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Understanding Children's Preferences in Art Making:  
Implications for Art Therapy

A DISSERTATION  
(submitted by)

Amy Morrison

In partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

LESLEY UNIVERSITY  
May 2013



Lesley University  
Graduate School of Arts & Social Sciences  
Ph.D. in Expressive Therapies Program

DISSERTATION APPROVAL FORM

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*In the judgment of the following signatories, this Dissertation meets the academic standards that have been established for the Doctor of Philosophy degree.*

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I hereby certify that I have read this dissertation prepared under my direction and recommend that it be accepted as fulfilling the dissertation requirements.

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SIGNED: Amy Morrison

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## ABSTRACT

This study employed a phenomenological, qualitative approach to investigate children's art making preferences. The researcher was curious about the meaning that creating two-dimensional and three-dimensional art forms held for children. Influences and contributions to children's art making preferences were explored. Lastly the study questioned what children's artistic preferences mean for the field of art therapy. Theories of art therapy, artistic development, and child development informed the study.

Thirteen children ages 5 to 11, four boys and nine girls participated. The researcher requested the children choose a subject and create the subject in both two and three dimensions. A range of art materials were offered to the children. Children were interviewed about past and present art making experiences. Parents and guardians completed two questionnaires which collected demographic information as well as information related to the children's early experiences with art making, children's feelings about art making, available art supplies, and home and family influences that might impact children's art making. The researcher's field notes and photographs of the children while engaged in the study provided additional data.

Data analysis of the interviews resulted in four main findings: (a) the children experienced support for art making in the home and by family members, (b) the children expressed preference for creating in three dimensions and identified the sensory and kinesthetic experience as preferential, (c) the children experienced choice in art making as meaningful, and (d) the children's two-dimensional mixed media artwork was informed by experiential knowledge of material qualities. Results from the parent and guardian questionnaires showed that the children preferred open-ended and unstructured

art experiences that encouraged creativity and expression. Findings indicated that children preferred to have choice in subject as well as materials. Contributions to children's art making preferences included art experiences at home with a range of materials as well as early life experiences with art making and encouragement from family members.

## **CHAPTER 1**

### **Introduction**

#### **Statement of the Problem**

The materials and action of art making play a definitive role in art therapy. Art therapists have emphasized the importance of understanding art materials and art making in art therapy since the beginning of the profession (Henley, 2002; Kramer, 1971/1974; Malchiodi 1998; McNiff, 1981, 2004; Moon, 2002, 2010; Naumburg, 1950/1973). Art therapists value conceptualizing and understanding specific qualities and processes of working with a range of materials (Malchiodi, 2012). Moon (2010) argued for the prominence of a materials theory in art therapy, stating “materials and media are the constituents through which meaning is made” (p. xv). Art therapists (Hinz, 2009; Lusebrink, 1990, 2004, 2010; Malchiodi, 2012; McNiff, 1998; Moon, 2010; Seiden, 2001) brought a dialogue to the forefront of the profession, which established the importance of materials in art therapy. However, there is little empirical research to support such efforts, particularly when working with children (Malchiodi, 2012). Specifically, little empirical research addresses what constitutes children’s art making practices and what informs children’s tendencies to use particular art materials.

Much of the literature consists of theories based on unsystematic observations of children’s art making by art therapists, art educators, child educators, and psychologists (Gandini, 2005; Hinz, 2009; Jaquith, 2011; Lowenfeld & Brittain, 1987; Pavlou, 2009; Piaget & Inhelder, 1956/1967; Rubin, 1978, 2005). Kramer and Schehr (2000) noted an art therapy evaluation session for children which addressed questions related to understanding the importance of children’s interaction with art materials. Similarly,

Rubin's (1978, 2005) art interview empowered children to make material and content choices that were intrinsically motivated and presented a model of artistic development that emphasized understanding children's experiences through engagement with materials. Lowenfeld and Brittain (1987) developed a hierarchical and progressive stage model for artistic development that acknowledged children as individuals, each with unique artistic abilities and preferences. Moreover, Hinz (2009) identified preferred medium as the first component of the art-based assessment utilizing the Expressive Therapies Continuum. Jaquith (2011) recommended choice based teaching as a way to support intrinsic motivation in art education settings. Cooper (2012) advocated understanding children's use of materials as a "deep form of research" (p. 297). Notably, Gandini (2005) and Ganus (2010) put forth the notion that theoretically and practically, materials serve and communicate as a language for children.

The literature reflects few related studies. Carr and Vandiver's (2003) quantitative study found that art projects which entailed few instructions and one material produced "positive behavioral responses and artistic expressions" (p. 157) for 10 children age 4 to 13 residing in a temporary housing shelter. In a qualitative study by Sheller (2007), clay was found to increase possibilities for expressing a different aspect of the same concept for children. Pavlou's (2009) study demonstrated children's ability to problem-solve and create representational forms with three-dimensional mediums as well as children's ability to shift artistic intentions in response to the medium. Likewise, Golomb and McCormick's (1995) study concluded that children beginning at age 5 can create in three dimensions and engage in increasingly experimental, creative problem solving. Hart and Goldin-Meadow's (1984) quantitative study investigated the age at which children can



reliably state artistic preferences. Lin and Thomas' (2002) mixed method study confirmed that children's aesthetics and preferences are shaped by their particular interests as well as exposure to and experience with art. A review of recent literature, however, turned up no empirical studies investigating children's experiential and material preferences in art making.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study was to understand four things. First, how children experience and prefer various forms of art making, and to do so through their own voices. Second, what influences and informs children's art making preferences. Third, how children's inclinations for art making were established. Finally, what experiences of meaning creating in two-dimensional or three-dimensional art forms held for children. The researcher wondered if and how children attributed different meanings to two-dimensional or three-dimensional art forms. The study aimed to reflect and respect the lived experiences of the participants within an ethical research design.

### **Research Questions**

The study addressed the following research questions. 1. What are children's art making preferences? 2. What do children consider as they initiate a choice of art materials? 3. What experiences of meaning in art making do two-dimensional and three-dimensional art forms hold for children? 4. What informs and contributes to children's preferences in art making? 5. What importance does child preference for art materials and art forms hold for the practice of art therapy? To address the research questions the researcher conducted a phenomenological qualitative study outlined by Moustakas (1994). Participants completed an art making experience and were interviewed. The

interview offered an opportunity to reflect upon immediate and past art making experiences. Interview questions guided the interview process to further explore and understand children's experiences with art materials, artistic preferences and what may inform or contribute to children's artistic preferences. Additionally, participants' parents or guardians completed two questionnaires that were developed by the researcher. The perspective of the parents or guardians provided another lens through which to understand the children's lived experiences with art making.

### **Assumptions and Limitations**

The researcher assumed a number of things: that children have artistic preferences that hold meaning for them; that children can honestly articulate their artistic preferences; and that art making is beneficial to children.

The study was limited by the inclusion of 13 children who mostly experienced a stable home life and support for art making in a variety of ways. Children in the study presented physical, mental, and emotional health. The unique experiences of these 13 children are valid for this group of children only and therefore cannot be generalized to a broader population.

## CHAPTER 2

### Literature Review

This multidisciplinary literature review is organized to provide a context in which to understand children's artistic preferences in art making. Research and theories developed by psychologists, art therapists, art educators, and child educators are reviewed. The research inquiry briefly explores the historical context art therapy, then considers a theory of materials, and proceeds organizationally within a developmental framework. Lastly the literature review encompasses personal and cultural influences on children's artistic preferences. Overall, the literature review seeks to address what is known about the ways in which children's art making preferences are formed with regard to art forms and material choice.

Art therapists have emphasized the importance of understanding art materials and art making in art therapy since the beginning of the profession (Henley, 2002; Kramer, 1971/1974; Malchiodi 1998; McNiff, 1981, 2004; Moon, 2002, 2010; Naumburg, 1950/1973). Seminal authors and pioneers in the field considered art materials to be an essential component of the art therapy experience (Kramer, 1971/1974; Naumburg, 1950/1973). Contemporary art therapist Catherine Hyland Moon (2010) argued for the development and prominence of a materials theory in art therapy, writing, "materials and media are the constituents through which meaning is made" (p. xv).

Malchiodi (1998, 2006) when working with children, highlighted that art therapists should consider how previous exposure to art and experiences in art making shape children's artistic preferences. Thus, Malchiodi suggested that through their experiences with art materials, children generally develop a preference for working with

a particular material. Lusebrink (1990) noted that when children visually represent an internal mental image, the materials used to create the image modify the external visual representation of it, accentuating the importance of material choice as children form imagery. Lusebrink proposed that as art making engages the right hemisphere of the brain it modifies the affective and sensory aspects of the image created. This is useful information as the art therapist seeks to understand children's art process in detail with regard to both creating artwork and the final product. Ultimately this knowledge helps to inform the art therapist on many levels of understanding children's experiences including cognitive, neurological, emotional, and behavioral. Increased awareness of material preference, along with treatment goals, can help initiate a course for art therapy and help to more deeply understand children's ways of processing information (Hinz, 2009; Lusebrink, 2010; Malchiodi, 1998, 2012; Moon, 2010).

Although art therapists have historically (Kramer, 1971/1974) and recently (Hinz, 2009; Lusebrink, 1990, 2004, 2010; Malchiodi, 2012; McNiff, 1998; Moon, 2010; Seiden, 2001) focused on advancing the importance of understanding art materials in art therapy there is little empirical research to support such claims, particularly when working with children (Malchiodi, 2012). Notably, there is a lack of research that addresses what children's preferences are in art making and further, what informs children's tendencies for using particular art materials.

### **Historical Perspectives in Art Therapy**

Margaret Naumburg and Edith Kramer are considered pioneers of the art therapy profession in the United States. Kramer and Naumburg, separately, began their professional careers specifically working with children (Kramer, 1971/1974; Naumburg,

1950/1973, 1966; Junge & Asawa, 1994). Since then, a number of art therapists have committed their professional lives to working with children, including: David Henley (1992), Gussie Klorer (2000), Cathy Malchiodi (1998), and Judith Rubin (1978, 2005). A diverse range is represented in the way that children's art making is understood in the field of art therapy; significant differences and oppositions are steeped in the seminal work of Kramer and Naumburg. These differing approaches to art therapy demonstrate a critical and long standing discourse in the field of art therapy that has shaped art therapy in practice.

Margaret Naumburg has been called the mother of art therapy (Detre et al., 1983; Junge & Asawa, 1994). Naumburg was strongly influenced by Freudian and Jungian analysis and advocated for creating art as a form of symbolic speech. Naumburg introduced the use of fluid and easily accessible art materials to elicit unconscious thoughts, wishes, and desires, and she supported the use of materials that allowed for spontaneity such as pastels and poster paint (Junge & Asawa, 1994).

Naumburg highlighted the transference / countertransference relationship in psychotherapy and used art with clients to help express, communicate, and process therapeutic goals within the therapeutic relationship. Although art materials were important in Naumburg's work, they were considered a way to understand and enhance the therapeutic relationship through imagery. Most importantly Naumburg understood the healing aspect of art making to be engaged by processing the symbolic content that derived from the created imagery. Naumburg's foundational work is known as Dynamically Oriented Art Therapy or Art Psychotherapy (Naumburg, 1950/1973, 1966).

One useful way to distinguish Naumburg's innovative approach is to contrast it, historically, with Kramer's.

Kramer emphasized the importance of material choice and the process of creation as a means of healing and sublimation in art therapy. Sublimation in art therapy is understood as the result of socially unaccepted desires, wishes, and behaviors, transformed and placed into a meaningful art product (Kramer, 1971/1974). Kramer advanced a vision of art therapy that provided clear art instruction in order to assist a client's therapeutic and creative process. Kramer's (1986) concept of the art therapist's "third hand" emphasized the therapist's active role in the art making process. Kramer believed strongly in supporting clients' creative process in art making by offering specific art materials as well as offering art instruction to support artistic expression.

Kramer described five ways of using art materials. These included: precursory activities; chaotic discharge; art in the service of defense; pictographs; and formed expression (1971/1974, p. 54). Kramer asserted that different ways of using materials shaped both the artist and the art product. Additionally, Kramer and Schehr (2000) noted that Kramer and Fields initiated an art therapy evaluation for children aged 4 to 15, which included the use of three different art materials. After discovering that each medium "elicits specific kinds of behavior" (p. 74), Kramer and Fields acknowledged the impact art materials have on children during art making.

To summarize, Margaret Naumburg and Edith Kramer are considered to have pioneered the art therapy profession in the United States (Junge & Asawa, 1994) and have each contributed to longstanding philosophical and practical applications of art therapy. Naumburg emphasized the therapeutic relationship in art therapy, while Kramer

expanded notions of therapy to include material choice, the way in which materials were utilized, and the quality of the final product.

### **Developing a Material Based Theory in Art Therapy**

Although historically art therapy has theoretical roots in psychoanalysis, art therapists have underscored the importance of developing a material based theory for the field (Malchiodi, 2012; McNiff, 2004; Moon, 2010). McNiff claimed that, “focused attention on media research will enhance the growth and depth of art and healing practices” (2004, p. 73). Art therapy is distinguished from other mental health professions by the action of creating art in session with art materials (Malchiodi, 2012). As materials play a central role in defining the field of art therapy, value is placed in further conceptualizing and understanding specific qualities and processes of working with a range of materials.

Moon (2010) stated, that in the largest sense, the use of materials leads to meaning making and that materials are, “intermediaries between private ideas, thoughts, feelings, and concepts, and their external manifestation in tangible, sensual form” (p. xv). As children encounter and explore materials they engage in the process of knowing, thus constructing meaning by what they learn from material interaction (Gandini, 2005). The “plurality of codes” is an educational concept, which highlights that through sustained relationship with a variety of materials, children strengthen abilities to express unique and multiple points of view (Gandini, 2012, p. 66). The idea of the plurality of codes led to the concept of the Hundred Languages of Children, in which the importance of multiplicity of meaning through art materials is illuminated. The concept of the Hundred Languages of Children (Edwards, Gandini, & Foreman, 2012) originates in the

educational philosophy of Reggio Emilia, Italy, in which children develop competencies through experiences of experimenting with art materials.

Materials offer children an opportunity to gain knowledge through experience and to develop tools that make it possible to construct and share understandings of the world (Cuffaro, 1995). Cooper (2012) agreed and noted that it is critical to understand children's use of materials as a "deep form of research" (p. 297). In art making for children, theoretically and practically, materials serve and communicate as a language (Ganus, 2010; Moon, 2010). Therefore, there may be critical links between which materials children chose or have inclinations toward and the externalization of internal experiences.

In developing an art therapy materials theory, Moon (2010) asserted that material choice has serious implications for professional identity:

What do materials mean? What are the theoretical bases upon which art therapists determine the specific material or media to provide a given client, or the array of material and media options offered from which the client might choose? How does the art therapist interpret the significance of the client's material and media choices and ways of using materials? (p. 50)

### **Consideration of Materials in the Evaluation of Children in Art Therapy**

Kramer and Schehr (2000) noted that Kramer and Fields developed an "art therapy evaluation session for children" which provided a potential foundational method to address the questions related to understanding the importance of children's interaction with art materials. The procedure is conducted individually and offers three different art media: pencil, tempera paint, and clay. A pencil potentially elicits narrative imagery



either real or imagined and offers an opportunity to assess “perceptual problems and evidence of thought disorders” (p. 91). Paint invites emotional expression, provides opportunities for affective responses to color, and displays cognitive and conceptual abilities of mixing colors. Clay gauges playfulness and ability for sustained effort and to determine “capacity for integrative work” (p. 91) or regression. Children are given the choice of content and freedom to choose what to create. This partially aligns with Rubin’s proposed (1978, 2005) art interview for children in which children are offered free choice of materials as well as subject matter.

Kramer and Schehr (2000), recommended recording children’s behavior during art making, the sequence of creation, and ensuing dialogue. Recordings are based completely on the art therapist’s direct observations. They suggested observing and recording: children’s artistic skills in drawing, painting, and clay as compared with corresponding chronological age; an assessment of the level of engagement in art making on a continuum of play to engagement with the formal qualities of art; and the children’s attitude toward the art therapist, art work created, and art materials; and lastly, assessment of children’s new learning, display of inner resources, and support or difference compared with previous observations (Kramer & Schehr, 2000, p. 91-92). Rubin (1978, 2005) also placed importance on recording the chosen material used by children as well as dialogue, and rapport with the therapist, and additionally included the child’s attitude toward self.

The evaluation described by Kramer and Schehr (2000) validated that the medium “elicits specific kinds of behavior” (p. 74). Additionally, they asserted that during the evaluation children produced artwork considered “more highly invested, more

imaginative and more complex” (p. 77) than artwork produced by the same children for standardized psychological tests. Their findings supported the notion that different two-dimensional and three-dimensional art media impacted the children and the art produced in varying ways.

Although the evaluation explicitly stated a preference for art materials as an important observational component, there is no reported research or evidence of what informed the children’s decision-making. As such, additional empirical research is required to understand the experience and meaning that art material preferences have for children. The art evaluation described by Kramer and Schehr (2000) made explicit a dialogue in the art therapy literature that acknowledged the formal theoretical and practical importance of materials in art therapy for children. Similarly, Rubin’s (1978, 2005) art interview provided a holistic view of children that empowered children to make material and content choices that were intrinsically motivated, as such; Rubin’s art interview was distinguished from art-based standardized tests which mandated materials and art directives for children (Brooke, 2004; Feder & Feder, 1998).

### **Potential Materials**

Art therapists (Henley, 1992, 2002; Malchiodi, 2012; McNiff, 2004; Moon, 2010; Seiden, 2001) have identified clinical implications for multiple and varied art materials. Kramer and Schehr (2000) identified three distinctly different materials (pencil, paint, and clay), which invited different emotional and cognitive responses from children. Rubin (1978, 2005) suggested materials that offered a range of experiences and included two-dimensional and three-dimensional materials. Additionally, the following materials and artistic processes listed have been identified as potentially therapeutic: adhesives

(such as glues, tape), animation, artist books, altered books, sketch books, boxes, canvas, carving, various forms of clay (water and oil based), cloth, collage, construction, craft supplies, design, digital media, drawing materials (chalk, chalk pastels, charcoal, colored pencils, crayons, craypas, thick and thin markers, oil pastels, pens), environmental materials, fabric, fiber arts, felting, found objects, glass, glitter, graphic novels, India ink, installation art, masks and body casting, metal, mosaic, mixed media, natural materials, paint (acrylic, finger paint, oil, poster, watercolors), paint brushes, paper, paper dolls, performance art, photography, plaster, plaster gauze, popsicle sticks, printmaking, puppets, recycled materials and objects, string, sand, sculpture, sewing, styrofoam, tape, thread, wearable art, weaving materials, wire, wood, and video.

Although this list is lengthy it is not exhaustive. Indeed, each material listed could be understood for its therapeutic use by applying the systems theory of the Expressive Therapies Continuum (ETC) (Hinz, 2009). Although not strictly a materials theory, the ETC may be considered the most sophisticated theory in art therapy contributing to a theory of materials (Moon, 2010). Applying the ETC concepts to materials will further aid in understanding material properties as well as potential underlying reasons for material preferences.

### **The Expressive Therapies Continuum**

The materials listed above may be situated by what has been termed The Expressive Therapies Continuum (ETC) (Kagin & Lusebrink, 1978; Lusebrink, 1990; Hinz, 2009). The ETC is considered a hierarchical systems model that uses a developmental sequence to organize art experiences and information processing from

simple to complex. Although not age specific, the ETC offers important information about experience through engagement with art materials and the artistic process.

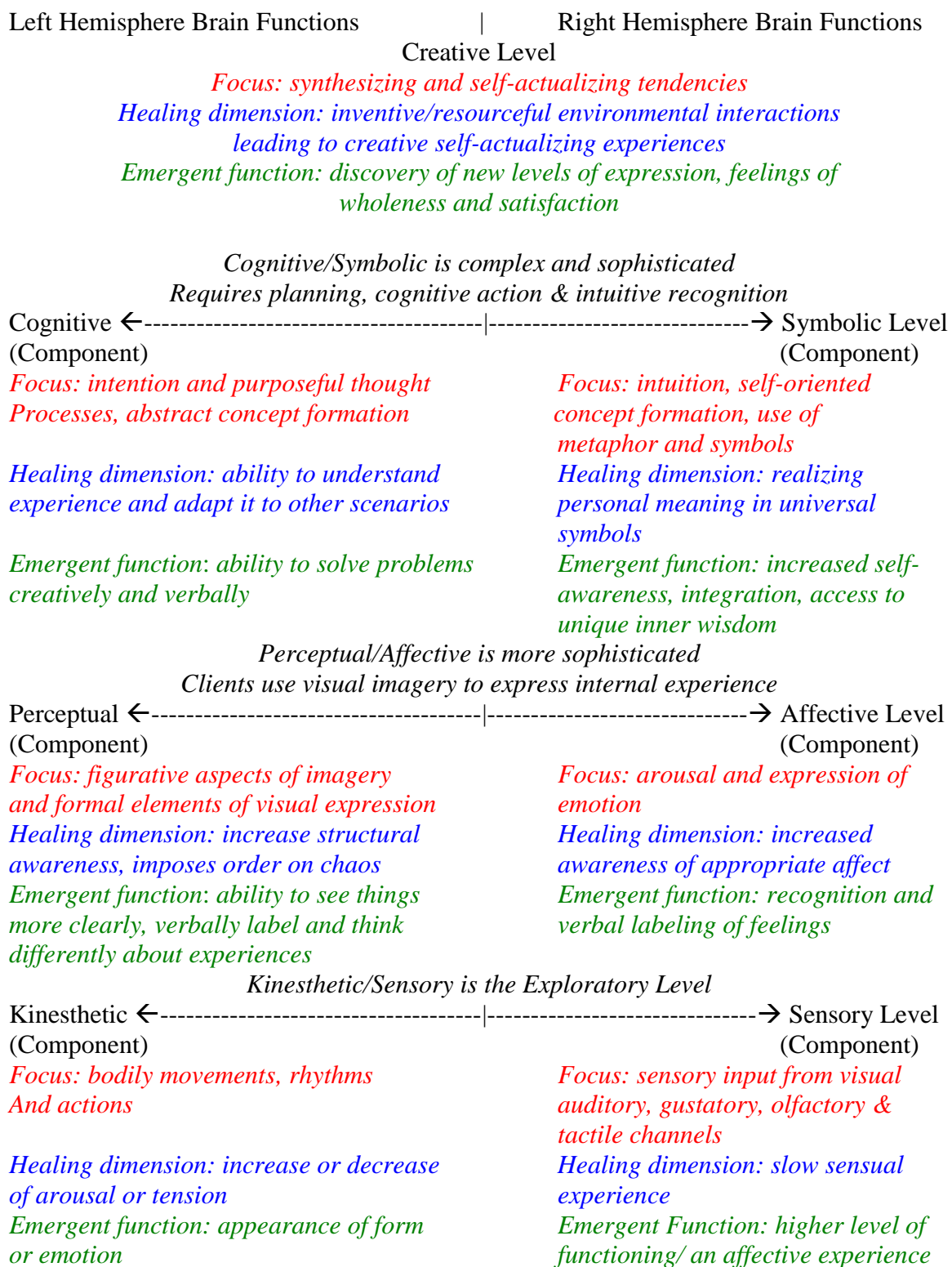
Kagin and Lusebrink (1978) developed the ETC by first presenting the effects of material properties by categorizing two-dimensional and three-dimensional materials on a continuum from fluid to resistive. Materials such as watercolor on paper would be categorized as fluid whereas working with stone or wood would be considered resistive. Fluid materials can move or flow easily whereas resistive materials require applied pressure and may resist this pressure in order to be used successfully. Kagin and Lusebrink posited that fluid materials would elicit an affective response from the art maker, while resistive materials would prompt a cognitive response.

