use the word children. What do you mean?

P: I'm talking about high school. The education act doesn't really provide for ostensible dropouts when they're in elementary school. They're not even supposed to be dropping out at twelve or thirteen. In fact, very quickly, some students fall through the cracks. There is no place for them. They make no place for themselves in regular high schools and people have to look for backup and basically we function in that mode.

We try not to take anyone out of a regular school who would succeed in a regular high school, who is succeeding. People have frequently called us trying to get into our school – because they have a friend there and they hear it's a great place. We basically say: does anybody want you out of the school? No. Are you doing all right? Yeah. So, then stay there. We're not even interested in looking. We'd be taking somebody else's space and we would be creating enemies within the regular high school system and so we're strict about that. We take people who can't make it in a regular high school – not people who simply decide one day they don't want to.

I: What do you think contributes the most to the high school dropout problem?

P: I don't have the stats on that. I've been doing some research for a course I'm going to do at McGill. School failure obviously has to fit in there. The inability to do well in a regular school has to fit into the plan, maybe thirty or forty, I'm not sure. Eventually, I'll get the numbers but it would be a challenge since a lot of the problem occurs around 13, 14, and 15. Obviously the whole parenting/adolescent crisis affects some much more than others. Some go through that time and they become unrecognizable to their parents. They become difficult. They show up around 18 or 19, fully functioning human beings and life goes on. Those that don't sometimes need our help. So, if it's not alcohol, drug addiction problems, if it's not divorce, if it's not something like that – an emotional breakdown, it would usually be a lack of academic success.

Very frequently, kids lead a nice happy, cocooning environment in elementary, go to a larger high school and feel they don't know anybody. They hang around with the wrong crowd; wind up with the wrong habits – very quickly. Although they're bright enough in school, they get labeled and put in the non-academic stream. They show up too often at the principal's door, the guidance counselor's door. Their services are no longer requested. Don't darken our towels in the school again and they begin to hop from school to school. When you carry the reputation of being in trouble, you find the next place you go to shows decreased tolerance. So, very rapidly, some of our students go through four or five schools in the space of two or three years and it becomes self-defeating. So we try to help them cut that. We try to help them

succeed within reason. It's a choice. A seventeen year-old has a lot of maturing to do in life.

I: What steps can administration make to help avoid the dropout situation?

P: Early intervention. Basically, if you want to stop dropouts in high school, make sure they don't start screwing up in elementary. That's why, lower class sizes. I'm very big on class sizes. There's research. We've had landmark studies, in Tennessee. When you start getting class sizes down not just teacher ratios – actual class sizes down with competent staff, the ability to identify problems early on and then follow-up with service to prevent rather than cure, has tremendous ability to improve the school system.

I: Do you think that the teachers are adequately trained?

P: This kind of thing you would learn in special diplomas. A sharp teacher will obviously notice something's wrong but that doesn't give you the materials to test and even if you have the testing, there's a whole set of activities involved in finding time to remediate. That cannot be done in a classroom activity. So the question is: are we spending the time, the money the resources? Do we take the kid out of the class? When we talk about inclusive education, do we really believe that a regular teacher in a class of twenty-six or twenty-eight is going to be able to deal with the regular students who have their own day to day crises, coded students who have a variety of academic and emotional problems and those that are just plain nasty – the asocial types, who are future sociopaths and delight in making trouble for everybody? I think it's totally unreasonable to think that your average teacher is going to be able to stay on top of that and not get tired. Practical teachers put in careers that I think are a remarkable tribute to their care-giving and their endurance.

I: Working in an alternative school goes against the idea of inclusion. So, you must be against the idea of inclusion or mainstreaming, right?

P: Well, I don't think the philosophy of total inclusion makes sense. All sorts of people in an orchestra have different levels of achievement.

I: How can we balance it out?

P: Different school boards have different philosophies. The X board is very, very committed to inclusiveness. I don't think it needs the approval of all the staff and I found that inclusiveness is just another way of cutting costs. If it isn't, it can be very good if you're willing to pump in the resources. If you're not, then I think it's shameful and I hate people who try to get up in the name of some nice philosophy and in fact undercut the value of education, with the

teachers and the students who despise them. If they're weak, they have no business being in education. However, our board is certainly a pioneer.

I: It's easier that way. I mean to put all the students in one boat. Right?

P: Easier for who? Not for the teachers, not for the parents, not for the students. For the administrators? They end up having a whole lot of problems without resources. It's sometimes an ideologically driven poison, that's all. Some school boards are ideologically driven in one way and some another way. There's no one reason why school board X has an ideological position of inclusiveness and we don't. Pragmatically, we don't come from that area and we're not willing to commit to it one hundred percent. Some schools are obviously more inclusive than others. However, there are still some people who don't fit into the mold.

I: Even in the other school boards there have been some attempts at creating alternative types of schools.

P: Yes, however, I've been talking to people from the X board and I don't feel that their commitment to our type of system is strong. I think it's fading in that school board. I think it doesn't fit in with their philosophy and so they have a hard time justifying it. We are really strong advocates of what we do. There are 25 000 students in our board. I figure there are 12 000 in high school. Our group of students (in alternative schools) is 4 500 kids. What percentage is that of 12 500? It might now be down to 300. So, that can be 3 or 4%. So, it doesn't mean you're not doing a great job of including 90 plus percent of your students. For those for whom it just doesn't work, we have what we do and I think that works too. This way you do not use ideology as a means of taking round pegs and fitting them into square holes and vice versa.

I: Using statistics, saying because there's not that many of these students, we're trying to ignore them because you're never going to get the same number of these students as regular students. It's a special population. When is it going to happen?

P: No, you're always dealing with about 3% of the population of the school population.

I: To ignore this population and to say it doesn't exist is just not fair, is it?

P: Well we used to do that but now we find it counter-productive to let students drop out. The cost to society is less. I found the decision is to get the students past grade nine. I've talked to a lot of colleagues. If you can get them to succeed there as far as I'm concerned, you can tell them you will get a high school diploma. You have the intelligence. Now, do you have the emotional maturity and the work habits?

I: What do you think is more important, the emotional maturity or the work habits?

P: Well, there isn't really. They may have bad work habits because of learning disabilities or because they are emotional babies. Either way, you have to try and help them out. I think it's intertwined. Very little in life is either or.

I: Thank you very much.