It is important to note that materials are not component-specific on the continuum and one material may be experienced and processed in different ways. For example Henley (1991) described clay as appealing to the senses when explored. Henley explained that clay might also be used to create figurative sculpture that could elicit cognitive and symbolic processing. Hinz (2009) pointed out that a scribble drawing first could be processed on the kinesthetic level as arms, wrist, and hand move the drawing material across a page, and then while looking at the scribble drawing perceptual processing is engaged. Thus the same material may be experienced and processed on a continuum and on different levels of the ETC.

The ETC presents four different levels of complexity on a hierarchical continuum that describes material interaction and expression: sensory/kinesthetic, perceptual/affective and cognitive/symbolic. The fourth level is the creative level, which reportedly may occur with the other three levels and play a synthesizing function

(Lusebrink, 1990; Hinz, 2009). Each component has a particular focus, healing dimension, and emergent function. The healing dimension is the, “activity that is distinctly therapeutic about each component process” (Hinz, 2009, p. 8). The emergent function is described as the process that occurs due to involvement with the particular component and often “suggests or provokes movement to a higher level on the ETC” (p. 8). Understanding the polar components of the hierarchy offers valuable information about how one may experience a particular art process or material. Additionally, valuable information may be gathered from one’s preference of material or preference for information processing. Figure 1 offers an adapted detailed visual representation of the ETC.

**Figure 1. The Expressive Therapies Continuum**



Adapted from Hinz (2009)

**Material preference within the expressive therapies continuum.** Hinz (2009) identified preferred medium as the first component on the art-based assessment utilizing the ETC as a way to understand inclinations for information processing as well as preference for “structuring images” (p. 196). Hinz stated, “Clients need to be free to choose materials and tasks in order to demonstrate their true preferences for expression” (p. 194). When clients choose a similar medium across differing art directives, Hinz cautioned that preferences might be unyielding and thus imply that other media forms are being “ignored or repressed” (p. 197). From this framework, flexibility and balance within medium choice is understood as healthy. In the case that a client chooses a material that is positioned in the middle of a continuum, this would suggest flexibility. Generally this preference is considered the healthiest, though it can also be understood as a comfortable choice that does not indicate a reasonable amount of risk.

Hinz suggested offering a wide range and variety of materials to increase options for differing responses. In addition, a detailed and articulated interview surrounding historical use and experimentation with art materials (Malchiodi, 2006) is recommended because it may reveal insights into hesitations or risk taking in choice. Hinz suggested obtaining a materials history more casually in conversation as art therapy sessions unfold rather than outlining a specific protocol.

## **Conclusion**

Though scholars and therapists like Hinz (2009) have paid attention to materials, the field, as Moon (2010) suggests, tends to neglect materials because of its historically professional alignment with psychotherapy: “The field of art therapy has been operating within an unnecessarily constricted visual vocabulary” (p. xvi). McNiff (2004) argued a

deepened inquiry of materials has often been obscured by a primary focus in art therapy on the therapeutic relationship. Despite the centrality of materials to art therapy practice, little research regarding materials has ensued. With regard to materials, Malchiodi (2012) argued that clinical and academic writing in the art therapy field has focused on “clinical observations and anecdotal information” (p. 28). Anderson (2001), Deaver (2002), and Kaplan (2005) debated that although the profession has taken measures to increase research in the art therapy field, such as the Art Therapy Research Initiative and the Art Therapy Research Taskforce formulated by the American Art Therapy Association, there continues to be a significant lack in art therapy research.

Art therapists (Hinz, 2009; Kagin & Lusebrink, 1978; Kramer & Schehr, 2000; Lusebrink, 1990; Rubin, 1978, 2005) have developed evaluative systems to observe and assess clients’ relationships with materials and art making. Although these evaluations are holistically focused, they do invest material choice and clients’ interactions with materials with significance. Even though a materials theory has yet to be fully established in the art therapy field, compelling arguments sustain the discourse in contemporary practice and bring the importance of art materials to the forefront.

### **Developmental Considerations of Children’s Art Making Preferences**

Golomb (1992, 2002) suggested that paying more attention to the developmental aspects of children’s drawings would help shape and inform a therapeutic consensus about healthy and normal representation among certain age groups. Although art therapists may not always place their first emphasis on artistic development in their practice, Rubin (1978, 2005) and Malchiodi (1998, 2012) maintained that knowledge of typical artistic development is essential in art therapy work with children. Understanding



children's growth and development is a significant component of children's life experiences and leads to an understanding of their artistic proclivities. Moreover, children's art making preferences have been, in part, linked to corresponding phases of human development (Piaget & Inhelder, 1969/1971).

Kramer (1971/1974), Rubin (1978, 2005), Lowenfeld and Brittain (1987), and Jaquith (2011) observed and conceptualized the importance of understanding which art materials to consider specifically when working with different age groups. Kramer considered the child's cognitive and physical development in comprising a basic developmental model for offering materials. Kramer stated that certain basic materials allowing for versatility should be required in the art therapy studio: "charcoal, tempera paints, pastels, and ceramic clay, and a kiln for firing clay sculpture" (p.44).

Lowenfeld and Brittain (1987) developed a hierarchical and progressive stage model for artistic development while at the same time declared that "growth in art is continuous" (p. 37) and acknowledged children as individuals, each with unique artistic abilities and preferences. Lowenfeld and Brittain (1987) viewed the art process as a way for children to bring together complex and diverse elements in order to make their experience meaningful and whole. They believed that as children construct, select, and interpret art, their values offer the adult important information in understanding how the children construe meaning. Additionally, Lowenfeld and Brittain advocated creating art for self-expression and for the development of identity.

Likewise, Rubin (1978, 2005) presented a model of artistic development that emphasized understanding children's experiences and abilities through engagement with materials. Rubin developed a model of artistic development that is applicable to all

“modes of making” (p. 36). Rather than focus on one medium, Rubin underscored opportunities for two and three dimensional work and accentuated drawing, painting, modeling and constructing.

Jaquith (2011) concurred and noted that when teaching art, children benefit from having a choice of a variety of materials. Jaquith identified intrinsic motivation as a way to support creativity in educational settings and recommended choice based teaching by offering studio stations with a variety of different materials. Jaquith also observed that in art classrooms, in which students were presented with preferential materials, a sustained intrinsic motivation for art making and creativity was supported. Although Jaquith’s notions are not research based, vignettes presented illustrated how choice of materials impacted creative potential in students.

Developmental (Piaget & Inhelder, 1956/1967, 1969), artistic (Lowenfeld & Brittain, 1987), therapeutic (Kramer, 1971/1974; Rubin 1978, 2005), and systems theories (Hinz, 2009) contributed the most relevant information for understanding what can be known about children’s artistic preferences. The following section of the literature review is organized chronologically according to age with consideration of the above theories.

### **Children’s Art Making Preferences Age Birth to 2**

According to Piaget and Inhelder (1956/1967) the sensorimotor stage occurs between birth and the age of 2. Throughout the sensorimotor stage of development infants begin to construct their reality and develop an understanding of the world. This understanding is informed by experience through primary senses, such as seeing, smelling, hearing, tasting and feeling. Physical development through reflexes and motor

activity affirm that the infant can gain knowledge by interacting with the environment. This stage begins with the infant largely gathering knowledge from sensorimotor experiences and ends with the beginning acquisition of symbolic thought (Piaget & Inhelder, 1956/1967). Although Piaget and Inhelder conceptualized this stage in infancy, Aach-Feldman and Kenkle- Miller (2001) and others (Kramer, 1971/1974; Malchiodi, 1998; 2012, Rubin, 1978, 2005) recognized that clients at any chronological age might present at the sensorimotor level of development.

Suggested materials during this level of development include a variety of pre-art materials that are non-toxic and malleable, such as: cornstarch, salt, cornmeal, oatmeal, flour, yogurt, shaving cream, noodles, sand and water (Aach-Feldman & Kenkle- Miller, 2001; Kramer, 1977/1974, 1979; Proulx, 2003). Hinz (2009) highlighted that introducing sensory materials in combination with kinesthetic experiences leads to the understanding of haptic (tactile) information. Concept shape elements such as form, weight, and texture are gained from haptic information.

Kramer's (1971/1974) description of precursory activities included utilizing materials to scribble and smear, while exploring the physical properties of the materials in a way that is positive. Conversely Kramer's concept of chaotic discharge is related to behaviors that become out of control by way of spilling, splashing, destroying, and pounding art materials. When working with sensory materials, Hinz (2009) contended that pre-verbal as well as affective experiences may be elicited.

Piaget and Inhelder (1956/1967) noted that, at the earliest, children can hold a drawing tool and acquire enough motor control to make a mark is around 18 months of age. At this time children can create movement with their bodies and therefore kinesthetic

thinking begins. Imagery, such as scribbling, may occur for the joy of movement and experimentation. Later, in the sensorimotor stage, toward age 2, children begin to think pre-symbolically and are able to create simple shapes such as circles and squares. These shapes then begin to take on symbolic meaning. Rubin (1978, 2005) characterized this phase of creating as manipulation, as defined by children's attention to the sensory experience of art making in which learning to manipulate materials, engage in kinesthetic experiences, and initiate movement are all equally important. In this developmental stage children gain an increased awareness of creating the artwork and therefore become interested in the visual experience, but are not necessarily invested in producing a finished final product.

Kinesthetic activity is considered instrumental in children's first graphic mark making. In art therapy this component can aid in expressing energy, decreasing bodily tension, and contribute to increased memory functioning. Art materials can serve as receivers of kinesthetic actions such as "pounding, pushing, scratching, stabbing, smashing or rolling clay, pounding nails into wood, cutting, scribbling, splashing paint and tearing paper" (Hinz, 2009, p. 42). Art materials that allow for optimal kinesthetic engagement are resistive; they often require physical effort to change and form and present resistance to such efforts. If possible, cognitive and verbal processing methods are recommended after kinesthetic art making experiences. Hinz explained if a more resistive material is preferred then clients maybe more dependent upon cognition as their preferred way to process information.

In an attempt to identify a preferred artistic modality with clients presenting on the sensorimotor level of development Aach-Feldman and Kenkle- Miller (2001)

suggested presenting “visual, auditory, tactile, kinesthetic, olfactory, and gustatory experiences” that will “attract the client’s attention and sustain interest” (p. 228). By identifying and understanding a preferred artistic modality Aach-Feldman and Kenkle-Miller proposed there will be an increase in receptivity to therapeutic treatment. This is in alignment with Jaquith’s (2011) notion that children experience an increase in motivation when presented with art materials that reflect their preferences. Hinz (2009) contended that understanding client preferences in artistic media would offer an illustration of “clients’ inclinations for information processing and structuring images” (p. 196). On a continuum of fluid and resistive, if a client consistently chooses a fluid medium such as sensory based materials, this choice would imply a preference for affective experience.

Even though empirical studies of children’s art making preferences are not specifically reflected in the literature during the sensorimotor stage of development, psychologists, art therapists, and art educators present the notion that a variety of early experiences with pre-art and sensory materials impact children’s ability to communicate their preferences. During this stage of human development art making preferences may be expressed by length of engagement and sustained tolerance of a particular material or positive affect when working with a specific material.

### **Children’s Art Making Preferences Age 2 to 7**

Piaget and Inhelder (1969) conceptualized the preoperational stage of child development, which occurs between ages 2 and 7, at this time children’s cognitive state shifts away from being primarily sensory based and moves toward representation. According to them, “The first obstacle to operations, then, is the problem of mentally representing what has already been absorbed on the level of action” (Piaget & Inhelder,

1969, p. 94). Children in this developmental stage work toward and are able to represent their world by expressing their experience through images, words, and drawings.

Rubin (1978, 2005) referred to ages 2 and 3 as the forming phase of artistic development. When, in this phase, children begin to consciously manipulate materials, create separate shapes, and build. However, the images they create are not necessarily representational. Aach-Feldman and Kenkle- Miller (2001) highlighted that children in the preoperational stage of development are more open to a variety of materials and begin to display “discrimination and organization of sensorimotor responses” (p. 234). Additionally, this is when children begin to “exhibit propensities for creative work” (Malchiodi, 1998, p. 78), therefore it is suggested that therapists’ increase attention and sensitivity to children’s artistic preferences.

Hart and Goldin-Meadow (1984) conducted a quantitative study of 65 children aged 3, 5, and 7 to investigate and distinguish when children can reliably state artistic preferences. Children were individually asked to review and evaluate a series of their peer’s drawings. The children were additionally asked to identify which drawings they thought someone older and younger than them would prefer and why. The study aimed to measure if children could choose a different drawing for someone else than the one they chose for themselves as preferential and if children could give different reasons as to why they would choose a certain drawing and why they think another person would prefer a different drawing. The children’s explanations were analyzed and coded for types of reasons, six different reasons were found. Results indicated that children beginning at age 3 have artistic preferences and can verbally express reasons for preferences as well as why others might hold dissimilar values. Hart and Goldin-Meadow’s research contributed

to growing knowledge that children at 3 years of age have personal artistic preferences and can express rationale for a point of view. Results contradicted previously held beliefs that children are egocentric and unable to expand understanding of what others might consider when experiencing art (Piaget & Inhelder, 1969; Rosenstiel, Morison, Silverman, & Gardner, 1978).

**Art making preferences for scribbling age 2 to 4.** Scribbling is considered a form of sensorimotor movement (Piaget & Inhelder, 1969) however Kellogg (1967, 1969/1970) asserted that the process of scribbling is also a form of visual interest. Kellogg noted that children follow their scribbling visually and will look away when they've stopped scribbling. Although children may begin scribbling during the sensorimotor stage, they begin their first intended mark making attempts around age 2.

Lowenfeld and Brittain (1987) identified three main categories of scribbling: disordered, controlled, and named. Disordered scribbles are marks that are made mostly by kinesthetic enjoyment; they may be short, vary in length, direction and quality of line. The drawing tool may be held by the child in fist form and movement often extends from the shoulder to the hand in an across motion. At this stage scribbling extends beyond traditional art materials. When inspired to scribble, children will use sand, walls, furniture, and food as mediums. This stage of scribbling was considered universal as a natural part of development in children (Kellogg, 1969/1970; Lowenfeld & Brittain, 1987).

Controlled scribbling entails a discovery on the child's part that bodily movements contribute to the marks being made. This occurs approximately six months after the initial scribbling. Children may become intently focused on scribbling, use a

variety of colors and maintain longer attention spans. Kellogg (1969/1970) identified 17 different patterns indicating children's use of space, purpose and beginning compositional thinking in scribbling. Kellogg discovered that scribbling becomes organized into placement patterns around the age of 2 and that between ages 2 and 3 children begin to create identifiable shapes. During the controlled scribbling stage children begin to connect with their environment which now has an influence on imagery in art making. Additionally, sharing scribbles and art products with others becomes an important part of the artistic experience (Lowenfeld & Brittain, 1987). Lastly, named scribbling is the stage in which children identify their scribbles and make connections between intention and what has been created.

Fienfield, Lee, Flavell, Green, and Flavell (1999) conducted a quantitative study to establish when children develop the understanding of intention as a mental representation. The researchers stated that by understanding the concept of intention children could display theory of mind, responsibility, and the ability to formulate and accomplish mental plans. Their study included 40 children aged 3 years and 1 month to 4 years and 10 months. The methodology was comprised of four separate stories that included illustrated pictures. The children's understanding of intention was assessed by patterns of how they answered questions related to the character's intention in the story as compared to the outcome of the story. Fienfield, Lee, Flavell, Green, and Flavell (1999) conducted two subsequent studies, each with 40 children in the same age range. Researchers concluded that most children seemed to develop concepts of intention as a mental representation between ages 3 and a half and 4.



Rubin (1978, 2005) stated that the naming phase of artistic development occurs between the ages 3 and 4. During the naming phase children begin to name marks and objects as real things, naming the mark or object is flexible and corresponds with what children are connected to in the moment. “With symbolic play and drawing, representation in action to representation in thought is reinforced” (Piaget & Inhelder, 1969, p. 56).

At age 4 children begin to create more representational drawings, are impacted by the environment, and are drawn to pictorial imagery. In addition, during this stage imaginative thinking begins (Gardner, 1982; Lowenfeld & Brittain, 1987). For children, the line that is created during a scribble becomes a visual reference point and the space that is created visually begins to take on meaning.

Though the literature does not directly address children’s preferences in art materials while engaged in scribbling, research suggests that beginning at age 3 children have the ability to both state their artistic preferences (Hart & Goldin-Meadow, 1984) and understand intention as a mental representation (Fienfield, Lee, Flavell, Green & Flavell, 1999). Theories suggested that children are beginning to respond and form preferences in relation to content of their artistic creations, which includes environmental and imaginative imagery (Gardner, 1982). As suggested earlier, some have proposed that we conceptualize materials on a continuum from fluid to resistive (Kagin & Lusebrink, 1978; Hinz, 2009), a notion that informs the range of scribbling experiences from “sensory qualities and passive facilitators of action” (Hinz, 2009, p. 201) to articulated sources of learning and expression.

Lowenfeld and Brittain (1987) recommended introducing clay if children present hesitations toward scribbling, in order to nurture a sensory based relationship with materials until they begin to develop confidence to work with a traditional drawing medium. Malchiodi (1998) stated that thinner crayons as opposed to thicker crayons might lead to decreased frustration for children when scribbling as they allow for more accurate lines and options for details. Drawing tools have been identified as: markers, pencils, crayons, craypas, chalk and pens, generally, these may present as preferential options when children are involved in scribbling (Moon, 2010).

**Children's art making preferences age 4 to 7.** The preschematic stage of artistic development was determined by Lowenfeld and Brittain (1987) as situated between the ages of 4 and 7: therefore the preschematic stage is chronologically within Piaget and Inhelder's (1969) conceptual frame of the preoperational stage of child development. Since object permanence has been formed, children can now create representations of objects that are in their immediate environment as well as objects that are not of their immediate experience.

At the same time, children become interested in their ability to represent and draw the human figure. Usually the first attempt to create a human figure includes the head and two line extensions directly down from the head as the legs. One consideration of this method of drawing the human figure is that children draw what they can actually see of their own bodies. Another perspective is that the head-feet representation reflects what children cognitively know about their bodies and is not necessarily a visual representation of the human figure. Indeed, this head-feet form seems to hold across cultures and

socioeconomic class and by age 6 children create images of the human figure that are easily identified by the adult (Lowenfeld & Brittain, 1987; Golomb, 2002).

Piaget and Inhelder (1969) stated that children's artwork during the preoperational stage reflects involvement in play, fantasy, and imagination. Subsequently, Gardner (1980) noted increasing expressivity in drawings by children between the ages of 5 and 7. Rubin (1978, 2005) referred to the artistic phase of development during ages 4 to 6 as representational. Images created by children include qualities of the object being represented and an emphasis on imagery is connected with what is important to the child in the moment. During the representing phase there is an expansion of children's graphic vocabulary and a continued exploration with art materials as children begin to create more expressive imagery. Drawings and their representational forms are flexible until age 7, when more fixated representational forms and schemas take on importance, however, Lowenfeld & Brittain (1987) stressed that art making during the preschematic stage reflects drawing as a continual learning process.

Pavlou (2009) argued that children's artistic development should not be based purely on maturation, but rather attributed to instruction and the extent to which the child has been given opportunities to practice with the materials and "develop their artistic awareness and representation in different forms and media" (p. 141). Pavlou asserted that the world is experienced in three dimensions, meaning, "the world of extension, height, width, and length" (p. 140.) however children are often asked to express their experience in drawing. Pavlou debated that graphic mark making encourages a fixed outcome and advocated for an increase in children's exposure to three-dimensional materials.

Pavlou (2009) conducted a qualitative ethnographic study of 10 children aged 5 and 6. The study sought to understand “children’s representational intentions in three-dimensional artwork, children’s understanding of visual/design concepts, and children’s expressive use of media” (2009, p. 139). The study included 10 art sessions in which children explored creating an animal of their choice through (a) storytelling, (b) drawing with pastels, (c) photography, (d) creating puppets with cardboard and fasteners, (e) pipe cleaners, (f) newspaper cardboard and tape, (g) covering the sculpture made in session six with “mod roc” also known as plaster gauze and lastly, (h) painting the sculpture. During the final art session, children were offered a wide variety of materials such as “soil, leaves, small branches and sticks” (p. 147) in which to collaboratively construct a shared space with all the animal sculptures.

Findings from Pavlou’s (2009) study demonstrated children’s ability to solve problems and create representational forms with three-dimensional mediums and to shift artistic intentions in response to the medium. Children expressed awareness of design and visual concepts by working on all sides of the sculptures. Additionally, children created upright sculptures by executing strategies of balance and stability. Lastly, Pavlou’s study demonstrated that introduction of a new art material such as mod roc (plaster gauze) increased intrinsic motivation. Pavlou’s study added to the argument that children age 5 and 6 are capable of cognitive problem solving when creating three-dimensional art work.

Golomb and McCormick’s (1995) quantitative study examined the artistic development of three-dimensional representation using clay. Participants included 109 children aged 4 to 13 and 18 college students with a mean age of 30. Participants were

asked to complete eight different tasks of modeling a “Cup, Table, Man, Woman, Person Bending, Dog, Cow and Turtle” (1995, p. 35). Conclusions verified that children as young as age 5 can create representational forms using clay and display cognitive understanding of three dimensions. This was exhibited in children’s attention to create volume in figures, attempt an upright stance, and engage in creating on multiple sides. Findings negated previously held beliefs which implied cognitive immaturity and defined a linear progression of representation (Piaget & Inhelder, 1956/1967). Lastly, Golomb and McCormick observed that working with clay increased children’s experimentation, creativity, and varied possibilities for problem solving.

Gallo, Golomb, and Barroso’s (2002) mixed method study included 45 children aged 5, 7 and 9 and sought to further understand and differentiate the theories of children’s compositional drawing strategies. Researchers argued that a closer examination of the role that medium plays in children’s compositional strategies is essential. Results from Gallo, Golomb, and Barroso’s (2002) quantitative study demonstrated that specific characteristics of media informs what can be known about children’s compositional strategies. Conclusions indicated that three-dimensional media offered information about children’s spatial understanding that was not apparent in two-dimensional art forms. Researcher’s proposed that a variety of art materials are required to fully understand children’s cognitive-spatial abilities. Qualitative results found that children enjoyed creating in three dimensions. Children reported that creating in three dimensions was more lifelike and appealing. Lastly, researchers observed a heightened interactivity from the children when working on the three-dimensional task (Gallo, Golomb, & Barroso, 2002).

Compositions during the preoperational stage are arranged according to the children's position in space. Gallo, Golomb, and Barroso (2002) pointed to the importance of the specific characteristics of artistic media and how materials inform what can be known about children's compositional strategies. Their study supports Arnheim's (1974) theory which called attention to the qualities inherent in materials, which were thought to have an impact on children's ability to translate their spatial understanding. Children's response to art materials questioned the Piagetian notion that central cognitive structures are the determining factor in children's compositional strategies. Research proposed that drawing alone is inadequate to fully examine children's compositional strategies henceforth a variety of artistic materials are required to fully understand children's cognitive-spatial abilities (Gallo, Golomb, & Barroso, 2002; Pavlou, 2009).

By contrast, Lowenfeld and Brittain (1987) argued that art materials serve a secondary role compared to the experience of creating. They advocated that the chosen subject matter be the primary focus as well as children's own unique expression and experience of creating. If a new art material is introduced Lowenfeld and Brittain recommended an exploratory approach that serves children's experience of being experimental and flexible. Traditional, good quality art materials are recommended for children in the preschematic stage of artistic development. Further recommendations included media such as thick tempera paints, heavy paper, unwrapped crayons, and pencils. Additionally, natural clay is highly suggested at this stage of artistic development. Lowenfeld and Brittain (1987) argued that the process by which children use materials, rather than the chosen material, adds to the focus and understanding of children's artistic development.

### **Conclusion for Children's Art Making Preferences Age 2 to 7**

According to Piaget and Inhelder (1969) the preoperational stage includes ages 2 to 7, a span that represents a diverse range of developmental accomplishments. Although there are recommendations for art materials for children during the preoperational stage, there continues to be a gap in the literature about which art materials children prefer and what may inform choices. Generally, during this stage, Aach-Feldman and Kenkle-Miller (2001) suggested that children are more open to a variety of materials. Children aged 2 and 3 begin to explore, manipulate, and build with materials (Rubin, 1978, 2005). This developmental achievement might influence an inclination toward creating with different types of clay. Blocks, foam shapes, recycled and natural materials with which to build might also be considered. Clay has been recommended if a child presents with hesitation toward using drawing tools and beginning scribbling (Lowenfeld & Brittain, 1987). Drawing tools are identified as markers, pencils, crayons, craypas, chalk, and pens and may be preferential while scribbling (Moon, 2010). Therapists are encouraged to consider the size and shape of drawing materials in order to support children's art making intentions (Malchiodi, 1998). Research suggested that children respond positively to a range of three-dimensional materials (Golomb & McCormick, 1995; Gallo, Golomb, & Barroso, 2002; Pavlou, 2009). Importantly, Gallo, Golomb, and Barroso's (2002) study found that children enjoyed creating in three dimensions and reported that working in three dimensions was more life-like. Additionally the researchers observed a heightened interactivity from the children when working on the three-dimensional task as compared to a two-dimensional task.

### **Children's Art Making Preferences Age 7 to 11**

Piaget and Inhelder (1969) delineated a concrete operational stage of cognitive development between ages 7 and 11. Within this age range children develop cognitive skills that aid in understanding artistic thinking. Piaget and Inhelder (1969) asserted that the concept of conservation is a developmental skill that is achieved during this stage and discovered that one way in which children learn conservation is by creating and changing shapes with clay. For example, children cognitively understand that when manipulating and changing the shape of clay that the actual quantity of the clay is not altered.

Lowenfeld and Brittain (1987) agreed with this notion, specifically suggested clay work for children aged 7 to 11 and pointed to clay's availability as a material to be constantly reworked as preferable. Further, Lowenfeld and Brittain asserted that working in clay encourages flexible conceptual understanding that is qualitatively different than working with drawing materials. This view was supported by Sheller (2007), whose study found that clay increased possibilities for expressing different aspects of the same concept (insecure attachment) for four children aged between 7 and 11. The literature suggested that children may find materials such as natural clay or plasticine modeling clay attractive because they aid in exploring the concept of conservation and concept flexibility.

**Developmental influences on composition age 7 to 11.** The ability to see visually and cognitively understand another person's point of view is developed during the ages of 7 to 11 and thus translates into children's compositional strategies. Children begin to exhibit organization in their drawings that reflects their cognitive understanding of object relations and abstract thinking. The intellectual realism of children's drawing displays "topographical relationships: proximity, separation, enclosure, closedness, and



so on” (Piaget & Inhelder, 1971, p. 67). This is demonstrated by children’s drawings in which objects are represented in relationship to one another as well as in relationship to the artist.

Thus, children begin to express and acknowledge through their drawings, understanding of multiple vantage points and frames of reference (Lowenfeld & Brittain, 1987; Piaget & Inhelder, 1969). To exhibit this, children may create a center point in their drawing, such as a kitchen table, and subsequently draw figures around the table.

Therefore children may combine images that mix the layout or plan of a situation from several perspectives. Relatedly, children compose using what some have called x-ray drawing strategies (Lowenfeld & Brittain, 1987). Winner (1982) described two types of x-ray drawings: those that reveal inside contents where both inner and outer elements of an object are represented, and those that reveal transparency through objects, such as when one object is behind another. In addition, drawing sequential actions or activities is a hallmark of artistic development in children age 7 to 11 (Lowenfeld & Brittain, 1987). Images that communicate time sequences of actions or story lines as well as drawings of maps and traveling are common developmental themes.

Cognitively, in the concrete operational stage (Piaget & Inhelder, 1971) children have great difficulty solving problems around a hypothetical scenario and do best when directly confronted with actual problems. Therefore, working with art materials that children already know and experience may help foster problem solving. Although clay may be used to express multiple vantage points, lay out plans, and inner and outer elements of an object, children intending to express a combination of perspectives or a

sequence of events may be inclined to use drawing materials such as pencils, pens, markers, crayons, and craypas.

**The development of schemas in children age 7 to 11.** Lowenfeld and Brittain (1987) argued that children develop imagery and symbols that reflect daily life and lived experiences. In so doing, children develop conceptual frames or schemas from their cognitive and affective experiences, “perceptual sensitivities, and his or her own special interests and priorities” (p. 260). A schema may be shaped by a number of factors including children’s point of view, preferences, emotional attachment, physical experiences, or an object’s significant functions in daily life. Rubin (1978, 2005) added that children’s schemas are influenced by an inner pictorial logic as well as culture. Children repeatedly create their adopted view or schema of a particular chosen object, such as a house, and often in the same artistic style. As in many other parts of the literature, however, few scholars have attended to whether material plays some role in developing the schema.

As children begin to create schemas investment is conveyed with intent to share experiences of the world through drawings, paintings, constructions and sculptures. Pictographs as conceptualized by Kramer (1971/1974) are children’s drawn narratives that can substitute for or compliment words. Choice of content in artwork corresponds to the meaning it holds for children, often emphasizing that size or proximity indicates importance. However, Malchiodi (1998) cautioned that exaggerations or obvious omissions from children’s drawings are difficult to assess and encouraged viewing children’s art from multiple perspectives. As children become intentionally selective about the content of their artwork we can begin to pay more attention to the potentially

intentional significance of their materials choice (Lowenfeld & Brittain, 1987; Rubin, 1978, 2005).

Structure is found to be an important organizing principle as children shift from a primarily sensorimotor to a more operational phase of development (Piaget & Inhelder, 1969). Developed schemas are externally represented forms that reflect children's first internalized beliefs and are a central component of children's emerging visual language (Arnheim, 1969; Lowenfeld & Brittain, 1987). With awareness of structural visual forms comes the ability to create order out of chaos. Kramer (1971/1974) asserted that communication and symbolic expression are best served by simple media such as "paper, crayons, paint and clay" (p. 22). Hinz (2009) recommended three-dimensional art materials such as "metal, wood and tile" (p. 80) which have the ability to evoke form.

Carr and Vandiver's (2003) quantitative study related to understanding structure with regard to artistic instruction. Their study included 10 children aged 4 to 13 residing in a temporary emergency shelter and sought to establish criteria for art projects that focused on increasing and supporting resiliency. The researchers hypothesized that "the [art] project that entailed few instructions and materials would encourage more positive behavioral responses and artistic expressions" (p. 157). Comparing an art project that involved multiple instructions and multiple materials with one that offered complete choice of materials but no instructions, the researchers confirmed that the project with few instructions and one material was more likely to "produce positive behavioral responses and artistic expressions" (p. 161).

### **Conclusion for Children's Art Making Preferences Age 7 to 11**

Children age 7 to 11 begin to develop cognitive skills such as conservation and conceptual flexibility that aid in artistic thinking (Lowenfeld & Brittain, 1987; Piaget & Inhelder, 1969). Abstract thinking allows for representation of relationships in children's artwork as well as schemas that bridge an external representation of an internal understanding of the world. Though the literature does not directly address artistic preferences from children's point of view, some scholars have suggested some preferences for working in clay (Lowenfeld & Brittain, 1987; Piaget & Inhelder, 1969). The literature suggested offering three-dimensional materials that evoke form as well as "paper, crayons, paint and clay" (Kramer, 1971/1974, p. 22). The literature also supports the inference that children of this age may prefer drawing materials such as pencils, pens, markers, crayons, and craypas.

### **Children's Art Making Preferences Age 9 to 12**

According to Piaget and Inhelder's theory of cognitive development, children age 9 to 12 span two stages: concrete operations until age 11, shifting to formal operational stage at pre-adolescence (Piaget & Inhelder, 1969). The formal operational stage is marked by children's use of abstract concepts and the logical use of symbols. Children are now capable of employing deductive reasoning and understanding both hypothetical scenarios and problems beyond their immediate experience. Both concrete and specific thinking are expanded as children become aware of what is possible beyond what they understand as reality. Trial and error is a common method used at this stage to understand and aid in problem solving.

Hinz (2009) asserted that children exhibiting a preference for cognitive functioning appreciate media properties and can think internally about possible outcomes before beginning an artistic task. Henceforth, children begin to incorporate intention and purposeful thought into artistic creations (Lowenfeld & Brittain, 1987). Children are able to understand a concrete experience and adapt what has been learned to other circumstances. At this level children are “freed from the concrete experiences and schemas characterizing earlier developmental stages” (Hinz, 2009, p. 124) and thus can process several factors through abstract and imaginative thinking. Hinz recommended art experiences that are created in multiple steps and can be brought to completion. Art media that have a “high degree of inherent structure, such as mosaic tile, construction paper, and collage” (p. 133) are suggested.

#### **Identity formation and social influence on art making preference age 9 to 12.**

As a range of interests are established, children begin to form and develop groups and become increasingly aware of the diverse and specific roles occupied by people in society. Cooperation, teamwork, and preference for groups are developmental components of what Lowenfeld and Brittain (1987) termed the “gang stage.” During the gang stage children begin to conform to accepted social roles and begin to create accepted forms of art. The gang stage is also characterized by children’s inclinations to discover and identify individual interests as well as define the self within a group of peers. Gardner (1980) and others (Rubin, 1978, 2005; Winner, 1982) contend that art offers a way for children to express individuality and grow creatively. Lowenfeld and Brittain (1987) maintained that both collaborative and individual art experiences are important at this developmental stage. The literature encouraged children to work

together on group art experiences such as creating a mural, a group drawing related to a social action issue, or constructing a city.

Theorists have confirmed the need for children to discover the range of what art materials can offer (Gardner, 1980; Kramer, 1971/1974; Lowenfeld & Brittain, 1987; Rubin, 1978, 2005). Additional importance has been placed on children's right to choose the content and composition of their artistic creations. Kramer acknowledged the need for "broadening the range of experience" but emphasized the importance of exploration through deepening work with basic materials to challenge children's "initiative and inventiveness" (Kramer, 1971/1974, p. 22). Thus, Kramer cautioned the addition of new materials until adolescence. Through committed work with basic materials Kramer believed that formed expression – art that serves self-expression and communication – could be achieved. By contrast, Rubin (1978, 2005) characterized this stage in children's artistic development as personalizing, as children may turn their interests to more abstract art-making or crafts that increase fine motor skills and offer the satisfaction of a finished product. Art created during ages 9 to 12 express children's emerging identity, artwork becomes more intentional, artistic themes are independently chosen and are personally syntonetic.

Hinz (2009) noted that children during this stage of development exhibit a preference for affective and symbolic information processing. Affective information processing involves arousal and expression of emotions through interactions with the art medium. Hinz suggested the notion of working with more fluid mediums as well as with vivid colors to enhance children's experience of exploring affect and coping skills. Suggested materials include chalk pastels or water-soluble oil pastels, and watercolor

applied to wet paper. It was further recommended that children approach art making with a non-mediated process, such as working with clay or plasticine, in order to encourage an opening for felt emotions that can then be labeled or named. Symbolic information processing is concerned with “intuitive and self-oriented concept formation” along with “self-discovery and insight” (p. 148). Utilizing unidentifiable and ambiguous forms created by low structured art tasks such as “sponge prints, scribble drawings, string paintings, blot paintings, and tissue paper collage” (p. 154) encourage discovery of personal symbols.

With increased independence and exploration of identity, imagery takes on more detail and specificity. “Drawing is not a result of careful visual observation, but rather a characterization of what is seen” (Lowenfeld & Brittain, 1978, p. 309). Imagery and objects begin to not only be arranged but also appear to have a relationship to one another thus exhibiting an increased cohesiveness in the visual narrative. Rather than using one baseline as in previous developmental stages, children incorporate multiple baselines and develop planes of space. Overlapping objects is a compositional drawing strategy utilized during this stage and implies an understanding of interrelationship between objects. Children continue to refine their ability to draw from multiple vantage points and are interested in drawing tasks that elicit individual and creative problem solving (Lowenfeld & Brittain, 1987; Piaget & Inhelder, 1969).

Rubin (1978, 2005) identified ages 9 to 12 as the naturalizing phase of artistic development and in agreement with Lowenfeld and Brittain (1987), concluded that imagery in drawings becomes more naturalistic and spatial relationships are depicted more accurately. Children begin to express concern and frustration about artistic ability

as attempts are made to express realism in both two-dimensional and three-dimensional products. Rubin suggested sculpture to help with the frustration of depicting realism. Conversely, Lowenfeld and Brittain asserted that this is an optimal time to inspire realism and encouraged close observation of nature as well as collecting interesting natural objects. Texture, differing shapes, and patterns offer a range of visual experiences and reference points for children to create their own blueprints and designs. Along with nature, reality, perception, and experience become important components of artistic expression.

Art material recommendations for children during the gang stage include: tempera paint, colored paper, natural clay, finger paint, scissors, adhesives such as glue and tape, a stapler, wood and wood working tools, hammer, nails, paper mache, wire, and cloth. Lowenfeld and Brittain (1987) additionally suggested offering containers filled with found objects and scrap material for assemblage and experimentation. In alignment with Kramer (1971/1974), they suggested that children use traditional materials in depth and in creative ways and emphasized that preassembled art kits are considered a “menace to normal curiosity and development” (p. 341).

### **Conclusion for Children’s Art Making Preferences Age 9 to 12**

Children aged 9 to 12 span two developmental stages of cognitive development: the concrete operations and formal operations (Piaget & Inhelder, 1969). Abstract and symbolic thinking develop and children initiate strategies of trial and error in problem solving. At the same time children begin to form groups and focus on their emerging identities (Lowenfeld & Brittain, 1987). Although the literature does not specify children’s artistic preferences, psychologists, art educators, and art therapists have



suggested a variety of art materials such as: chalk pastels or water-soluble oil pastels; watercolor applied to wet paper; clay or plasticine, “mosaic tile, construction paper, and collage” (Hinz, 2009, p. 133); “sponge prints, scribble drawings, string paintings, blot paintings, and tissue paper collage” (Hinz, 2009, p. 154); basic art materials (Kramer, 1971/1974) sculpture and crafts (Rubin, 1978, 2005); natural objects; tempera paint; colored paper; natural clay; finger paint; scissors; adhesives such as glue and tape; staplers; wood and wood working tools; hammer, nails, papier-mâché; wire; cloth; found objects and scrap material (Lowenfeld & Brittain, 1987). The above authors agreed that children need ample time to discover and explore material properties. Therefore children’s preferences are in part formed by individual experiences with materials. In addition, the literature pointed to the importance of group art experiences, leading some to argue that children’s preferences may be informed by their peers.

### **Summary of Developmental Considerations of Children’s Art Making Preferences**

Developmental considerations link cognitive (Piaget & Inhelder, 1969), artistic (Lowenfeld & Brittain, 1987), therapeutic (Kramer, 1971/1974; Rubin, 1978, 2005), and systems (Hinz, 2009) theoretical frameworks understandings of children’s artistic and material preferences. The literature spans from birth to age 12 and illuminates children’s cognitive, physical, emotional, and social experiences in order to understand possible artistic proclivities. It is important to note that assumptions presented in the literature are based on the theorists’ observations and interpretations and are not direct experiences from the children’s point of view. The literature reflects a beginning and growing knowledge base with regard to how children cognitively experience art, develop artistically, and respond to materials. It is clear that more research will be needed in order

to more deeply understand both children's artistic preferences and what influences those preferences.

### **Challenges to Developmental Considerations**

During the 1950s and 1960s in the United States, Piaget and Inhelder's (1956/1967) model of cognitive development was considered revolutionary. Along with other psychologists of this generation, Piaget and Inhelder celebrated the role of young children as active agents in their own development. However this model of "universal emergence" of skills was based on the child's bodily actions upon the environment did not consider the culture of the child (National Research Council and Institute of Medicine, 2000, p. 58). At the time, critics called for a framework that assessed the role of culture in human development.

Lowenfeld and Brittain's (1987) intention in creating a stage model was to help art educators and caregivers of children by offering a set of flexible standards to refer to and to connect with regarding their children's artistic expressions. Although Lowenfeld and Brittain insisted on approaching the study holistically, they have been criticized for being insufficiently sensitive to cultural specificity (Alter-Muri, 2002; Burton, 2001). Due to the elements and inherent nature of a stage theory, criticism tends to focus on the ways in which distinctions and categories applied to development do not fit children's lived experience. On this note, other critics have claimed that Lowenfeld and Brittain's theory is too steeped and biased by in their own historical and cultural moment: the 1960's and 1970's in the US (Alter-Muri, 2002; Burton, 2001). A critical evaluation is not expressed in the art therapy literature pertaining to Kramer's (1971/1974) ways of using art, Rubin's (1978, 2005) stages of artistic development or the Expressive

Therapies Continuum presented by Kagin and Lusebrink (1978), Lusebrink (1990) and Hinz (2009).

### **Personal Experience Considerations for Children's Art Making Preferences**

Seiden (2001) stated that, "If we look to our personal history, each of us has had a natural attraction to certain materials and objects" (p.21). Seiden contended that as artists our material preferences are partially shaped by our early experiences with materials and our relationship to objects. Personal artistic experience is linked with opportunities to engage with art materials, either in children's homes and family life, or in educational settings (Pavlou, 2009). In order to understand one's history with art materials Malchiodi recommended completing a "personal art history" (2006, p. 54) in which the art therapist asks a series of questions related to the client's history and personal experiences with art making and art materials. Although this "personal art history" questionnaire is oriented for adults, it can be modified for children by including age appropriate language.

Lin and Thomas' (2002) mixed method study included 100 participants aged 4 to 25. Their examination required participants to comment on five genres of art, after indicating a preference for a particular style or image, participants were asked two questions, "Describe this picture to me" and "Why do you like it?" (p. 280). Findings suggested that the "development of aesthetic understanding is branching and multidirectional rather than stage-like" (Lin & Thomas, 2002, p. 278) as had been previously suggested. The study confirmed that aesthetics and preferences are greatly determined by particular interests of the individual and their exposure and experiences with art.

Malchiodi clarified that “emotional or cognitive content is dependent on other aspects of the creative process including the specific process introduced and clients’ personal preferences for using art for self-expression” (2012, p. 29). Children’s investment, ability and imaginative capacities can be shaped by access and exposure to art environments such as art museums, art classes, discussions of artists, and family values of imagery and artistic expression (Beal & Miller, 2001; Gandini, Hill, Cadwell & Schwall, 2005; Gardner, 1980, 1994).

### **Cultural Considerations for Children’s Art Making Preferences**

Kramer asserted that the way in which art materials are offered by art therapists is largely determined by the “cultural environment in which we function” (2002, p. 219). Kramer claimed that it is not the transference and countertransference that is central in art therapy, but the clients’ relationship to their artwork. The task of art therapy is to help give form to clients’ issues through quality art materials, so that they can further confront “what they see” (p. 222). Kramer advocated that art therapists foster a rich and deep relationship between their client and the client’s use of materials while remaining cognizant of the culture of the client and that of the art therapist. Although Kramer does not explicitly state that culture influences artistic preferences, it is implied that children are shaped by their cultural environment and that the cultural exposure to art may influence artistic preferences in art making. Seiden (2001) concurred, “Our attraction and attachment to certain materials is shaped by personal history as well as the enormous influence of culture” (p. 21).

Moon (2010) compared the use of materials as a tangible form of language to that of verbal spoken or written language. Highlighting the unique subtleties and details that

art materials afford, Moon stated that these characteristics “provide the potential for a highly developed, nuanced, and intelligible means of communication” (p. xv). Moon called for a critical discourse that includes understanding materials and media within larger societal and cultural vantage points and henceforth questions “the field’s preference for fine arts materials” (p.xvii). Emphasizing that fine art materials may inhibit more culturally aware and sensitive art making, art therapists are encouraged to underscore the purposeful use of materials to “increase cultural competence” (p. xvii). Although Moon did not directly address the culture of children, the author highlighted the importance of matching clients’ “artistic intentions” (p.xxii) with the most appropriate materials.

Gardner (1994) claimed individual approaches to art-making are influenced in part by, heredity, skill, personal temperament, and largely by the perceptions and opinions of family, friends and the culture that children are immersed in. Adults’ opinions are also thought to have an impact on children’s propensities toward art making. Lowenfeld and Brittain (1987) stated that the way in which adults respond to initial mark making can send strong messages to children about their ability to create and learn and thus impact the children’s attitude as learning unfolds. Golomb (2007) recognized the important role that culture has in artistic development and stated that cultural models and continued instruction significantly impact artistic progression.

### **Art Therapist Influences on Children’s Art Making Preferences**

Rubin (1978, 2005) argued that the most salient psychological element in art therapy is the adult’s attitude when art materials are offered to children. Rubin highlighted three main components of the adult’s approach to children: (a) attitude,

related to trust vs. mistrust; (b) expectations, related to positive vs. negative; and (c) personal qualities, related to empathy vs. distance (1978, 2005, p.23). Rubin stated that above all, in order to provide opportunities for decision-making and child-initiated choices regarding art materials, the adult must have a solid belief and trust in the child's innate abilities to move toward independence, growth, and exploration. In addition to the adult's attitude, Rubin asserted, "If there is enough variety, [of materials] then children can discover and develop their own unique tastes and preferences, their own favorite forms of expression" (p. 29). While presenting a range of two-dimensional and three-dimensional art materials to children is important, equally important is the way in which the adult offers and invites children to explore and discover which materials may be preferential.

Moon (2010) called for an awareness of aesthetic preferences and bias on part of the art therapist and encouraged a reflective practice to consider which materials are offered in art therapy. Similar to Rubin, Moon referred back to the art therapist's responsibility to tend to the actual materials presented as well as the approach the art therapist takes in offering materials. Lastly, Cattaneo (1994) pointed to the need for art therapists to recognize culturally bound aesthetics that may impact material selection in art therapy.

### **Summary**

This literature review drew upon a diverse range of knowledge drawn from art therapists, psychologists, art educators, and child educators. The literature review sought to answer questions related to both children's artistic preferences and what influences may be instrumental in shaping children's inclinations for art making. The search resulted

in a knowledge base from seminal theories, and qualitative as well as quantitative studies that addressed: historical and contemporary understanding of material use in art therapy; material focused art evaluations for children in art therapy; a list of potential materials recommended for art therapy; children's cognitive capacity and artistic development from birth to age 12 combined with art therapy theories; and potential influences on artistic preference by personal art history, cultural considerations and artistic preferences presented by the art therapist in art therapy. However there was a considerable gap in the literature with regard to empirical research that spoke directly to the research question. Additionally, there was a significant gap in the literature that addressed children's point of view as research participants.

The topic of children's artistic preference remains an important and understudied foundational aspect of the field of art therapy (Malchiodi, 2012; Moon, 2010). The literature supported the notion that materials are an essential component in art therapy, a component that identifies the field as separate from other mental health professions (Malchiodi, 2012). As some have suggested, providing preferential materials may enhance intrinsic motivation (Jaquith, 2011), an openness to art therapy treatment (Aach-Feldman & Kenkle-Miller, 2001), and an articulated understanding of information processing (Hinz, 2009).

## CHAPTER 3

### Method

#### Qualitative Research

This study employed a qualitative phenomenological research approach to understand children's experiences with art materials and to explore children's artistic preferences. A qualitative phenomenological research approach underscores the importance of understanding lived experiences (Creswell, 1998; Danaher & Broid, 2005; Moustakas, 1994). This inquiry explored what might inform or contribute to children's formation of artistic preferences. Additional questions encompassed children's proclivities when creating two-dimensional and three-dimensional art as well as what meaning these experiences and art forms hold for children. Lastly, this study considered what children's material and art making preferences mean for the practice of art therapy.

The qualitative phenomenological approach fits this research inquiry in a number of significant and specific ways. This research study sought to gather first-hand experience and develop rich descriptions of experience from children's perspectives. As the children were either interviewed alone or in dyads, the study pursued knowledge from the "explicit life-world experiences of individual *I*," and explored "shared structures of meaning implicit in the *we*" (Danaher & Broid, 2005, p. 217). Green and Hogan (2005) and others (Dewey, 1934; Vygotsky, 1978) asserted that experience is socially mediated, based on the perspectives and discourse made available to us. Further, Creswell (1998) asserted qualitative research is an appropriate match when the researcher takes on a role



as an active learner and shares the data from the point of view of the participants, rather than from the remove of an expert.

Qualitative research is a “situated activity that locates the observer in the world” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 3), it occurs in a natural setting (Creswell, 1998) and consists in practices that contribute to a richer, fuller view of the world. In this case, the study hoped to explore children’s perspectives on art making preferences. The research study engaged children who reflected on their experience as they created different art forms and employed a range of art materials in familiar art-making environments. As a result, a variety of representations inform the visibility and scope of what we can know about children’s artistic experiences. Greene and Hogan (2005) speak to the importance of multiple approaches when researching with children and highlight that methodology should be “suited to children’s level of understanding, knowledge and interests” (p. 8).

Employing a qualitative phenomenological approach fits the researcher’s professional training as an art therapist and mental health counselor, in which the researcher has been trained and is familiar with interviewing and observing naturalistic, up-close experiences of art making. Additionally, qualitative research supports innovation and creativity in ways that are consistent with the goals of this study (Creswell, 2009).

## **Research Protocol**

### **Participants**

To obtain participants, the researcher utilized email and word of mouth to contact art teachers who would ideally serve as gatekeepers. The gatekeepers would allow the researcher to gain access to his or her art classroom to assess potential research

participants. When email and word of mouth were not successful, the researcher contacted an art teacher who the researcher knew. This particular art teacher's instruction included a wide range of materials and she had been awarded the "best art teacher of the year" by the state of Massachusetts. The art teacher was employed full-time in an elementary school. The researcher and the art teacher met several times to discuss the purpose of the research study. The principal and the art teacher authorized the researcher to conduct the research study with students in the art classroom.

The researcher served as a participant-observer in art classes of an elementary school on Mondays from late September of 2011 to late January of 2012. Children were observed by the researcher once a week from 8:30am to 2:30pm, with each class time lasting 45 minutes. Green and Hogan (2005) asserted that the amount of time committed to establishing rapport between children and the researcher significantly shapes children's levels of trust when interviewed as well as their understanding of the research purpose. The researcher did not know any of the children prior to the study. The researcher observed and participated in kindergarten, first, second, fourth and fifth grade classes. A typical classroom had 24 children. With the inclusion of interview time, the researcher observed the children for approximately 87 hours over the span of 13 weeks. Lastly, after data were analyzed and themes were identified, the researcher observed four days in the classroom to check in with the participants.

The goal as participant-observer was to select participants for the research study. As participant-observer, the researcher observed children making art, assisted and supported children in creating art, and established rapport with children in the classroom (Hill, 2005; Thorne, 2010). The researcher related to the children through discussion of

art products and art process. Questions were asked regarding artistic decisions as well as experiences with the materials that children were using. The researcher as participant-observer asked exploratory questions that helped her understand children's artistic choices and creations and to further connect with the children's lived experiences (Beal & Miller, 2001; Gandini, Hill, Cadwell, & Schwall, 2005; Lowenfeld & Brittain, 1987).

The researcher developed a set of questions to help identify potential research participants. In the design of these questions, the researcher considered what was relevant for the study to be informed. In addition, the researcher prioritized the children's experience from an ethical standpoint (Hill, 2005).

- Does this child seem to enjoy creating artwork?
- Has this child had a variety of art making experiences?
- Has it been easy for this child to relate and interact with me, respond to my questions, and have spontaneous conversations?
- Have I heard this child express his or her opinion?
- Can this child describe his or her art making with accuracy?
- Can he or she share likes and dislikes?
- Would this child benefit from participating in this study?

The researcher identified 51 children as potential participants: 12 fifth graders, 13 fourth graders, 8 second graders, 9 first graders, and 9 kindergarteners. Next, a letter entitled "Invitation for Participation in a Study of Children's Art Making" (see Appendix A) was sent to appropriate parents and guardians. This letter included: an introduction to the researcher; the researcher's role and relationship to the child; a description of what would happen during the research study; and the purpose of the research. Due to the

initial unresponsiveness from kindergarten and second grade parents and guardians, the researcher sent home a second invitation (see Appendix B) that identified the child's name, offered a more detailed description about the researcher's role in knowing the child, and invited the parent or guardian to be present for the study. Parents or guardians of kindergarteners and second graders did respond to this second letter. Of the 51 total invitations sent, 17 parents or guardians responded via email or phone expressing interest in having their child involved in the study.

After receiving a response, the researcher offered parents or guardians a brief review of the purpose and design of the study and addressed any questions or concerns. Consent forms and forms related to the child's personal history with art-making were also reviewed in this conversation. The forms were approved by the IRB of Lesley University and included: the Doctoral Research and Informed Consent form (Appendix C); Consent to Digitally Record, Use and/or Display Research Data form (Appendix D); Demographic Information form (Appendix E); and the Art Experience Information for Research form (Appendix F). Of the 17 respondents, 15 parents or guardians returned the forms completed and signed. Of the 15 children that returned completed and signed forms, 13 children committed to a set date for the study.

The children's names have been changed to protect their privacy and to provide confidentiality. Participants included: two 5 year old kindergarteners named Caden and Molly; two 6 year old first graders named Aaron and Mae; two 8 year old second graders named Devon and Jenna; two 9 year old fourth graders Abbey and Sarah, and two 10 year old fourth graders named Matthew and Reese; two 10 year old fifth graders named Elisa and Alea, and one 11 year old fifth grader named Emma.

Table 1

*Participants*

<i>Name</i>	<i>Grade</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Sex</i>
Caden	Kindergarten	5	M
Molly	Kindergarten	5	F
Aaron	First	6	M
Mae	First	6	F
Devon	Second	8	M
Jenna	Second	8	F
Abbey	Fourth	9	F
Sarah	Fourth	9	F
Matthew	Fourth	10	M
Reese	Fourth	10	F
Elisa	Fifth	10	F
Alea	Fifth	10	F
Emma	Fifth	11	F

**Ethical Considerations**

Because the study included children, specific ethical considerations were taken into account and shaped all features of the study, especially regarding its methodology. The researcher followed ethical principles when researching children presented by Alderson (1995, 2000). Hill stated these principles can be understood as a set of rights and include: “self-determination, privacy, dignity, anonymity, confidentiality, fair

treatment, and protection from discomfort or harm” (2005, p. 65). At the beginning of the interview and art making experience the researcher stated the children’s rights clearly. The researcher explained that the children could talk with their parents or guardians, the art teacher, or any other child during the study and that the children could leave the room at any time and that they could end participation in the study at any time without consequence or judgment. The researcher was aware of the power differential between the researcher and the children and through ethical approaches sought to decrease this discrepancy. In order to ease anxiety and empower the children in the participant research role, the researcher highlighted the learning role of the researcher and the teaching role of the participants (Hill, 2005).

The children’s assent to research was requested by the researcher (Hill, 2005; Greig, Taylor, & MacKay, 2007). The researcher presented and explained the following forms: Doctoral Research and Informed Assent (see Appendix G) and the Child Assent to Digitally Record, Use and/or Display Research Data forms (see Appendix H). These documents included language that could be easily understood by children. Additionally, children were asked for their consent to be recorded and for the process and product of their art making to be photographed.

After the data collection was complete the children were given a small thank you gift for participating in the study (Hill, 2005). The researcher thanked the art department of the elementary school by donating a one-year membership to a local recycling center that salvages reusable materials and a \$100.00 direct donation to the art department.

## Data Collection

Data collection for the study consisted in obtaining first hand reports from children regarding their experience of art making preferences. Data were collected from late September of 2011 to late January of 2012. Data collection also included an art making experience with a choice of content and a choice of two-dimensional and three-dimensional art materials. A semi-structured interview was conducted with each participant either immediately following or during the art making experience. Data were collected by two forms that the researcher created and were completed by the children's parent or guardian. These parent or guardian questionnaires included the Art Experience Information for Research Form (Appendix F) and The Demographic Form (Appendix E). Additional sources of data included the researcher's field notes and field observations as well as photographs the researcher took of both children engaged in art making and the final art products.

The interview data, which included the art making experience, were collected in the children's art classroom in the children's elementary school. This was in alignment with Westcott and Littleton's (2005) ethical position that children should be involved in research environments that correspond to the inquiry being explored, and to Morrow and Richards (1996) assertion that familiar research environments for children increase the veracity of reported experience.

The purpose of each method was to collect data that specifically related to the research questions. The overarching research inquiry encompassed the following questions:

1. What are children's art making preferences?

2. What do children consider as they initiate a choice of art materials?
3. What experiences of meaning in art making do two-dimensional and three-dimensional art forms hold for children?
4. What informs and contributes to children's preferences in art making?
5. What importance does child preference for art materials and art forms hold for the practice of art therapy?

**Art making experience.** Two children from the same grade met with the researcher directly after the traditional school day, from 2pm until approximately 3:15 pm. Fourth graders and one fifth grader were the exception because of scheduling difficulties and therefore met with the researcher individually. Art making was the first step in collecting data directly from the children regarding their artistic preferences. This method of data collection directly related to research questions one, two, and three. The art making experience sought to illuminate children's lived experience and preference of art materials and art forms when offered choice.

During the art making experience children were given free choice of what to create, though if this decision was difficult the researcher suggested an animal of choice. The children were asked to create the same subject in both two dimensions and three dimensions. The suggestions above are consistent with previous research conducted with children and art making (Golomb & McCormick, 1995; Kramer & Schehr, 2000; Pavlou, 2009). Two-dimensional art materials (Appendix J) included: 8.5" x 11" white drawing paper; a pencil with an eraser; a hand held eraser; color pencils; a ballpoint pen; a thin and thick black sharpie; fine point markers; thick markers; craypas; and crayons. After the children completed the two-dimensional artwork the researcher cleared the table and



presented the three-dimensional materials. Three-dimensional art materials (Appendix J) included: grey self-hardening clay; a 24 pack of plasticine non-hardening clay in a variety of colors; wire and wire tools; newspaper with masking tape; wood sticks (popsicle sticks) and wood glue.

**Interview.** The interview occurred either at the end of the overall art making experience or during the process of art making. The art making and interview process lasted for approximately one hour and 15 minutes. The interview offered an opportunity for children to reflect upon their immediate and past art making experiences. The researcher asked questions that were open-ended and followed up with probing questions based on the children's responses (Greene & Hogan, 2005; Malchiodi, 1998; Moustakas, 1994; Westcott & Littleton, 2005). The researcher utilized active listening and would often repeat what was heard in order to accurately understand the children's expressions. The researcher presented questions regarding the children's artistic experiences related to the research inquiry. However, the interview process was co-constructed with the children. Indeed, often, the children would ask each other questions and engage in inquiry. The children were viewed as active and engaged participants in the research interview process (Westcott & Littleton, 2005).

The interview data collected were the primary data of the research study and addressed research questions one, two, three, and four. Each interview question was developed in order to guide the interview process and to further explore and understand children's experiences with art materials, and both artistic and material preferences. The questions evoked responses and provided focus for the research conversation. The

interview was guided by a flexible set of questions (Appendix I) and addressed the following:

- Children’s choice of subject and what was created in the art making experience
- Children’s choice of art materials during the art making experience
- Children’s experience of the art material
- Feelings related to using the art material
- History and preference for art materials
- Preference for creating in two dimensions and three dimensions
- Preference for drawing or sculpting
- If participants would make different choices in subject or art materials regarding the art making experience
- What children like and dislike about the art making experiences in general
- Children’s experiences of being asked questions related to art making and being interviewed in the current study
- Children’s identity as artists
- Art forms and art materials that children typically create with
- Children’s experiences of creating art outside of art class and in the home
- Children’s experiences of friends or family members and art making

**Parent or guardian questionnaires.** The questionnaires completed by the parents or guardians of the children served as a form of triangulation for the research. Creswell (1998) described triangulation as the “use of multiple and different sources, methods, investigators and theories in order to provide corroborating evidence” (p. 202).

The perspective of the parents or guardians provided another lens from which to understand the children's lived experiences with art making. The researcher developed each form based on information that may be useful for the research inquiry.

***The demographic form.*** The Demographic Form (Appendix E) provided a standard method to obtain basic information about the children's lives. This form was completed by the children's parents or guardians and returned along with the consent forms. The Demographic Form clarified personal and demographic information: the child's age; ethnicity; the relationship and age of those the child was living with; highest educational level of parents or guardians; if two parents or guardians were in the home; and length of their relationship. The demographic information gave the researcher a practical view of the children and helped to shed light on the children's lived experiences. Data from the Demographic Form sought to address research question number four. The researcher was curious if family life and education levels of parents would influence children's art making preferences.

***The art experience for research form.*** The researcher developed The Art Experience for Research Form (Appendix F) which was adapted from Malchiodi's questionnaire titled, "Your Personal Art History" (2006, p. 53). The purpose of Malchiodi's questionnaire was to explore "personal beliefs and experiences with art" (p. 53) before engaging in art therapy. The Art Experience for Research Form was developed by the researcher and completed by the children's parents or guardians in order figure out how parents or guardians understood their children's experiences with art. More specifically, the form was developed in order to obtain concrete information about the children's history with art materials and art making. Data from The Art Experience for

Research Form sought to address research questions number one and four. Below are questions that were presented on The Art Experience for Research Form:

- How does your child generally feel about their art and art making?
- What kind of art did or has your child created when they were toddler or preschool aged?
- What did your child seem to enjoy most about art making?
- What did he or she seem to like least?
- Has your child taken classes or focused on art making outside of learning about art in school? How so?
- In what other ways has your child seen or been involved in art and art making?
- Lastly could you list what kind of art supplies or art influences are in your home?
- Please share anything else you think is important in understanding your child's relationship to art and art making.

The responses from parents and guardians offered an additional view into the children's art making experiences and helped the researcher further comprehend children's history and preferences for working with art materials. The last question ("Please share anything else you think is important in understanding your child's relationship to art and art making") was left intentionally open ended in order to illuminate aspects of children's art making that might be have been unaddressed in the questionnaire. The questions presented on this form were also addressed with the children during the interview process.

### **Data Preservation**

Interviews were recorded on a digital voice recorder and then transferred to the researcher's computer for preservation and password protection. Interviews were then

erased from the digital voice-recording device. The researcher photographed the children while engaged in art making, during the interview, and of the art products, as well. These photographs were taken on the researcher's digital camera and then transferred to a file on the researcher's computer which was password protected. The photographs were then erased from the researcher's digital camera. Printed interview transcripts, consent forms, assent forms, as well as the completed Art Experience for Research Form and Demographic Form were collated and maintained in a locked file cabinet. At the end of the interview, the children kept the art products they created in the study.

### **Method of Data Analysis**

#### **Analysis of Interview Data**

The researcher utilized a phenomenological approach to data analysis informed and outlined by Moustakas (1994) which was an adaption of the "Stevick- Colaizzi- Keen method of analysis" (p. 121). The interviews were the primary data of this study and were analyzed by the phenomenological approach. The researcher followed the steps below for each interview (p. 122).

1. Using a phenomenological approach, obtain a full description of your own experience of the phenomena.
2. From the verbatim transcript of your experience complete the following steps:
  - a. Consider each statement with respect to significance for description of the experience.
  - b. Record all relevant statements.
  - c. List each nonrepetitive, nonoverlapping statement. These are the invariant horizons or meaning units of the experience.

- d. Relate and cluster the invariant meaning units into themes.
  - e. Synthesize the invariant meaning units and themes into a *description of the textures of the experience*. Include verbatim examples.
  - f. Reflect on your own textural description. Through imaginative variation, construct a *description of the structures of your experience*.
  - g. Construct a *textural-structural description* of the meanings and essences of your experience.
3. From the verbatim transcript of the experience of *each* of the other *co-researchers*, complete the above steps, a through g.
  4. From the individual textural-structural descriptions of all the co-researchers' experiences, construct a *composite textural-structural description of the meanings and essences of the experience*, integrating all individual textural-structural descriptions into a universal description of the experience representing the group as a whole.

Danaher and Broid clarified that “phenomenologists do not prejudice the freshness and ‘whole cloth’ of lived experience by deciding understanding in advance using preconceived categories” (2005, p. 219). Rather, the aim of a phenomenological study of children seeks to clarify, describe, and interpret children’s unique ways of tending to the world. Engaging in epoche and bracketing is the first stage in analyzing data from a phenomenological standpoint.

Moustakas (1994) described epoche as “refraining from judgment” and from previous understanding of the phenomena. The process of epoche encourages the researcher to view the phenomena with fresh eyes – in other words, to see what is before

us without bias from past experiences. In order to set aside biases the researcher engaged in bracketing (Creswell, 1998) which entails acknowledging bias and bracketing it or setting biases aside with the purpose of being fully present with the phenomena, as it is experienced by the participants. Thus, before approaching the data, the researcher bracketed bias and assumptions as well as wishes and desires related to children's art making and two-dimensional and three-dimensional art making. Specifically the researcher bracketed preferences for creating with specific art materials, for creating sculptures and installations, and feelings regarding children's art making.

**Step 1.** The researcher listened to each interview and followed along with the typed transcript and jotted down notes in order to create *a full description of her own experience of the phenomena*, of what the researcher observed and how the researcher experienced the children while engaged in art making and being interviewed. The researcher revisited field notes as well as photographs that were taken of the children and utilized the data to inform the overall description of observing the phenomena. The researcher delineated the outstanding and repeated features of observing the phenomena as well as anomalies to construct a descriptive composite summary.

**Step 2.** For each interview, the researcher listened to the interview and followed along with the typed transcript. The researcher considered each statement as it related to the description of the experience and as it related to the research inquiry. As an example, a child spoke about preferring to work in clay to represent a cat because it rendered that cat more realistic. She then continued to speak about where she adopted her cat, who her cat likes best in her family. In this session, the researcher was most attuned to the descriptive features of the interview because these were most relevant to the research

inquiry. The researcher recorded all relevant statements in a word document for each interview. Next, the researcher delineated nonrepetitive statements and identified these statements as meaning units. These meaning units were then clustered. If a meaning unit was found in each interview it was highlighted and identified as an emergent theme. Themes that emerged across all interviews were identified. Each identified theme was organized in a separate word document. The researcher constructed a *description of the textures of experience* for each theme that included verbatim examples from the children. The *textural description* seeks to describe the *what* of the experience (Creswell, 1998; Moustakas, 1994).

Imaginative variation seeks possible meanings by approaching the phenomena from a variety of perspectives and varying frames of reference and helps to illuminate how the phenomena came to be experienced. The purpose of imaginative variation is to reflect on how the facts of the experience can transfer to the realm of ideas and possibilities (Moustakas, 1994). To engage in imaginative variation the researcher requested a peer to review the themes and *textural descriptions* and to generate questions for the researcher. These questions generated from the peer reviewer contributed to the researcher's reflection and development of a *structural description* for each theme. The structural description consists of the "conditions, situations, or context" (Creswell, 2009, p.60) in which the participants experienced the phenomena. The researcher took into consideration the children's context of art making, situations the children were exposed to with regard to art making, as well as the conditions in which the children were engaged in art making. Moustakas (1994) stated, "structural description involves conscious acts of thinking and judging, imagining, and recollecting in order to arrive at core structural



meanings” (p. 79) and “provides a vivid account of the underlying dynamics of the experience” (p. 135). For each theme the researcher constructed a combined *textural structural description* to describe meaning and essence of the experience of the phenomena related to the theme.

**Step 3.** The third step repeats Step 2 for each interview and is therefore described above.

**Step 4.** The fourth step involved constructing a *final synthesis* which included a *total composite textural structural description* of the phenomena based on meaning of all combined thematic *textural structural descriptions*. This description encompasses a universal description of the experience representing the participants as a whole group.

### **Analysis of the Parent or Guardian Questionnaire Data**

**Demographic and art experience for research forms.** The researcher analyzed the data collected from the Demographic Form and the Art Experience for Research Form. In order to determine which data were most important, the researcher considered the answers that would corroborate or challenge evidence.

### **Organization of Data and Presentation of Results**

**Organization and presentation of parent or guardian questionnaire results.** The data results from the Demographic Form were organized and presented in a table entitled “Participant Demographics.” The data results from the art experience for research form are organized and presented in a table entitled “Children’s Art Experiences.”

**Organization and presentation of interview results.** Results of the interview are organized as follows:

1. A written descriptive composite summary of observed phenomena from the researcher's observations.
2. The analysis process of how the researcher arrived at a theme cluster and formulated meaning. This data is presented in a table format.
3. Each theme separately is presented and the following data is presented:
  - a. A written description of the textures of the experience from participants, including verbatim examples.
  - b. Presenting questions that were generated through imaginative variation and peer review.
  - c. A written description of the structures of the experience.
  - d. A written combined textural and structural description that describes the meaning and essence of the experience.
4. A written Total Composite and Final Synthesis description of the experience based on the meaning of all combined thematic textural-structural descriptions.

### **Verification Procedures**

The researcher engaged in verification procedures for qualitative research as outlined by Creswell (1998). Creswell presented the question, "How do we know that the qualitative study is believable, accurate and 'right'?" (p. 193). Validation procedures were identified as a source for answering the above question. The researcher employed validation procedures throughout the entire research process and sought to establish trustworthiness of the study.

### **Prolonged Engagement**

Prolonged engagement and persistent observation are described as time spent in the field establishing trust with participants, observing and educating oneself about the culture of the participants and delineating what was most important and relevant to the study (Creswell, 1998). The researcher employed prolonged engagement and persistent observation by spending from late September 2011 to late January 2012 with the children. In the role of participant-observer the researcher established rapport with the children and learned about their culture, specifically in the art classroom. During the prolonged engagement the researcher observed, collected data, and solicited member checks.

### **Triangulation**

Triangulation refers to the process of employing a variety of data sources in order to corroborate or contrast evidence. When researching with children, a variety of data sources have been recommended to “stimulate and maintain [their] interest” (Greene & Hill, 2005, p.16). The research protocol intentionally included multiple forms of data collection: the researcher’s field and observation notes; children’s art making experience; photographs taken by the researcher of the children’s art making experience; interviews with the children; and parent and guardian questionnaires that addressed demographic information and children’s art experiences.

### **Member Checking**

Greene and Hogan (2005) stated that member checking is “in line with the goal of keeping faith with the children’s own perspective and voice” (p. 12). Member-checking occurred during the interview process to confirm that the researcher accurately

understood what the children had expressed. Member checking also occurred after the researcher identified themes or specific descriptions. Photographs that the researcher had taken of the children during the study were shared with them during member checking. The researcher corresponded with the gatekeeper to check that the researcher's self-reported role and time commitment were consistent with the gatekeeper's experience (Personal Communication June 4, 2012).

### **Clarifying Researcher Bias**

Because qualitative research is interpretive, the researcher's personal background, bias, and values shape the interpretation (Creswell, 2009). This researcher brought a number of professional and personal assumptions to the study. The researcher is a board certified and registered art therapist and licensed mental health counselor and therefore carries a belief that values art making and visual thinking. The researcher is also an artist who enjoys using tactile materials to create sculptures, assemblages, and arranged installations. The researcher is a mother of young children and therefore immersed in the daily lived experience of children. Throughout the study the researcher engaged in bracketing and utilized field notes to become more self-aware and self-conscious of bias in her practice.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **Results**

#### **Introduction**

The research study sought to understand children's material preferences in art making. Further, the study questioned what children consider as they initiate a choice of materials and what experiences of meaning two-dimensional and three-dimensional art forms hold for children. Lastly, the study explored what contributes or informs children's preferences in art making. A qualitative phenomenological approach (Moustakas, 1994) was employed to collect and analyze data in order to consolidate, interpret and make meaning of the children's experiences. Though the researcher intends to contribute to theory-making, this project is careful to respect the composite experience of art making preferences for these unique 13 children.

The Demographic Form and The Art Experience for Research Form were developed by the researcher and completed by the children's parents or guardians. Results from the Demographic Form are shown in Table 2. The Art Experience for Research Form gathered information regarding children's experiences with art making, and results are shown in the section titled Children's Art Experiences, organized in Tables 3, 4 and 5.

Data results from the interviews are organized under the title, Data Results from the Interviews. Table 6 shows a sample of a child's significant statements interpreted by the researcher and construed into formulated meaning units. The researcher constructed 50 formulated meaning units (see Appendix K). The formulated meaning units were then assessed across all children. If a formulated meaning unit was found in more than half of

the children it was identified an emergent sub-theme. Table 7 displays a sample of how the researcher interpreted participants' significant statements to identify emergent sub-themes. Nine emergent sub-themes were identified. The researcher consolidated the nine emergent sub-themes into four main themes, shown in Table 8. 1. The children experienced support for art making in the home and by family members. 2. The children expressed preference for creating in three dimensions and identified the sensory and kinesthetic experience as preferential. 3. The children experienced choice in art making as meaningful. 4. The children's two-dimensional mixed media artwork was informed by experiential knowledge of material qualities.

The four main themes are described by the phenomenological method of analysis outlined by Moustakas (1994). Results include: a composite summary of observed phenomena from the researcher's observations; a textural description of the experience; imaginative variation conducted by a peer reviewer; a structural description of the theme; a composite textural-structural description; and lastly, a total composite and final synthesis description.

## Data Results From the Demographic Form

Table 2

### *Child Demographics*

<i>Name</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Sex</i>	<i>Race/Ethnicity</i>	<i>Living with Parents/ Guardians</i>	<i>Length of Commitment</i>	<i>Highest Education of Parents/ Guardians</i>
Caden	5	M	Not reported	two parents	23	Bachelor's
Molly	5	F	White	two parents	10	Bachelor's
Aaron	6	M	Caucasian	two parents	12	Master's
Mae	6	F	African American/ Caucasian	one guardian		Master's
Devon	8	M	White	two parents	10	Bachelor's
Jenna	8	F	White	two parents	14	Bachelor's
Abbey	9	F	White	two parents	12	Associate's
Sarah	9	F	Caucasian	two parents	11	Master's
Matthew	10	M	White	two parents	12	Associate's
Reese	10	F	White	two parents	14	Bachelor's
Elisa	10	F	Caucasian	two parents	16	Bachelor's
Alea	10	F	Asian	one parent		Post Master's
Emma	11	F	White/Caucasian	two parents	16	Bachelor's

Table 2 illustrates that two of the children lived in single parent or single guardian homes. Eleven of the 13 children lived in a two parent home in which the parents report a committed relationship of 10 or more years. This may be interpreted as relational stability, which may impact the stability of the child's home life. The reported highest education level of parents and guardians ranges from Associate to post-Master's degrees. Living with a well-educated parent or guardian may mean that values in the home reflect importance of education, critical thinking, and access to such resources.

## Data Results From the Art Experience for Research Form

Table 3

### *Children's Art Experiences: Feelings Related to Art Making, Early Experiences with Art Making and Involvement Outside of School with Art Making*

<i>Name</i>	<i>Feelings Related to Art Making</i>	<i>Early Experiences With Art Making</i>	<i>Involvement Outside of School with Art Making</i>
Caden	enjoys doing art very much	finger and brush paints, glue on shapes, stamping, art was always involved, his daily job and favorite thing	visits to art museums, pottery classes and construction projects makes art at home
Molly	loves art and being creative	drawings and paintings of people and animals	pottery classes daily art at home
Aaron	loves to draw and create	collages, drawing, rubbings, coloring	unable to find good and affordable programs, makes art at home, draws for hours
Mae	confident, focused, happy, relaxed,	not known	makes art at home
Devon	loves art and being creative	sculptures, drawings	pottery and art at home
Jenna	feels good about art making	drawing, gluing, scrapbooking, nature projects	summer art camps, makes art at home
Abbey	loves art	coloring, paint, clay	art classes, pottery classes, painting pottery
Sarah	enjoys art but can feel a lack of confidence	paint, crayons, pens, pencils, clay, blocks, popsicle sticks, beads	summer camps, visits to art museums
Matthew	loves art	regular school art	afterschool art class, my office is filled with his creations, kids love to see his work
Reese	loves art	pictures, painting, sculptures, sand art, scrapbooking, nature projects	scrapbooking, pottery class, painting pottery, summer art camps
Elisa	loves art and anything creative, has an amazing imagination	paint, foam letters, coloring, play dough	no
Alea	very proud of her art and enjoys creating art	painting and craft projects	painting classes, craft club
Emma	loves to do art and being creative	all arts and crafts, painted a lot	just at home



Data results from Table 2 were collected by the children's parent or guardian. Results show that all 13 children experienced positive feelings related to art making. Commonly repeated words in this category were "love," "creative," and "enjoy." Sarah's parent reported that Sarah enjoys art but can also experience a "lack of confidence." Eleven of the 13 children experienced art making at an early age. At least two art forms were reported, with the most frequent being painting and drawing. Additionally, clay and crafts were mentioned among the 11 children. Mae's guardian reported "not known" under this category and Matthew's parent reported "school art" which was non-descriptive and therefore difficult to interpret. Nine of the 13 children experienced art instruction outside of their school through either specific art classes or art camps. Responses included that seven of the children made art at home. Caden's and Sarah's parents included museum visits. Elisa's parent responded "no" to this category.

The results from Table 2 show that the majority of children in the study experienced positive feelings related to art making, had early life experiences with art making with at least two art forms, and were involved in art experiences outside of school through specific art classes, art camps, and art making at home. These results may reflect that the children were encouraged early in their life to experience art making and had positive experiences and responses to their art all of which may have contributed to love and enjoyment of creating art. The majority of children also experienced support and opportunities to continue their interest in art making outside of school.

Table 4

*Children's Art Experiences: Home Art Supplies*

<i>Two-dimensional Art Materials</i>	<i>Number of Total Responses</i>	<i>Three-Dimensional Art Materials</i>	<i>Number of Total Responses</i>
<b>Drawing</b> Markers (8) Colored pencils (10) Crayons (10) Chalk (1)	17	<b>Clay</b> Play dough (4) Clay (3) Sculptures (2) Model magic (1)	10
<b>Paint</b> Paints (12) Paint-dobbers (1)	13	<b>Construction/Sculpture</b> Duct tape (1) Wood (1) Recycled materials (1) Foam(2) Legos (1)	6
<b>Paper/Supports</b> Paper (7) Sketchbooks (1) Tissue paper (1) Cardboard (1) Poster board (1) Canvas (1) Whiteboard (1)	13	<b>Craft</b> Painting pottery (2) Pom poms (1) Stamps (3) Beads (2) Stickers (3) Many crafts( 2) Papier-mâché (1) Origami (1)	15
<b>Collage</b> Scrapbooking materials (1) Magazines (1) Collage materials (1) Mixed media (1) Photography (1)	5	<b>Fiber arts</b> Knitting supplies (1) Fabric swatches, ribbon (3)	4
<b>Total Responses for Two-dimensional Materials</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>Total Responses for Three-dimensional Materials</b>	<b>35</b>

Additional data from the question regarding art supplies or art influences in the home included materials such as glue, scissors, tape, stapler, and etc. These materials were difficult to categorize as either two or three-dimensional and are not included in Table 4. Caden's parent commented that Caden has an annual in home art show.

Matthew's parent commented that, "his grandfather and father loved to draw and were great at it." Reese's parent commented that there was, "lots of art around here [in the home] – she loves to create and show it off or give art as a gift." Alea's parent commented that Alea "was inspired by an artist demonstrating origami at school."

Table 4 shows the number of responses each material received across all the children, along with total responses for the specific category of art supplies. Across all recorded data, children, parents or guardians identified 42 total art materials. The category of art supplies in the home that received most to least responses are as follows: drawing, craft, paint, paper/supports, clay, construction/sculpture, collage, and lastly, fiber arts. Traditional and non-traditional art supplies were reported as well as two-dimensional and three-dimensional materials. Two-dimensional art materials received a total of 48 responses and three-dimensional materials received a total of 35 responses.

Table 4 shows that the children's homes contained a wide variety of art supplies that offered opportunities for a wide range of art making experiences. Therefore children had opportunities to create art in the home and to understand specific material properties and how materials work. Additionally, having a range of art materials in the home afforded children the opportunity to compare and assess artistic preferences.

Table 5

*Children's Art Experiences: Likes Most and Likes Least About Art Making*

<i>Likes/Dislikes</i>	<i>Number of</i>	<i>Sample Supporting Statements</i>
	<i>Children</i>	
Likes most: With Consideration Of Process in Art Making	8	<i>Likes free expression</i> <i>Likes open ended free art</i> <i>Likes freedom to be creative</i>
Likes most: With Consideration Of Material Quality	5	<i>Likes painting</i> <i>Likes projects that involve three-dimensional materials</i> <i>Likes to use materials with all different colors</i>
Likes least: With Consideration Of Process in Art Making	6	<i>Dislikes highly structured art and coloring pages</i> <i>Dislikes structured art</i> <i>Dislikes being told what to make</i>
Likes least: With Consideration Of Material Quality	3	<i>Dislikes getting messy</i> <i>Dislikes drawing people</i> <i>Dislikes materials that have a lot of clean up</i>
No response to likes least	4	<i>No statements reported</i>

Table 5 illustrates parent and guardian assessments of what children like most and like least about art making. Parent and guardian responses show that the majority of children considered the process of art making and liked most art making experiences that are open-ended, offer freedom to be creative and opportunities for free expression. Likewise, parents and guardians reported that the majority of children disliked highly structured art experiences, coloring pages, and being told what to make. Parents and guardians reported that children preferred unstructured art experiences where creativity and expression were encouraged.

## **Summary for Parent and Guardian Questionnaires**

The majority of children in the study were encouraged early in life to experience art making and had positive experiences and responses to their art, which may have contributed to reported feelings of love and enjoyment for art making. The majority of children also experienced support and opportunities to continue their interest in art making outside of school. The children's homes contained a wide variety of art supplies that offered a range of art making experiences. Therefore children had opportunities to understand how materials work and observe specific material properties, to compare and assess preferences for working in particular mediums, and to create art in the home. Parents and guardians reported that children preferred unstructured art experiences where creativity and expression were encouraged.

## **Data Results From the Interviews**

**Composite summary of observed phenomena from the researcher's observations.** The researcher reviewed each interview in order to create *a full description of her own experience of the phenomena*: of what the researcher observed and how the researcher experienced the children, both during and after the interview. The researcher revisited field notes as well as photographs taken of the children and utilized this data to inform the overall description of observing the phenomena. The researcher delineated both the outstanding, repeated features of observing the phenomena and anomalies to construct a descriptive composite summary.

**Introduction to the study.** Each participant arrived for the study immediately after the traditional school day and met with the researcher in the children's school art room. The researcher observed that the children were excited to be included in the study and

eager to begin. The children displayed investment in the study by staying focused on the researcher despite art room disruptions from the art teacher, school custodian, and other children working in the art room. The children exhibited focus by listening to and looking at the researcher until the researcher was done speaking. Each child was careful and serious while signing the assent forms. The children also exhibited focus by waiting to engage in art making until they were requested to do so. Although the children were invested and focused, their excitement was evident by positive affect and fidgety yet joyful movements.

*Engaged in art making.* Upon being asked to choose a subject for art making, the children took a moment to think about what they wanted to create and shared their choice and reason for their choice with the researcher. The children made subject choices independently and easily. After establishing their subject each child made material choices and engaged in art making. During the art making, children were calm, focused, engaged and worked on their art until completion. The only exception was Elisa, who took her sculpture home to complete. All the children transitioned easily from working in two dimensions to working in three dimensions. The children displayed respect for themselves, each other, the researcher, the art room, art materials, and the artwork. During the art making children were interactive, animated, and engaged in conversation with each other. Children commented on their immediate and past experiences with the materials they were creating with. They asked for help only after they had tried multiple times themselves. Children displayed responsibility and organization and helped to clean up the art space and return art materials.

*During the interview.* The interview occurred while the children created art or directly after the children completed their artwork. Children easily responded to questions that the researcher asked. Children also engaged in discussion with the each other and exhibited interest in what was being said. Reese, Matthew, and Emma were the exceptions as they were interviewed individually. Children made eye contact with both the researcher and the other child being interviewed. Children interacted comfortably and asked questions of the researcher. When inspired, children would tell a story that connected with the research study. The children responded to the researcher's redirection when the stories or interactions interfered with the art making and interview. Children genuinely answered questions to the best of their abilities. Children left the art room and easily reunited with their families when the art making and interview were finished.

### **The Analysis Process of How the Researcher Arrived at Formulated Meanings and Themes**

The researcher utilized a phenomenological approach to data analysis informed and outlined by Moustakas (1994), which was an adaption of the "Stevick- Colaizzi- Keen method of analysis" (p. 121). From the verbatim transcript of each child's interview, the researcher considered each statement with respect to significance of the description of the experience. The researcher recorded all relevant statements in a table with the title significant statements. In the column next to the significant statements the researcher made an interpretation from the statements and constructed a formulated meaning. The researcher identified a total of 50 formulated meaning units across all the children combined (see Appendix K). Table 6 is a sample of how the researcher organized significant statements and formulated meaning units.

The researcher identified formulated meaning units that were present across all the children. The researcher considered a formulated meaning unit significant and an “emerging theme” if it was present in more than half of the children’s responses. Each emergent theme was organized in a separate table with two columns, one entitled “child” and the second entitled “significant statements.” Significant statements were included that supported the textural experience of the emergent theme. The researcher identified nine emergent themes. Table 7 is a sample of how the researcher organized children’s textural support for the emergent theme.



Table 6

*Sample: Reese Significant Statements and Formulated Meanings*

<i>Significant Statement</i>	<i>Formulated Meaning</i>
<p><i>Yeah I'm going to make a cat I have two cats. Two cats, And what are their names? Harper and Sam Yeah it's similar to my cat Harper, because she's yellow and orangish, she's a mix, like some places she's yellow and some places she's orange</i></p>	<p>Child chooses a subject that is familiar and has personal meaning.</p>
<p><i>Umm can I use the air dry clay?</i></p>	<p>Child prefers working in clay.</p>
<p>[In response to what she liked best about the experience] <i>Umm, like I got to make what I wanted to and sculpt it in the way that I wanted to</i></p>	<p>Child experiences choice of subject and materials as important.</p>
<p><i>First I used the pencil to outline then the used sharpie over the things that I needed to, then I used these- like crayons..... Craypas Craypas, I used orange and yellow and I used colored pencils, and that's pretty much it on this one First I started with pencil so I could erase it if I needed to, then I used the sharpie the outline, then I knew that I should do the color, and do the eyes, the nose the whiskers and stuff. And I noticed for some detail I could add like the paw, some cats have the paw sort of outline , so I drew that and that's why Do you like mixed media? Yeah</i></p>	<p>Child was thoughtful about material properties.</p> <p>Child thought of a plan before beginning the two-dimensional drawing task.</p>
<p><i>Because I knew it [air dry clay] was easier, it was easier for me to use, well because I've used it before and I'm good sculpting with it, I don't know why but I am</i></p>	<p>Preference for working in mixed media</p> <p>Child experiences confidence when working with clay.</p>
<p><i>I liked the sculpting, I don't know why, I like how you can move the things around in your hands better than drawing them on the paper</i></p>	<p>Child prefers working in three dimensions. Child appreciates the sensory and kinesthetic qualities of working with clay.</p>
<p><i>Well I like to do some things differently, so I might use different materials, because umm I don't like doing the same thing over and over again because it gets boring Right, So it sounds like you might make different choices because you like to explore different things Yes</i></p>	<p>Child appreciates working with a variety of materials.</p> <p>Child appreciates the process of working with new materials.</p>
<p>[In response to the question of making art at home]</p>	

*Yeah we do have a lot art in our home life, and one of my favorite things is duct tape art, there's this colorful duct tape and I make wallets and pens and purses and it's really fun*

Child creates art at home.  
Child enjoys creating functional art.

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Table 7

*Sample: Emergent Theme: Preference for working in three dimensions*

<i>Child</i>	<i>Significant Statement - Textural</i>
Reese	<i>I liked the sculpting, I don't know why, I like how you can move the things around in your hands better than drawing them on the paper</i>
Molly	<i>Build, I say build! I like the feel of things and like when you make them, you can always fix it and stuff like, And it sounds like what you may like about building and constructing is that you get to feel the material, like right now you're pushing your thumbs into the clay [Molly nods head yes]</i>
Elisa	<i>Ew I like sculpting! Well, what makes me like sculpture is like you can sculpt like whatever you want. And it's like your imagination and I just like to do it. I like it because you can express your feelings on it and sometimes if you are angry you can squish it or like it gets your anger out. And it's like relaxing, and sometimes I do it for fun because umm I just like to do it for fun. And it sort of expresses your feelings like [child pounds on the clay]. Well I like to do papier-mâché 3D stuff, All we have is like play dough and stuff but I still sculpt it and take pictures. My least favorite [art making] is drawing, pretty much and then my favorite is sculpting with clay</i>
Devon	<i>What are some of your favorite materials to work with outside of class? I like to build with stuff from my recycling bin So far what's been your favorite thing about this art experience? umm building</i>
Caden	<i>[in response to what he likes best in art making] I like to sculpt and construct. Do you know what I like about doing it [sculpting and constructing]? Well I like to, like well cause sometimes I will invent a whole new thing, umm and normally I experiment and try out different materials I've never used Because with sculpture you can usually take stuff apart. And a material like a crayon , you can't exactly erase , sometimes I don't like that</i>
Aaron	<i>[in response to what he liked best about the art making experience] Making the sculpture. Because you don't really get to stand it up or something. And that's just on a piece of paper you don't get to just cut it out and then like make it! It's like, it's real</i>
Mae	<i>Mae, what did you enjoy most about being here with me and Aaron today? That I get to build what I drew.</i>
Jenna	<i>I think it's more interesting to build- Because you can use different materials at the same time, and you can discover something</i>
Emma	<i>I like the 3D better. Because it seems like its more real than just drawing something, it seems more alive</i>
Alea	<i>Yeah, I think I'm going to go with the air dry clay. Well like with the clay you can actually touch it and feel what you are doing. I chose to use clay because I like to make it and sculpt it more than just having it in one shape</i>

Table 8

*Consolidating Sub-themes into Main themes*

<i>Main Theme</i>	<i>Sub-theme</i>
Children experience support for art making in the home and by family members.	Children create art at home.
	Children's art making is influenced by family members.
Children expressed preference for creating in three dimensions and identified the sensory and kinesthetic experience as preferential.	Preference for working in three dimensions.
	Preference for working with clay.
	Children enjoy the sensory and kinesthetic qualities of working with clay.
Children experience choice in art making as meaningful.	Children experiences choice of subject and choice of material as important.
	Children choose a subject that is familiar and has meaning.
Children's two-dimensional mixed media artwork is informed by experiential knowledge of material qualities.	Preference for working with mixed media when working in two dimensions.
	Children are thoughtful about material qualities and characteristics.

The nine emergent themes were considered sub-themes and were consolidated into four main themes. The sub-themes were combined when similar or related significant statements were found across sub-themes. Table 8 illustrates how the nine sub-themes were consolidated to construct the four main themes.

**Theme One: The children experienced support for art making in the home and by family members.**

*Composite description of the textures of the experience.* All 13 children experienced support for art making at home. Ten of the 13 children felt that a family member inspired or influenced their art making. Children responded enthusiastically to questions related to art making at home and influences from family members. Molly stated, “Yeah, I have an art kit, that comes with paint brushes and like it comes with these [holds up craypas] and I had some of this [holds up plasticine clay]. Yea, my brother uses the art kit and umm and my sister does to and she also like painted with it and ummm and my cousin also likes drawing. A lot of my cousins do too, because my grandma, like we always go over her house and she has this coloring set, like books and stuff and I like to color with them.” During the same interview Caden shared, “Yeah I’m so into art that I even have an easel ever since I was 2. Yes we have two art spaces, and my mom is really into art because she was so into art when she was little. My family always thinks it’s [art] kind of fun. Yeah. Pretty much everyone on my mom’s side, appreciates and some make art, like my mom likes to make art and I think my dad likes art too because he’s kind of into building like houses and stuff and that’s almost like sculpturing, so I would say my dad, my mom, my mom’s grandma, ummm me- And umm a lot of my cousins.”

Aaron and Mae described art making at home with markers and crayons. Mae added that she made art with air dry clay and painted at home. Aaron, Mae and Jenna felt supported by their siblings to create art. When asked, “has anyone encouraged you to make art?” Aaron, Mae and Jenna responded, “my sister!” When asked about art making at home, Jenna shared, “well there’s this lantern thing she [the art teacher] taught us how

to do and I like went home and started to make them, because I really like them.” When asked if she used other materials at home Jenna stated, “I like to work with paper and scissors a lot and pencils and some other things, colored pencils and crayons.” During the same interview Devon described art making at home, “Yeah I do, I make a lot of things [at home], I like to use stuff from my recycling bin.” Reese spoke thoughtfully and acknowledged support for art in her home and stated, “yeah we do have a lot art in our home life.”

Matthew and Sarah experienced support and were influenced by their fathers art making. Sarah stated, “well my Dad, he doesn’t love to make art but when he draws art he makes cartoons, that are cute, they are all over the house and he’s really good.” Matthew shared, “my Dad, he’s the one that taught me how to draw. Yeah, and he’s a good drawer too.” So maybe you’ve learned a little from him at home? “Yeah, [Matthew nods his head yes] Like my mom tells me to draw her stuff for her work, I think one girl asked her, because I drew a Minnie Mouse for her- and she said- does he draw more pictures and my mom asked me to keep on drawing!”

When asked about art making at home Sarah responded, “well, not drawing art but other kinds of art. Would you consider, well I do, drawing art. But would drawing art, could that also be like designing clothes? I draw them [designs for clothes] I usually just draw at home. I like to design and I make jewelry to from bottlecaps!” Abbey also shared that she made jewelry and added, “Um well I usually spend hours [making art], I knit, crochet, umm loom, and umm I draw and I do create like designs and stitchery. I made a pillow and I’m making purses right now. No well yea, I do make duct tape stuff, but not right now. I make wallets beach bags, purses, shoes. Yeah, I make stuff out of clay at

home too.” When asked if other family members created art Abbey stated that her uncle has impressed her, “he can draw like really good, he can draw without looking, he drew me, my mom and my dad, and my cat Silvestor and it was like wow!”

Elisa and Alea both attributed feeling supported in art making by having the experience of watching their grandmothers create by knitting. Elisa stated that her sisters also made art, “I’d say my sisters, they are actually pretty artistic... that’s what I like about her [my sister] is that she hangs all her artistic things that she does on her door and I just like them.” Elisa described her experience of art making at home, “like I sometimes at home, I get like a big piece of paper and I do like a collage, or draw pictures of just things that I imagine.” Alea shared that other family members also influenced her own art making of origami and sewing at home, “well my mom she does origami too, oh and my aunt she likes to make [makes a hand sewing motion] little crafts and stuff.”

***Imaginative variation.*** Imaginative variation seeks possible meanings through approaching the phenomena from a variety of perspectives and varying frames of reference and helps to illuminate how the phenomena came to be experienced. The purpose of imaginative variation is to reflect on how the facts of an experience can transfer to the realm of ideas and possibilities (Moustakas, 1994). To engage in imaginative variation, the researcher requested a peer to review the themes and textural descriptions and to generate questions for the researcher.

The peer reviewer presented the following questions about theme one: “The children experienced support for art making in the home and by family members. What is it that creates the environment at home in which they feel comfortable, safe, excited about making art? I’m wondering about the attitudes that their parents have about art in

the home, how that might contribute to the child's experience. What is the value of art that is placed in the home? What is the culture in their family and their parent's families of art making? The cultural aspects, the family values and then the developmental, those are the things I have questions about. It sounds like that they have parents or siblings that value art in the home and respond positively. What do families see as art and creativity? Do they have rigid ideas of what is art-making, drawing or painting? One boy said his uncle builds and sculpted houses, so he sees that architecture is a form of art. I'm wondering how broad or how narrow children's ideas are about art and art making and is that expanded or constricted by the family values?

There is something that seems positive and collaborative in these families around art making. There is a way that art making is encouraged and is considered an accepted way to spend time. They do it together, it's available. When I read the statements there aren't any negative statements, it doesn't seem like there's a negative comparison between family members. There's a non-competitive feeling about the art making. It seems very collaborative and also a source of bonding with family members. In what ways does their role, age etc, in the family influence how they see other people making art? What motivates them, what is their view as the role of art in their family? Is it to share with others, display in a certain way? Sharing it and showing it was mentioned, sharing themselves – how are they understanding what art is for?

What is creating the availability of the art materials? One child said he made art out of the recycling materials, another said that she had a sewing kit, so what is it that is introducing those specific materials in the home? What is creating that opportunity and availability? Is it that the parents are going out and buying kits, what allows for that



opportunity, is it economic? It is educational based on the parents' memory of using those materials, or being educated about the materials? Is it because there is more marketing toward children, in terms of those pre-made arts and crafts kits? I'm wondering about what's available and how is it getting into the home. Are these materials being introduced into the home because developmentally at this age they are manipulating things, creating things they're asking for things to manipulate and create with? If they were older would they still be making art in the home as much as they are now?"

*Composite description of the structures of the experience.* The questions generated from the peer reviewer contributed to the researcher's reflection and development of a "structural description" for each theme. The structural description consists of the "conditions, situations, or context" (Creswell, 2009, p.60) in which the children experienced the phenomena. The researcher took into consideration the children's context of art making, situations the children were exposed to with regard to art making, as well as the conditions in which the children were engaged in art making. Moustakas (1994) stated, "structural description involves conscious acts of thinking and judging, imagining, and recollecting in order to arrive at core structural meanings" (p. 79) and "provides a vivid account of the underlying dynamics of the experience."

Based on the peer reviewer's questions the researcher approached the inquiry of how the experience came to be. It was significant to understand children's experiences in their own words of art making and engaging with materials within the context of home and family. All 13 children experienced art as an important and normal activity, describing their home environments as supportive of art making. Children experienced

that the art space was a valued aspect of living space in the home. Children experienced a wide range of traditional and non-traditional art materials as acceptable. Children were encouraged to experiment with different art materials and developed a point of view about how they experienced art materials. Having access to materials may be attributed to parent's or guardian's values, resourcefulness, economic ability and interest in purchasing materials, experience with art making and materials, and views on creativity and child development.

Ten of the 13 children identified one or more family member that inspired or influenced them to create art. Family members were described as supportive or inspirational in art making by creating art themselves, offering verbal encouragement to the child to create art, or engaging in collaboratively making art with the child. The family values and attitude toward art and art making influenced the children's experience of art making. This was exhibited in the children's description of non-competitiveness, comfort, and acceptance in art making as well as a non-stressful and non-judgmental approach to making art. Children described positive experiences and feelings of confidence and importance when sharing art with family members.

***Composite textural-structural description.*** The researcher constructed a textural-structural description to describe the meaning and essence of the experience of the phenomena. Moustakas (1984) stated that the relationship of the textural and structural brings together the “the appearance and the hidden...to create a fullness in understanding the essences of a phenomena or experience” (p. 79). The textural-structural description seeks to make known what is seen and what underlies the phenomenon as it is experienced. All 13 children in the study described a positive experience of art making at

home. Having a dedicated art space in the home for children's art making illuminated the family values and support for art making. Opportunities to experience creating art with a range of art materials expanded children's notions of acceptable art making. Experiencing a range of materials, along with a feeling of acceptance from family members made children confident and helped them express their points of view. Children's experience of family support for art making provided an experience of non-competitiveness, collaboration, and comfort. Underwriting the children's experience of art making in the home and support from family members is the value and recognition of the importance of art making for children.

**Theme Two: The children expressed preference for creating in three dimensions and identified the sensory and kinesthetic experience as preferential.**

*Composite description of the textures of the experience.* Twelve of the 13 children stated a preference for working in clay and attributed this preference to the sensory and kinesthetic qualities of clay. Eleven of the 13 children expressed a clear preference for creating in three dimensions. During the interview, the children responded by describing their immediate and previous art making experiences. Molly, Aaron, Mae, Jenna, Reese, Abbey, Sarah, Elisa, Alea and Emma each expressed that the sensory and kinesthetic qualities of clay were experienced as positive. Molly shared, "I like the feel of things [materials] and like when you make them, at first you think it might be bad but then you can always fix it." The researcher responded, "And it sounds like what you like about building and constructing is that you get to feel the material, like right now you're pushing your thumbs into the clay [Molly smiles and nods yes]." Molly: "Like this is

really fun!” The researcher: “What is fun about it?” Molly: “Dipping my hand in the water. I like feeling this- [laughing while pushing thumbs into clay].” Aaron also enjoyed the sensory process of working in clay and shared, “Because it’s actually kind of hard to make but I actually like it!” The researcher asked: “But you like it, what do you like about it?” Aaron responded, “Umm that it’s kind of hard and you have to use water to make it not dry.” The researcher: “Right. You need to use water to make it kind of slippery [Aaron smiles and nods head yes].” Jenna shared this quality of experience and stated, “I kind of like the clay the best, when you put the water on it, it gets your hands dirty.” Elisa felt similarly and stated, “This clay is so nice because you can smooth it out by using the water, it feels so cool!” Emma connected the sensory experience of the clay with the memory she had of the beach. “Yeah, it’s mucky and soft-like clay, it feels like when the sand is like wet on your feet.” The researcher: “Umm hmm, so the materials really matched your image that you had and what you remembered about the place [Emma nods her head yes].”

Kinesthetic experiences were also shared as contributing to child’s preferences for working with three-dimensional materials. Abbey experienced satisfaction when working in clay and stated, “I love clay! Well the first thing [I like], is that this is clay, I get to push it and mold it.” Alea appreciated the kinesthetic qualities of working with clay in three dimensions and shared, “Well like with the clay you can actually touch it and feel what you are doing. With the drawing you ‘re just sort of drawing it.” The researcher responded: “That’s kind of what I’m picking up from what you are saying – whereas clay is really, you kind of form it, and because of the material you can really push it around, and there’s no right or wrong really with clay, does that seem right?” Alea: “Yeah. I

chose to use clay because I like to make it and sculpt it more than just having it in one shape.”

Reese described her experience: “Umm can I use the air-dry clay? I liked the sculpting, I don’t know why, I like how you can move the things around in your hands better than drawing them on the paper.” Elisa agreed and thoughtfully stated, “It feels like a part of the earth is in my hand.”

In response to what she liked about sculpting, Elisa shared: “I like it because you can express your feelings on it and sometimes if you are angry you can squish it or like it gets your anger out. And it’s like relaxing, and sometimes I do it for fun because umm I just like to do it for fun. And it sort of expresses your feelings like [pounds on the clay]. Well I chose clay because I like to take my time and I like to use clay. My least favorite [art making] is drawing, pretty much and then my favorite is sculpting with clay.”

Emma and Aaron felt that creating in three dimensions offered an experience of the art that seemed more real to them. Emma shared, “I like the 3D better. Because it seems like it’s more real than just drawing something, it seems more alive.” Similarly when the researcher asked Aaron why he preferred sculpting rather than drawing he stated, “Because you don’t really get to stand it up or something. And that’s it’s just on a piece of paper, you don’t get to just cut it out and then like make it! It’s like [pointing to his sculpture] it’s real!”

Caden and Mae felt that being able to add and subtract from their sculpture contributed to the appeal of working in three dimensions. When the researcher asked Mae, “what did you enjoy most about being here with me and Aaron today?” She responded, “That I got to build what I drew.” Researcher: “Mae when you chose to

make the house, did you like making the house better in the drawing or building it with the clay?” Mae: “Building it with the clay.” In response to why she didn’t like the drawing as much as the sculpture Mae stated, “Because it stays on the paper, you can’t add to it or make it with something else.” Caden shared, “I like to sculpt and construct. Do you know what I like about doing it [constructing, sculpting]?” Researcher: “What do you like about doing it?” Caden, “Because with sculpture you can usually take stuff apart. I specifically like um, well I like to, like well cause, sometimes I will invent a whole new thing, umm and normally I experiment and try out different materials I’ve never used.”

Jenna had a similar feeling: “I think it’s more interesting to build. Because you can use different materials at the same time. And you can discover something new!” Devon and Matthew experienced that using non-traditional art materials was preferential in working in three dimensions. Matthew stated that he liked, “to make stuff out of scrap.” Similarly Devon described, “I like to use stuff from my recycling bin.”

***Imaginative variation.*** The peer reviewer presented the following questions regarding theme two: The children expressed preference for creating in three dimensions and identified the sensory and kinesthetic experience as preferential. “The first thing I noticed that the 12 children valued clay because of the sensory experience. Why do they value the sensory experience over more of a...cognitive experience...what is different? What is it about that experience that they are valuing and why? Is this immersive and engaging sensory experience more stimulating to the brain? It is because they are in a specific developmental stage? Do they value the sensory experience over the action of getting something just right? Are they not yet critical of themselves or have a social construct of right and wrong and that art has to be a certain way? They are valuing the

bodily experience, of how it feels in their hand. Are they are able to be more present with their experience?

Most children said they liked the messy quality of the clay best. I wonder if there is a value placed in the home on experimenting or being messy. What is their experience of clay at home? Are they able to get messy in their art class? Were they not allowed to get messy and that's why they can enjoy it here? Do they have previous experience with getting messy and think that it's ok? Some said the emotional aspect was preferential, the catharsis. What is it that makes them feel comfortable to squeeze and punch the clay? Is there something more permissible about the clay?

What about the sculpture feels more alive than the drawing? Is the immersive experience, the hands on experience, something that they almost need developmentally in order to learn, discover things, experiment? Are they problem solving, balancing constructing, deconstructing? Is that a cognitive process? Is choice experienced as important as they construct and deconstruct? Is there something empowering about this change, is there something about changing the space that is different? You can change a drawing, but when you change a sculpture you are changing the space. When you build and construct you shift something in space, you completely move something and that seems to feel different.

Does movement contribute to the idea that the art is alive? Does the art become more alive for them because they can interact with it in space rather than a flat surface? Is there something important about creating an object, crafting it? Is the manipulation of materials to make something satisfying s? Does a sculpture inhabit a different kind of

space than a drawing does? Does inhabiting space help them to explain and understand what they did?

Did they like having choice? One child said, well if I don't like what I made then I can change it, it's reparative. Does having choice and control lead to feeling empowered or important? I want to raise and question the cultural context. American culture values freedom of choice and expression of feelings, and that you can make a change with personal agency. If we were to do this same study in a different culture would these same themes of choice and control come up in the same way that they are here for these children?"

*Composite description of the structures of the experience.* Twelve of the 13 children articulated a preference for working in clay because of its sensory and kinesthetic qualities. Children described the sensory experience as enjoyable. The sensory experience of working with the clay was described mainly by feeling the texture and weight of the clay, a finding perhaps explained by the children's developmental stage, and immersion in sensory exploration. Likewise, children may have not internalized rules and expectations of art making. Children may have had experiences at home with clay that informed their acceptance of the tactile sensation of the clay.

The kinesthetic experiences were produced by pushing, molding, and manipulating the clay. Some children described the kinesthetic experience as cathartic. Clay as a medium may offer more permission to be manipulated. One child commented that being able to repair clay made it satisfying material to work with. Being able to repair or shift an object in space may also be experienced as empowering and reflect cultural values of agency as well as the belief in the ability of an individual to make



change. Eleven of the 13 children preferred creating art in three dimensions. Children shared that working in three dimensions felt as if the art was more real, offered more possibilities to add and subtract, offered an opportunity to experiment with new materials and led to the experience of discovering something new. Underlying these experiences may be the satisfaction of working with an art form that inhabits and can be interacted with in space, as opposed to a flat surface.

*Composite textural-structural description.* Twelve children preferred clay in part because of its sensory and kinesthetic qualities. Other qualities that were experienced as satisfying included the manipulability of the clay and the ability to shift sculptural forms in space. The experience of sculptural forms as being “more real” was also significant. Children’s developmental stage, previous experience with clay, and messages internalized from culture or family life, may underlie their non-judgmental stance and satisfaction in manipulating three-dimensional forms.

**Theme Three: The children experienced choice in art making as meaningful.**

*Composite description of the textures of the experience.* All 13 children chose familiar and meaningful subjects for their art making. Seven children experienced choice of subject and art materials as important. Overall choice was experienced as an important aspect of art making for the children. Molly and Caden chose subjects that were personally important to them. Molly chose a Christmas tree, as the time of her interview for the study was in December and she celebrated Christmas. During the interview Molly made several references to the Christmas tree. She shared, “I actually got that art kit, it was a Christmas present. This year our Christmas tree was filled with ornaments that we made. Yea and I have one from when I was two!” Caden chose the subject of

*Thunderbirds*, a British television show that held a meaningful connection with his dad. When Caden's dad said good-bye to him when leaving the art room, Caden said, "Copy that, I mean .....[Caden does a movement with his arms and hands]." Researcher: "Caden that was a nice movement." Caden: "Umm yea, I do this international rescue business and umm I made up that signal it means copy, I made it up for me and my dad." Researcher: "Ohh, cool, did you know that signal Molly?" [Molly shakes her head no] Caden: "No, I made it up myself, and that's a minitag term, umm yea." Researcher: "That is cool." Caden: "Yea because I started this by seeing this this TV program called thunderbirds, that I watch with my dad, it's British."

Though each child made a meaningful choice for the subject of their art making the reasons varied widely. Aaron chose to create a penguin and stated, "Because they are one of my favorite kind of animal." In the same interview Mae chose to create a house because she felt confident, and stated, "Because I knew I could do a good job on it." Matthew felt similarly and created a cartoon character that he had drawn before and received positive feedback as a result. Devon described his subject this way: "It's like an airplane that can slide on ice when it lands." Devon shared that it also related to his current experience of the weather changing and his expectation and excitement for snow and ice.

Reese, Elisa, Emma, and Alea chose subjects that related to their home experience. Reese and Elisa chose the subject of a cat. Reese described her relationship with her cats and shared how important they were to her. Elisa's family had recently adopted a cat from an animal shelter and her subject of the cat was related to the meaning of this experience. Alea chose to create a bookshelf and shared that reading was

important and meaningful to her family. Emma chose to create a beach scene and shared, “Umm well, it’s so cold outside I wish it was like this, and I always go down to Cape Cod and the beach because my grandmother lives down the street from a beach and so I love to go to the beach, so I wish it was like this so that’s how I got the image.”

Abbey, Sarah, and Jenna also chose subjects that they liked. Abbey chose a pig in part because she liked pigs and also because she thought she could do a good job representing one, “I think I’m gonna do a pig. I chose the pig, because I absolutely love pigs, and the color and umm it’s usually easy to make to make a pig out of clay, and I just think that pigs are interesting creatures, and they’re cute!” Sarah also chose a subject that was familiar to her and that she liked, “A daisy flower, I just think they are pretty.” Jenna was undecided and looked around the art room until she found a teapot that interested her and she was curious if she could also create it, “Why I chose the teapot is because I looked at the teapot and I was like wow- maybe I could do that?”

Each child easily chose a subject independently and did not ask the researcher or the other interviewed child for suggestions. Children were confident in their choice and were able to identify reasons for their choice and how it related to their life. Additionally, seven children identified that having a choice of what to create and what materials they could use to create it with was an important aspect of the art making experience. Alea shared her experience: “Yeah and I liked being able to choose what I could use too, instead of just being handed something and being told what to do.” Reese shared what she liked best about the experience: “Umm, like I got to make what I wanted to and sculpt it in the way that I wanted to.” Abbey described her experience: “Yes, it is really

fun and I like that I could make artwork, like we don't have to do just one topic, we can do what we like." Researcher: "So you had a choice." Abbey: "Yea, I really liked having a choice." Emma shared that, "I would like to have my options on how to use my materials." Caden shared that he enjoyed the art making and interview experience and the opportunity to create what he termed personal art: "I like doing this a lot, I liked doing the art personally [seemed to mean having personal choice]." Researcher: "You liked doing the art personally. Does that relate to having choice to make something that was personally important to you? [Caden nods his head yes] Caden: "I think what else is really important is to, is uh to see the materials and feel them to make sure you're going to use and choose the right materials."

***Imaginative variation.*** The following questions were presented by the peer reviewer for theme three: The children experienced choice in art making as meaningful. "Did the child imbue meaning into the subject because they chose it and because it's something that they worked on? Does the act of creating it, does that give it meaning? Do they feel in some way that it needs to have meaning because you are asking them about it? Or did the subject have meaning before and they chose consciously to present that to you?"

The other component is that they have to consider what they can make that they can create in both in two dimensions and three dimensions, how did that impact what they chose? Were they thinking that the subject needed to work in the three-dimensional realm as well? Was it that the actual subject was important, or that it worked for both tasks? The meaning may also have come from their ability to create the subject in two and three dimensions.

They may have created the subject before, they have history with it, it's familiar, they have prior experience making it. How much of the research environment is influencing their responses and the way that they think about their art making. You said each of them were really focused, so they may have wanted to do a good job. Perhaps they chose subjects they could create well, because of the educational environment they were in, are they used to doing the best they can?

Maybe their first thought wasn't, what is most important to me. Are they thinking more technically as they get older? Are they responding to the expectations that they think you may have of them? A younger child may be more spontaneous. For some it seems it may have been an inspired thought, like a penguin! But none of them said what they made was not important. Are they giving meaning to the subject in the process of creating it? That's a big part of art therapy, finding meaning in the process of creating. Insight or ascribed meaning may have come from the process of creating."

*Composite description of the structures of the experience.* The structures of the experience seek to understand in what ways the experience came to be, and what the underlying dynamics are of the experience. Thirteen children chose subjects that were familiar and meaningful. How did those subjects come to have meaning for the children? The children may have felt the subject was meaningful because time was spent creating it and an adult asked questions about it. The children may also have intended to create something meaningful. Conversely children may have chosen subjects based on artistic ability to create the same subject in two and three-dimensions or history with being able to create the subject well. Children may have ascribed meaning to the subject as they spent time creating, thinking about, and reflecting on the subject.

The second question for theme three is; how did the children come to experience the choice of a subject and materials as meaningful and important? How did the children come to appreciate or value choice in art making? Children may be responding to US culture in which individuality and choice are highly valued. They may have experienced choice at home or during their school art class, or conversely, children may have had limited choice at home or in their school art class. They may have appreciated the freedom of a non-directed art experience. Children may have experienced the structure of the art making experience with regard to direction, time, and materials access as acceptable and enjoyable. Conversely, children may have experienced the amount of choice as overwhelming, seeking more structure and direction.

*Composite textural-structural description.* Thirteen children experienced the chosen subject as meaningful. Children's expressed confidence in the choice of subject and easily related the importance of the subject to their lived experience. Children chose subjects independently and did not seek consultation with the researcher or the other child present in the interview. Possible underlying dynamics as to why the children experienced the chosen subject as meaningful included: intentional choice of a meaningful subject; ability to create the subject in both two and three-dimensional forms; history and artistic ability; and lastly, children may have discovered meaning in the subject as the subject was created.

Seven children articulated that experiencing choice of subject and choice of material was meaningful and important. Underlying this experience may be a US cultural value of choice and individuality. Other possibilities include children's experiences of

choice at home and in the art classroom as well as their experience of the art making structure of the research study with regard to time, direction, and materials access.

**Theme Four: The children’s two-dimensional mixed media artwork was informed by experiential knowledge of material qualities.**

*Composite description of the textures of the experience.* Nine children identified media properties as they described their decision making process in art making. Seven of the nine children exhibited a preference for working in mixed media. The majority of the children chose to use more than one material when creating and the children were thoughtful when asked about their material choices. When asked if she liked mixed media Reese stated, “Yeah.” When asked to share her material choices and decisions Reese responded, “First I used the pencil to outline then the used sharpie over the things that I needed to, then I used these- like crayons.....Craypas, Craypas, I used orange and yellow and I used colored pencils, and that’s pretty much it on this one.” Researcher: “On that piece, on the drawn cat, how did you make your choices?” Reese: “First I started with pencil so I could erase it if I needed to, then I used the sharpie the outline, then I knew that I should do the color, and do the eyes, the nose the whiskers and stuff.”

Molly shared that craypas were her favorite drawing material and stated, “I think these [craypas] because they are like slippery and it’s easy for me to draw big things.” Researcher: “Umm hmm, umm hmm, the craypas are your favorite Molly because they are kind of slippery and they help you to draw, like you can cover a lot of the space?” Molly: “Yeah.” Researcher: “What would you choose [regarding a different drawing material] Molly?” Molly: “I would choose like markers because they are also good for the color but also like umm, slow and stuff but you can color in little things.” [In

response to a question about how drawing materials differ] Molly: “Well see how these pencils just have like a little drawing? And these have a big drawing like.” Researcher: “Yep, I understand that, the pencils have a tiny point and the craypas have a nice bigger space on the bottom.” Molly: “Yea so like you could color this with little stuff like that, or something.” When asked if she would choose a different material to do the drawing task again Molly stated, “yeah, I would use all of them [art materials] on the table, combining them.” Molly spoke of the material characteristics with regard to the ability to draw details, the amount of coverage the material afforded and the vibrancy and variety of color. She also stated an inclination to use all the materials combined if she did the drawing task a second time.

Caden stated a preference for mixed media and used mixed media in both the two-dimensional and three-dimensional art making tasks. Caden agreed with Molly about craypas being a favorite drawing material: “Yea and they’re [holding up craypas] my favorite too.” Researcher: “And they’re your favorite too Caden?” Caden: “Yeah. I like them a lot. Well, I think, because, I think almost the same as Molly, it’s slippery. Just because of that yeah you know what my favorite is too, is if you mix ‘em, they mix, really well! I noticed when I was using the black that it makes like a really pitch black.” Caden identified craypas media properties as oil based and therefore slippery and producing vibrant and rich colors which he enjoyed blending. Caden also described a detailed and clear plan of using mixed media drawing materials if he were to complete the drawing task a second time.

Abbey and Mae both responded that they preferred craypas. Mae agreed that media properties such as the “smoothness” and “bright” color of the craypas were



appealing. Abbey described her experience: “I used craypas for the grass, the clouds, and um the sky and markers for the whole entire pig and the sun and the outline for the pig and my initials. Well um with craypas you can have like, with these [holds up a craypa] you can have more of a flow and it looks like a grassy thing than just scribbling with markers. I like those craypas best.” Researcher: “So you used a craypa and for an outline you used a marker. Were you really thinking about the two-dimensional materials and making choices.” Abbey: “Yes.”

Jenna and Devon both preferred markers to crayons and were thoughtful in their description of media properties. In Jenna’s interview, the researcher asked, “Ummhmm and at first you chose crayons and then you chose markers, and can you say which one you liked working with better?” Jenna: “Markers.” Researcher: “The markers. Can you say why?” Jenna: “Because it kind of gets it darker. And because when you draw with crayons there can be some bald spots and when you draw with these [markers] they like can be a little bit fatter so you can draw the while entire thing in color, color it all yeah and it’s quicker and brighter.” Devon had a similar experience, “I like working with markers because of the rich color, and because crayons kind of wear out after you work with them a little bit.” Researcher: “Hmm, so the markers give a more vibrant color and sometimes they last longer.” Devon: “And sometimes they get out of the lines- the crayons.” Researcher: “Ah. So the markers are more precise, they make the line straighter than a crayon would?” Devon: “Yeah.” Emma was thoughtful and considered media properties for both the two-dimensional and three-dimensional art making tasks. Emma shared, “I chose pencil because like at the beach the sand is like graphite and it looks like it – and why I chose this is because the sand, it’s mucky.” Researcher: “Umm hmm, So

the materials really matched your image that you had and what you remembered about the place?” [Emma nods her head yes].

*Imaginative variation.* The following questions were presented by the peer reviewer for theme four: The children’s two-dimensional mixed media artwork is informed by experiential knowledge of material qualities. “Were they thoughtful about materials because you were asking about what they thought, and so did they create thoughtfulness? Or were they really telling you their thought process? Were they cognizant in the process or are they reflecting on what was? Does this thoughtfulness reflect their art instruction in some way? The black sharpie allows you to have permanence, and establish a plan. How did the qualities of these materials help support a mental plan of what to create? How much have they been taught to think about their process in art making? They could’ve been instinctive, and then the plan comes about in the questioning. Was their art making intentional because of the qualities of the materials offered?

Is this similar to how they make art at home? Do they need to sit down and plan this out because it’s a research study? Did the younger ones show as much planning and thinking ahead as the older children? It seemed like the older children, the 10 and 11 year olds were using pencils to create a blueprint. Were they thinking how does this material match my intention? They used a pencil to make a blueprint for the sculpture. If they were teenagers would they be less spontaneous? Do they accept the way the teacher teaches or is there a pushing of the boundaries? They are thinking in a linear way, first this then I did this ... is that how they were taught in class?

More than half the children preferred mixed media in the drawing task. Do they create mixed media in class? How are they encouraged to mix and use more than one media at a time or experiment? What does it mean that they use mixed media? Is it more interesting to see how the media interacts with other media? Were they hesitant to stay with one media, why? What value is placed in using different media together? Does this relate back to culture and opportunity? The privilege of having multiple materials? Does this have something to do with accepting differences? And combining differences?"

*Composite description of the structures of the experience.* Nine children were articulate about media properties. Seven children expressed a preference for mixed media when working in two dimensions. How did it come to be that nine children were thoughtful and articulate about media properties? Underlying reasons for children's thoughtfulness about media properties possibly point to their previous experience with the materials, intentions for art making, influence from art instruction in school or home, or that the materials offered were obviously different that the children noticed and stated their awareness. What are possible underlying reasons for a preference for creating with mixed media? Children may have had an interest in experimenting or trying mixed media techniques that they learned in school. Children may have felt pressure from being in the research study to use all the materials presented. A linear established mental plan may have guided their mixed media choices. Curiosity about how materials interact may have encouraged mixed media. Materials may have seemed preferential when combined to observe differences and cultural values may have influenced children's preferences to use multiple materials and to mix media.

*Composite textural-structural description.* Nine children experienced and articulated knowledge of material properties. For seven children, this knowledge informed a preference for using mixed media when working in two dimensions. Children chose preferential materials based on observed media characteristics such as the ability to blend craypas, create defined line with a marker, use a sharpie marker for permanence, or chose a pencil so marks could be erased. Previous experience, artistic intentions, and art instruction contributed to possible underlying reasons as to why children were aware of media properties. Preference for working in mixed media when creating in two dimensions was demonstrated in the art of seven children. The structures that may have contributed to this experience of preference include children's curiosity about how materials may interact, cultural messages of privilege and opportunity, and techniques that they may have learned in school.

### **Total Composite and Final Synthesis Description**

The final synthesis includes a total composite textural structural description of the phenomena based on meaning of all combined thematic textural structural descriptions. This description encompasses a universal description of the experience representing the children as a whole group.

Children experienced and articulated knowledge of material properties and chose preferential materials based on observed media characteristics. Opportunities to experience creating art with a range of art materials at home expanded children's notions of acceptable art making. Experiencing a range of materials, along with a feeling of acceptance from family members helped children state their point of view and experience confidence. Children's preferences for working in mixed media may have been informed

by their curiosity about how materials interact, cultural messages of privilege and opportunity, and techniques that they may have learned in school. Children's experience of clay as preferential may be due to the material's sensory and kinesthetic qualities. Children's developmental stage, previous experience with clay and messages internalized from culture and family life may underwrite children's non-judgmental stance and satisfaction in manipulating three-dimensional forms. Children expressed confidence in the choice of subject and easily related the importance of the subject to their lived experience. Children articulated that experiencing choice of subject and choice of material was meaningful and important. Underlying this experience may be a US cultural value of choice and individuality.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Discussion**

#### **Summary of the Study**

The study explored the following research questions. 1. What are children's art making preferences? 2. What do children consider as they initiate a choice of art materials? 3. What experiences of meaning in art making do two-dimensional and three-dimensional art forms hold for children? 4. What informs and contributes to children's preferences in art making? 5. What importance does child preference for art materials and art forms hold for the practice of art therapy?

The interviews were the primary data of this study and were analyzed by the phenomenological approach advanced by Moustakas (1994). Four main themes emerged as a result from the data analysis: (a) the children experienced support for art making in the home and by family members, (b) the children expressed preference for creating in three dimensions and identified the sensory and kinesthetic experience as preferential, (c) the children experienced choice in art making as meaningful, and (d) the children's two-dimensional mixed media artwork was informed by experiential knowledge of material qualities.

Results from the parent and guardian questionnaires revealed that the majority of children shared a number of background characteristics. They tended to live in two parent homes with a parent or guardian who was college educated; they were encouraged early in their life to experience art making; they experienced family members as supportive of art making; they had positive experiences making art; they had a wide variety of art

supplies available in the home; they were involved in art classes or art camps outside of school; they preferred unstructured art experiences where creativity and expression were encouraged; and they reported feelings of love and enjoyment for art making. Children in the study were informed and conversant with art materials. When interpreting these results, the privilege indicated by the parent and guardian responses for their children's familiarity with art materials and art processes should be considered.

Although there were similarities in how the children experienced art-making preferences, each experience was unique and child-specific. Below, the researcher contextualized the research findings in response to the research questions and in relation to the literature. The researcher considered how the existing literature and research differed from or supported findings from the current study.

### **Research Findings Discussed in Relation to the Research Questions and to the Literature**

#### **What are children's art making preferences? What experiences of meaning in art making do two-dimensional and three-dimensional art forms hold for children?**

Results indicated that these children preferred making art with clay in three dimensions. Children in the study attributed this preference to the sensory and kinesthetic experiences when working with clay. During the art-making experience children highlighted their sensory experience and stated awareness of how clay textures felt on their hands. Children articulated that the sensory interaction involved in the process of creating with clay was meaningful and enjoyable. One child connected the sensory experience of the clay to a memory she had of the beach and found that the feeling of the clay matched a sensory memory. These experiences are support Gandini's (2005) notion

that as children encounter and explore materials they engage in the process of knowing, thus constructing meaning by what they learn from interacting with materials. These results extend the meaning and importance of sensory based experiences past the developmental stage presented by Piaget & Inhelder (1956/1967).

Rubin (1978, 2005) agreeing with Lowenfeld and Brittain (1987), stated that children aged 9 to 12 begin to express concern and frustration about artistic ability as attempts are made to express realism in three dimensional products. Children in this study, given their ages (5 to 11), did not express such frustration. Indeed, the researcher observed a non-judgmental, tolerant, and flexible approach to problem solving when the children worked with clay in three dimensions. These findings were consistent with Pavlou's (2009) study which demonstrated children's ability to solve problems, create representational forms, and maintain artistic flexibility in three-dimensional media. Results from the parent and guardian questionnaires reported that for the majority of children, clay and crafts were the most frequently introduced materials for early experiences with art making. These findings show that early experiences with three-dimensional art forms as well as support from home life shaped these particular children's attitudes of acceptance, flexibility, and tolerance when creating in three dimensions.

Interview results indicated that kinesthetic experiences held meaning for children in the study and contributed to preferences for working with three-dimensional materials. Kinesthetic experiences were felt when the children pushed, molded, and manipulated clay in their hands. While engaged in the art making aspect of the study, children experienced clay as a medium that offered permission to be formed and manipulated.



This is consistent with Hinz's (2009) claim that art materials serve as receivers of kinesthetic actions. Some children described the kinesthetic experience as an emotional catharsis, supporting observations described by Kramer and Schehr (2000) that the medium "elicits specific kinds of behavior" (p. 74). In turn, Hinz (2009) suggested sensory-based materials such as clay can produce preferable affective experiences.

Children's interview statements revealed that working in three dimensions made the art feel more real, offered more possibilities to add and subtract, to experiment with new materials and lead to new discoveries. These findings agree with Gallo, Golomb, and Barroso's (2002) qualitative results in which children reported that three-dimensional creation was more lifelike and therefore more appealing. Additionally, Gallo, Golomb, and Barroso observed a heightened interactivity from children when working on the three-dimensional research task. This finding also aligns with Golomb and McCormick's (1995) observation that working with clay increased children's experimentation and varied possibilities for problem solving. Children stated that being able to repair clay made it a satisfying material to work with. These results agreed with Lowenfeld and Brittain's (1987) suggestion of clay work specifically for children age 7 to 11 and identified clay's availability as a material to be constantly reworked as preferable. Further, Lowenfeld and Brittain asserted that working in clay encouraged flexible thinking. Lastly, children's experience of repairing and shifting an object in space may be empowering and reflect US cultural values of agency and change.

These children specifically experienced working in three dimensions as preferential because it offered a satisfying opportunity to interact with the materials in space. Children identified that scrap and recycled materials were preferential for building

and constructing. These experiences support Lowenfeld and Brittain's (1987) suggestion that children be offered containers filled with found objects and scrap material for assemblage and experimentation. The preference for experimentation was reflected in results from parent and guardian questionnaires, which reported that children preferred unstructured art making that encouraged creativity.

When making art, children preferred to make choices about subjects and materials. This finding agrees with theorists (Gardner, 1980; Lowenfeld & Brittain, 1987; Rubin, 1978, 2005) and affirms the need for children to discover the range of what art materials can offer as well as their right to choose their artistic subject. Hinz's (2009) statement, "Clients need to be free to choose materials and tasks in order to demonstrate their true preferences for expression" (p. 194) supports the importance of individual artistic preferences. The reader should keep in mind that these children had positive, rich and varied experiences with art making which contributed to their confidence in making choices. The privilege of previous experiences with choice and experimentation with art supplies, along with positive responses from family, shaped children's ability to state a preference. This ability may differ for other children depending on their particular experiences with art making and life circumstances.

During the study, children expressed confidence in their choice of subject and easily related the importance of the subject to their lived experience. Children chose subjects independently and did not consult with the researcher or the other child present in the interview. This experience is consistent with Fienfield, Lee, Flavell, Green, and Flavell's (1999) quantitative study, which concluded that children develop concepts of intention and can formulate and accomplish a mental plan beginning at age 3 and a half.

Additionally this experience supports results found in Hart and Goldin-Meadow's (1984) study which indicated that beginning at age 3, children have artistic preferences, can verbalize preferences and rationalize their point of view.

Children in the study experienced their chosen subject as meaningful. This finding agrees with notions advanced by Kramer (1971/1974) and Lowenfeld and Brittain (1987) that choice of content in artwork corresponds to what subjects hold meaning for children. A variety of reasons informed the children's experience of their chosen subject as meaningful: intentional choice of a meaningful subject; ability to respond to the research task of creating the subject in both two and three-dimensional forms; history and artistic ability to create the subject; and lastly the discovery of potential meaning in the subject as the subject was created. Rubin (1978, 2005) stated that art created between ages 9 to 12 becomes more intentional as artistic themes are independently chosen and are personally syntonic. Children in the study, however, displayed the above characteristics in art making between ages 5 to 11.

Children articulated that experiencing choice of subject and choice of material was important and preferential. While in the role of participant-observer, the researcher observed that children's art classes focused on art instruction and that personal choice in art making was significantly limited. By contrast, parent and guardian questionnaires reported that children experienced choice of materials at home. Parents and guardians reported a composite total of 42 different art materials offered in the home for art making. This finding differs from Kramer's (1971/1974) suggestion to withhold the introduction of new materials until adolescence. However this finding agrees with Hinz's (2009) suggestion that parents offer a wide range and variety of materials to children and

Pavlou's (2009) research finding that the introduction of a new materials sustained children's interest and lead to intrinsic motivation

Parent and guardian questionnaires reported children's preference for unstructured and open-ended art experiences in which creativity and expression were encouraged. Children also stated a preference for subject and material choice. These findings differed from Carr and Vandiver's (2003) quantitative study, which found that art experiences with few instructions and one material produced positive behavioral responses and artistic expressions. While Carr and Vandiver's 10 participants were of a similar age range (aged 4 to 13), the 13 participants in the current study (aged 5 to 11), did not experience the stress related to living in a temporary emergency shelter that undoubtedly shaped Carr and Vandiver's results. This difference illustrated that children experiencing stress may be overwhelmed by choice. Carr and Vandiver may be right, therefore, that under those circumstances children benefit from low instruction with one material. Whereas children in the current study experienced a stable home life, preferred, and tolerated unstructured and open-ended art experiences with choice of subject and materials. When comparing the above studies the reader should consider the significant difference of the living situations that the children are experiencing and how related factors shaped research results.

**Summary for research questions: What are children's art making preferences?**

**What experiences of meaning in art making do two-dimensional and three-dimensional art forms hold for children?**

The most prominent finding was that children in the study preferred creating art work in three dimensions. Children experienced that creating in three dimensions felt

more real, adding to findings of Gallo, Golomb, and Barroso's (2002) study. Children experienced that creating three-dimensionally offered an opportunity to experiment with new materials and led to new discoveries, which added to existing research (Golomb & McCormick, 1995). This study produced a number of new findings. For one, children prefer working in three dimensions because the process offers a satisfying opportunity to add and subtract forms and interact with the materials in space.

These children also experienced a preference for working with clay because of clay's sensory and kinesthetic properties. Children approached the clay with tolerance, flexibility, and non-judgment which added to existing research (Pavlou, 2009). Across ages (5 to 11) children in the study valued the sensory kinesthetic experience. Further, the research found that early art-making experiences with clay and crafts might have influenced children's experience of tolerance, flexibility, and non-judgment.

Children's art making preferences included choice of subject and of art materials. During the art-making experience children independently and confidently chose subjects that held meaning for them. This finding adds to research that children as young as 3 and a half can establish intention and execute a mental plan (Fienfield, Lee, Flavell, Green, & Flavell, 1999). Children valued having a choice and displayed their artistic preferences in subject and materials. This finding added to existing research by Hart and Goldin-Meadow (1984) which indicated that children beginning at age 3 have artistic preferences, can verbalize preferences, and express a rationale for a point of view.

Parents and guardians reported a composite total of 42 different art materials offered in the home for art making this result supported Pavlou's (2009) research which found that the introduction of a new materials sustained children's interest and lead to

intrinsic motivation. Additionally, it was found that these 13 children tolerated and enjoyed choice of subject and materials, in part because they were experiencing a stable home life that encouraged and supported experiential art making.

**What do children consider as they initiate a choice of art materials? What informs and contributes to children's preferences in art making?**

Children's positive experiences of art making at home contributed to children's ability to reflect and state their art making preferences. Children's descriptions were consistent with results from parent and guardian questionnaires which reported that children experienced positive feelings related to art making. Repeated words for the question "how does your child feel about art making?" were: love, creative, and enjoy. These experiences support Lowenfeld and Brittain's (1987) claim that the way in which adults respond to art making can send strong messages to children that impact attitudes about art making as learning unfolds. Parent and guardian reports of establishing dedicated art space in the home for children's art making illuminated family values and support for children's art experiences.

Experiences creating art with a range of art materials expanded children's ideas of what could be considered acceptable art making. Parents and guardians reported that children experienced art making at an early age. Art forms that were reported for art making at an early age were: painting, drawing, clay, and crafts. These findings are supported by Seiden's (2001) contention that our material preferences are partially shaped by our early experiences with materials and our relationship to objects. Across all participants (children, parents/guardians) a total composite of 42 art materials were identified as present in the home. Traditional and non-traditional art supplies were

reported as well as two-dimensional and three-dimensional materials. This is consistent with Malchiodi's (1998) notion that children develop a preference for working with a particular material through varied experiences with art materials. These findings supported Rubin's assertion that, "If there is enough variety, [of materials] then children can discover and develop their own unique tastes and preferences, their own favorite forms of expression" (p. 29).

Children's confidence and ability to state their point of view were influenced by art making at home with a range of materials along with a feeling of acceptance from family members. This finding is consistent with Pavlou's (2009) research that linked children's artistic beliefs with opportunities to engage with art materials in homes, family life, and educational settings. Children's experience of support and inspiration from family members to make art provided an experience of non-competitiveness, collaboration, and comfort. Underlying the children's experience of art making in the home and support from family members is the value and recognition of the importance of art making for children. These findings align with Gardner's (1994) claim that individual approaches to art-making are influenced largely by the perceptions and opinions of family, friends, and the culture that children are immersed in.

Parents and guardian questionnaires revealed that most children lived in two parent homes with a relational commitment of 10 or more years. Parent and guardian questionnaires reported at least one parent or guardian in the home had earned a higher education degree. These factors might contribute to a stable home life and reflect values in education, critical thinking, as well as access to resources. Children experienced exposure to art outside of their school instruction through either specific art classes or art

camp. Some parents and guardians listed museum visits as artistic influences. These findings are consistent with Lin and Thomas's (2002) study which confirmed that aesthetics and artistic preferences are shaped by particular interests of the individual and their exposure and experiences with art. These findings contribute to Pavlou's (2009) argument that children's artistic development should be attributed to instruction and to the extent that the child has been given opportunities to practice with the materials rather than maturation.

Children experienced and articulated knowledge of material properties, this knowledge of material properties informed their preferences for mixed media when working in two dimensions. This preference for working in mixed media was demonstrated by children's established plans to use art materials in a specific order. These experiences are supported by Fienfield, Lee, Flavell, Green and Flavell's (1999) quantitative study which determined that at age 3 and a half children can form intentions and implement a mental plan. Children chose preferential materials based on observed media characteristics such as the ability to blend craypas, create defined line with a marker, use a sharpie marker for permanence or chose a pencil so marks could be erased.

Contributing to this experience of preference includes children's curiosity about how materials might interact, cultural messages of privilege and opportunity, and techniques that children learned in school. Previous experience, artistic intentions, and art instruction contributed to children's awareness of media properties. Children reported opportunities to understand how materials work and identify specific material properties, as well as to compare and assess preferences for working in particular mediums. Authors (Lowenfeld & Brittain, 1987; Rubin, 1978, 2005) agreed that children age 9 to 11 need



ample time to discover and explore material properties therefore children's preferences are in part informed by individual experiences with materials.

Parent and guardian questionnaire responses show that the majority of children took the process of making art into consideration. Parent and guardian reports showed that children liked art making experiences that were open-ended, offered freedom to be creative and opportunities for free expression. Likewise, parents and guardians reported that the majority of children's dislikes were related to highly structured art experiences, coloring pages, and being told what to make. Parents and guardians reported that children preferred unstructured art experiences where creativity and expression were encouraged.

**Summary for research questions: What do children consider as they initiate a choice of art materials? What informs and contributes to children's preferences in art making?**

The research results revealed that children's preferences in art making are influenced and informed by a number of personal experiences. Early experiences with art making and opportunities to make art in the home held importance for all children. The availability of a range of two-dimensional and three-dimensional art materials in which to create with, along with school instruction and access to art classes and art camps outside of school offered differing art experiences of which informed children's preferences. Family involvement such as visits to museums, art making by family members, encouragement and inspiration to make art by family members, a home atmosphere that set a tone for non-competitiveness, collaboration, and comfort in art making, also contributed to art making preferences. Lastly, cognitive abilities to set an intention and

establish a mental plan for art making contributed to children's abilities to articulate art making preferences.

Results showed that when working in two dimensions children demonstrated a preference for mixed media. As children initiated a choice for materials children considered: specific materials properties, personal history with using the material, how the material combined with other materials, and opportunities for experimentation. Results from parent and guardian questionnaires revealed that children prefer unstructured art experiences that encourage creativity and expression. Children reported that when working in two-dimensionally mixed media provided an allowance for preferential art experiences.

### **Implications for Art Therapy**

The primary goal of the study was to understand children's lived experience of preference in art making. The study presented original research that has not been represented in other studies. Foremost, the study presented baseline results for children's preferences in art making for a normative culture. Further, this study extended the literature regarding children's experiences in art making from the children's point of view.

Children in the study presented with acceptance, flexibility, and tolerance when offered choice of subject and material in art making. Further, children stated a preference for choice in art making. This was supported by parent and guardian questionnaires that expressed children's preference for open-ended, unstructured art experiences that encouraged creativity and expression. Carr and Vandiver (2003) found that the art experiences with few instructions and one material produced positive behavioral

responses and artistic expressions for children living in a temporary emergency housing. Children's experiences of stability in the current study influenced their ability to be flexible and to tolerate artistic choices. Additionally, this finding may inform the amount and type of supplies, as well as the level of structure art therapists offer to children in art therapy.

Although art therapy literature has explored clay work with children (Henley, 2002; Kramer, 1971/1974; Rubin, 1978, 2005) this is the first systematic research study that included materials, such as clay, as a significant factor. During the art experience and interview children reported that the sensory and kinesthetic experience of working with clay was preferable and meaningful. The children experienced feeling more engaged in art making and aware of their sensory experience. Children reported that kinesthetic experiences allowed them to push, mold and squeeze the clay, which led to a satisfying experience. In part this experience was satisfying because it offered the children control to manipulate and form the clay. Younger and older elementary aged children shared a common experience despite representing a range of stages in artistic development (Lowenfeld & Brittain, 1987). Art therapists who primarily offer two-dimensional materials may inquire about material preference and consider that clay may be preferential.

Children in the study experienced that creating in three-dimensions offered an opportunity to experiment with new materials and led to the experience of discovering something new. Children experienced that the process of working in three-dimensions offered a satisfying opportunity to add and subtract forms and interact with the materials in space. Some children preferred recycled materials, suggesting that art therapists may

consider art experiences that include construction, sculpture, or assemblage. The metaphors of discovering something new, adding and subtracting, interacting or having an impact may be explored through three-dimensional materials and experienced as meaningful for children experiencing art therapy. In addition, art therapy researchers might consider the value of including both two- and three-dimensional art forms in future research studies.

Results from the study point to the importance of home and family life for these particular children's art making and therefore the children's ability to state artistic preferences. Art therapy practices may benefit from a detailed interview with children regarding their experiences with art making and preferences for art materials. In addition, interviewing parents and guardians about children's early experiences with art making, materials currently available in the home, and parent and guardian attitudes and assumptions about art and art making might offer important information that would inform art therapy treatment. Dedicated space for art making at home with a range of materials contributed to children's ability to state their artistic preferences and articulate a point of view. Art therapists may consider what professional role they could play in creating customized meaningful art spaces in family homes or consulting with families on ways to integrate art making at home life.

Children's reports and results from parent and guardian questionnaires identified that children experienced a wide range of two-dimensional materials and preferred to work with mixed media. The researcher observed that children were aware of media properties and enjoyed the process of layering and mixing media. This may imply that offering a range of materials in art therapy that allow for layering and permanence may

be considered. The metaphors inherent in the layering of art materials may hold meaning for children and contribute to the use of materials as a language in art therapy (Gandini, 2012). Art therapists might introduce materials through demonstration of material properties that illustrate layering, permanence, covering up and revealing (Kramer, 1986). Art therapy researchers might consider research that explores in which ways properties of mixed media impact treatment with children.

It is the researcher's hope that these implications extend to related professions of art therapy, such as child psychologists, art educators and child educators. Additionally the researcher hopes implications of the study may enhance and enrich parenting and care giving practices for children.

### **Limitations**

Measures were taken to ensure trustworthiness and rigor through verification procedures such as: prolonged engagement and persistent observation; triangulation through utilizing a variety of data sources; member checking; clarifying researcher bias; and peer review. However the nature of qualitative research, which emphasizes the experience of another, recognizes the inherent limitations of what can truly be known about the other (Greene & Hill, 2005).

The researcher spent approximately 87 hours over the span of 13 weeks engaging with the children as they created art during art classes and as they engaged in the study. During this time the researcher and children established a positive and trusting rapport. The study took place in the children's art room, which was a familiar and relevant environment. Although measures were taken to ensure children's comfort and honesty

with the researcher it is possible that children aimed to please the researcher and provided answers they imagined were expected.

The study was limited by the inclusion of 13 children, four male and nine female, aged 5 to 11. Children in the study were selected based on inclusion criteria developed by the researcher, thus limiting the results. Children in the study mostly came from two parent households in which there was a committed relationship of 10 or more years. Most of the children experienced support for art making from home and family life and were exposed to a myriad of art supplies and opportunities to take art classes and attend art camps. The confidence in art making that the children displayed is specific to this participant sample and was impacted by the above privileges. It would be meaningful to study children that did not encounter the same privileges.

Children in the study presented as physically, mentally, and emotionally healthy thus results from this study may limit transferability to children seeking treatment. The unique experiences of these 13 children are valid for this group of children only and therefore cannot be generalized to a broader population. Limitations include the age and location specificity of the participants and that identifiers such as socio-economic status, and ethnic diversity were not purposefully sought.

### **Recommendations for Further Research**

This study attempted to illuminate children's art making preferences and bridge a gap that existed in the literature with regard to children's expressed point of view. The study could be replicated with specific groups of children with regard to variables such as: age, gender, location, and socio-economic status. As noted earlier, this study could be

replicated with children who did not share the same privilege as these children experienced.

Replicating the study with the addition of more in-depth interviews with the family of the participants would offer additional evidence. Interviews with families could focus on how family attitudes about art and art making impact children's beliefs about and preferences for art making. Art therapists could study homes of families where art making is supported and encouraged and thus identify factors that contribute to art positive homes.

The study included one interview session with the children, along with member checking. Results may be enhanced with multiple interviews with children over time. An ethnographic approach could be taken in art classrooms or in art therapy groups to observe children's art making preferences.

The study could be replicated within a quantitative research approach and therefore reach a larger population of children. The quantitative study could be conducted in various institutions that would allow for comparisons.

Art therapists may be inspired by the parent and guardian questionnaires developed by the researcher and customize or enhance them to utilize in further research related to understanding children's art making experiences.

Art therapists could expand upon the study with regard to cultural influences on children's artistic preferences. Researchers could explore the meaning of preference as well as beliefs and assumptions about children's art making preferences within a variety of cultures.

## Conclusion

The motivation for this research was the researcher's interest in understanding children's art making experiences. The researcher was inspired by her pilot study in which the children's choice of art materials was a significant factor in the children's ability to tell a story. Further, the researcher was motivated by learning about the Reggio Emilia philosophical approach of engaging children with art materials. Lastly, the interest for this research grew out of the researcher's own experience observing children's art making in a variety of settings.

The research inquiry addressed children's art making preferences with regard to materials and two and three-dimensional art forms. The research also questioned what contributed or influenced children's art making preferences. A phenomenological qualitative approach guided data collection and method of analysis. Thirteen children participated in an art making experience and were interviewed regarding their experience. Parents and guardians of the children completed questionnaires that collected children's demographic information and data regarding art making experiences. Four main themes emerged from the data analysis of the interviews: (a) The children experienced support for art making in the home and by family members, (b) The children expressed preference for creating in three dimensions and identified the sensory and kinesthetic experience as preferential, (c) The children experienced choice in art making as meaningful, and (d) The children's two-dimensional mixed media artwork was informed by experiential knowledge of material qualities.

Findings showed that the children in the study preferred choice in art making with regard to subject and art materials. Results indicated that children preferred art making



experiences that were unstructured, open-ended, and that supported creativity and expression. Moreover, children's sensory and kinesthetic experiences guided preferences in art making. These particular children's art making preferences were influenced by creating art at home and by encouragement from family. Lastly, findings showed that these children's early life experiences as well as continued art experiences influenced preferences in art making.

APPENDIX A

Invitation for Participation in a Study of Children's Art Making

## APPENDIX A



29 Everett St.  
Cambridge, MA 02138

**Invitation for Participation in a Study of Children's Art Making**

Dear Parent or Guardian,

My name is Amy Morrison I am a doctoral student at Lesley University studying children's preferences in art making. I have been observing Mrs. \_\_\_\_\_'s art classes and getting to know the children in each grade. Through brief conversations with your child in art class I think that he or she would be helpful to this study. It seems to me that your child may enjoy making art and is able to speak about what they like and don't like. For the study, your child will be asked to create something of his or her choice, in 2D as in a drawing and the same thing in 3D, as in a sculpture. After the art making time, your child will be asked a few questions about his or her experience and preferences while creating. This is expected to take no more than 30-45 minutes for each child. Your child will receive a small art gift as a thank you for their time and participation. Ultimately this study will help understand how different art media may be helpful for children to express themselves.

Please respond if you think it would be possible to have your child participate. If you have any questions about this study or about me, please call Amy Morrison at 781.956.4230 or email [amorris5@lesley.edu](mailto:amorris5@lesley.edu). You may also contact Lesley University's Internal Review Board at [irb@lesley.edu](mailto:irb@lesley.edu). Contacting me with questions does not mean your child has to be involved in this study. If you would like your child to be involved, forms clearly explaining what you are agreeing to will be discussed with you. The same information will be explained to your child. The study will take place in your child's regular art classroom. I am at your child's school on Mondays and can meet from 2-3pm, or at a time that is convenient for you. I know that parents and guardians are busy, I fully appreciate your time in reading this invitation and your consideration of this project.

Sincerely,  
Amy Morrison,  
781.956.4230, amorris5@lesley.edu

APPENDIX B

To Second Grade Students: Invitation for Participation in a Study of Children's Art

Making

## APPENDIX B



29 Everett St.  
Cambridge, MA 02138

**To Second Grade Students:**

**Invitation for Participation in a Study of Children's Art Making**



Dear Parent or Guardian of \_\_\_\_\_ ,

I am writing a second letter because having a second grader's perspective in this study is important to me. My name is Amy Morrison I am a doctoral student at Lesley University studying children's preferences in art making. I have met your child in his or her art class with Mrs. \_\_\_\_\_. Due to your child's abilities in art at this young age and their skills in forming relationships I think they have something to offer in helping us to understand how children think and feel about making art. For the study, your child will be asked to create something of his or her choice, in 2D as in a drawing and the same thing in 3D, as in a sculpture. After the art making time, your child will be asked a few questions about his or her experience and preferences while creating. This is expected to take no more than 30-45 minutes for each child. Your child will receive a small art gift as a thank you for their time and participation. Ultimately this study will help us understand how different art media may be helpful for children to express themselves.

As parents I know you are busy and may have hesitations about having your child involved with research. Please know that this study will in no way harm your child. If you request I can send you transcripts of the interview process and photographs of your child's art that is created during our brief interview. If you have any questions about this study or about me, please call Amy Morrison at 781.956.4230 or email [amorris5@lesley.edu](mailto:amorris5@lesley.edu). Contacting me with questions does not mean your child has to be involved in this study. The study will take place in your child's regular art classroom, if you'd like you may also stay with your child. I am at your child's

school on Mondays and can meet from 2-3pm, or at another time that is convenient for you. I know that parents and guardians are busy, I fully appreciate your time in reading this invitation and considering if your child can participate.

Sincerely,

Amy Morrison  
781.956.4230  
[amorris5@lesley.edu](mailto:amorris5@lesley.edu)

APPENDIX C

Doctoral Research Informed Consent



## APPENDIX C



29 Everett St., Cambridge, MA 02138

**Doctoral Research Informed Consent**

Your child has been invited to participate in the research project titled:  
 “Understanding Children’s Experiences and Preferences in Creating 2D and 3D Artwork”

The intent of this research study is to: Study school aged children and their experience and preferences while creating 2D and 3D artwork.

Participation will entail:

Your child will be asked to create something in 2D and 3D, this will be your child’s choice or if no decision is made, he or she will be asked to create an animal in 2D and 3D. Then I will ask a few questions about your child’s experience of art making and if they had preferences of working in one art form. You, as his or her parent or guardian will be asked to complete a questionnaire regarding his or her experience with art as well as a form with demographic information. You will be asked to complete informed consent and release forms and if you request, to meet with the researcher to review these forms. The researcher will also explain to your child, informed consent, review release forms and discuss the purpose of the study.

In addition

- Former knowledge about children’s art and development or artistic skill is not necessary.
- You and /or your child are free to choose not to participate in the research and to discontinue participation in the research at any time.
- You and your child may ask the researcher questions that you may have at any time.
- Identifying details will be kept confidential by the researcher. Data collected will be coded with a pseudonym, the participant’s identity will never be revealed by the researcher, and only the researcher will have access to the data collected.
- Any and all of your questions will be answered at any time and you are free to consult with anyone (i.e., friend, family) about your decision to participate and to have your child participate in the research and/or to discontinue participation.
- Participation in this research poses minimal risk to the participants. The probability and magnitude of harm or discomfort anticipated in the research are no greater in and of themselves than those ordinarily encountered in daily life.
- If any problem in connection to the research arises, you can contact the researcher:
- Amy Morrison at 781.956.4230 and by email at [amorris5@lesley.edu](mailto:amorris5@lesley.edu) or Lesley University sponsoring faculty Dr. Robyn Flaum Cruz at (412) 401-1274, or the Internal Review Board at [irb@lesley.edu](mailto:irb@lesley.edu),
- The researcher may present the outcomes of this study for academic purposes (i.e., publications, teaching, conference presentations, supervision, educational purposes, possible art exhibit, etc.)

My agreement to participate has been given of my own free will and that I understand all of the stated above. In addition, I will receive a copy of this consent form.

---

 Parent or Guardian’s signature

---

 Date

---

 Researcher’s signature

---

 Date

## APPENDIX D

Consent to Digitally Record, Use and/or Display Research Data

## APPENDIX D



29 Everett St., Cambridge, MA 02138

**Consent to Digitally Record, Use and/or Display Research Data**

**CONSENT BETWEEN:** Amy Morrison and \_\_\_\_\_  
 Expressive Therapies Doctoral Student      Participant's Parent or Guardian

I, \_\_\_\_\_, agree to allow Amy Morrison  
 Participant's Parent or Guardian name      Expressive Therapies Doctoral Student

to photograph and film my child while creating artwork or being interviewed, to photograph/film my child's artwork, in digital form for the following purpose(s):

- Reproduction and/or inclusion within the research currently being completed by the expressive therapy doctoral student.
- Reproduction and/or presentation at a professional conference, or for educational purposes in an educational setting
- For possible exhibition, in which the child's identity will remain anonymous
- For publication in which the child's identity will remain anonymous
- Reproduction, presentation, and/or inclusion within academic assignments including but not limited to a doctoral work, currently being completed by the expressive therapies doctoral student.

It is my understanding that neither my name, nor my child's name nor any identifying information will be revealed in any presentation or display of my artwork, or publication unless waived below.

I DO wish to remain anonymous       I DO NOT wish to remain anonymous.

This Consent to Digitally Record, Use and/or Display Research Data may be revoked by me at any time. I also understand I'll receive a copy of this consent form for my personal records.

Signed

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Participants' Parent or Guardian

I, Amy Morrison (Expressive Therapies Doctoral Student) agree to the following conditions in connection with the use of artwork. I agree to keep your artwork safe, whether an original or reproduction, to the best of my ability and to notify you immediately of any loss or damage while your art is in my possession. I agree to return your artwork immediately if you decide to withdraw your consent at any time. I agree to safeguard your confidentiality.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Expressive Arts Therapy Doctoral Student

For further information or questions you may contact: Amy Morrison, 29 Everett St., Cambridge, MA 02138, 781.956.4230, [amorris5@lesley.edu](mailto:amorris5@lesley.edu) or Lesley University's Internal Review Board [irb@lesley.edu](mailto:irb@lesley.edu)

APPENDIX E  
Demographic Form

## APPENDIX E



29 Everett St., Cambridge, MA 02148

**Demographic information for :****Research on Children's Experience and Preference in Creating Artwork in 2D and 3D**

Child's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

This is only for this document so that I may contact the parents if needed. The child's and family's name will not appear on any other documents. A pseudonym or a number will be given to ensure confidentiality.

 DOB: \_\_\_\_\_ Age: \_\_\_\_\_ Sex: Male  Female 

Race and Ethnicity: \_\_\_\_\_

Parents/ Guardians name and ages:

 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Education level of parents or guardians:

 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

If child is not living with her/his parent(s) at this time, please write the guardian (s) name and age, please specify relationship to child:

 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Parental or Guardian Marital Information:

- \_\_\_\_\_ intact marriage  
 \_\_\_\_\_ separated (please specify what year)  
 \_\_\_\_\_ divorced (please specify what year)  
 \_\_\_\_\_ years of commitment if married  
 \_\_\_\_\_ years of commitment if not married

Siblings (gender, ages, DOB):

 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

APPENDIX F

Art Experience Information for Research

## APPENDIX F



29 Everett St.  
Cambridge, MA 02148

**Art Experience Information for Research on:  
Children's Experience and Preference in Creating Artwork in 2D and 3D**

**Child's Experience with Art**

1. How does your child generally feel about their art and art making?
2. What kind of art did or has your child created when they were toddler or preschool aged?
3. What did your child seem to enjoy most about art making?  
What did he or she seem to like least?
4. Has your child taken classes or focused on art making outside of learning about art in school? How so?
5. In what other ways has your child seen or been involved in art and art making?
6. Lastly could you list what kind of art supplies or art influences are in your home?
7. Please share anything else you think is important in understanding your child's relationship to art and art making.



APPENDIX G

Doctoral Research Participant Informed Assent

## APPENDIX G



29 Everett St., Cambridge, MA 02138

Doctoral Research Participant Informed Assent

You have been invited to participate in the research project titled:  
 “Understanding Children’s Experiences and Preferences in Creating 2D and 3D Artwork”

The intent of this research study is to: Study school aged children and their experience and preferences while creating 2D and 3D artwork.

Your participation means:

You will be asked to create something in 2D, as in a drawing and to make the same thing in 3D, as in a sculpture. What you create will be your choice or you may create an animal. Then I will ask a few questions about what it was like to create the drawing and sculpture and if you liked drawing or sculpting better. Your parent or guardian will be asked to answer some questions about your past experiences with art making as well as some questions about your family in general. You will be asked to complete informed assent and release forms and will meet with the researcher to review these forms. I will also explain these forms, talk about the reasons and purpose of the study and answer any questions you may have.

In addition

- Artistic skill or knowing a lot about art is not necessary.
- You are free to choose to stop participating in the research at any time.
- You may ask the researcher questions that you may have at any time.
- Only the researcher will have access to the artwork and interview data, and who you are will be kept anonymous, no one will see your name or hear your name if I am talking about or showing your artwork
- You are free to talk with anyone (i.e., friend, family, or teachers like Mrs. \_\_\_\_ or others) about your decision to be in this study or to stop being in the study
- This research study should feel very much like art class and I don’t think it will cause you to feel stress or discomfort but if it does you can talk to the researcher, your teacher and your family and friends and/or ask me if there’s something that can make you feel better.
- If any problem in connection to the research arises, you can contact the researcher:
- Amy Morrison at 781.956.4230 and by email at [amorris5@lesley.edu](mailto:amorris5@lesley.edu) or Lesley University sponsoring faculty Dr. Robyn Flaum Cruz at (412) 401-1274, or Lesley University’s Internal Review Board at [irb@lesley.edu](mailto:irb@lesley.edu)
- The researcher may talk about the study in other classes that teach about children and art making, as well as in articles, , conference presentations, exhibition and for other educational purposes

My agreement to participate has been given of my own free will and that I understand all of the stated above. In addition, I will receive a copy of this assent form.

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Participant’s signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Researcher’s signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Date

APPENDIX H

Child Assent to Digitally Record, Use and/or Display Research Data

## APPENDIX H



29 Everett St., Cambridge, MA 02138

## Child Assent to Digitally Record, Use and/or Display Research Data

CONSENT BETWEEN: Amy Morrison and \_\_\_\_\_  
 Expressive Therapies Doctoral Student      Child Participant

\_\_\_\_\_, agree to allow Amy Morrison  
 Child Participant      Expressive Therapies Doctoral Student  
 to photograph and film me while creating artwork or being interviewed, to photograph/film my  
 artwork, in digital form for the following purpose(s):

- To include with my current research study
- To reproduce or presentation at a professional conference, or for educational purposes in an educational setting
- For possible exhibition, in which your identity will remain anonymous
- For publication in which your identity will remain anonymous, such as an article or chapter in a book
- Reproduction, presentation, and/or inclusion within school assignments including but not limited to: this current research study being completed by me, the expressive therapies doctoral student.

It is my understanding that neither my name, nor any identifying information will be revealed in any presentation or display of my artwork, or publication unless waived below.

I DO wish to remain anonymous,       I DO NOT wish to remain anonymous.  
 I don't want my name or identifying information      I give you permission to use my name and information about me to be shared.      about who I am and to share this with others.

This assent to Digitally Record, Use and/or Display Research Data may be cancelled by me at any time. I also understand I'll receive a copy of this assent form for my personal records.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
 Child participant

I, Amy Morrison (Expressive Therapies Doctoral Student) agree to the following conditions in connection with the use of artwork. I agree to keep your artwork safe, whether an original or reproduction, to the best of my ability and to notify you immediately of any loss or damage while your art is in my possession. I agree to return your artwork immediately if you decide to cancel your assent at any time. I agree to safeguard your confidentiality.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
 Expressive Arts Therapy Doctoral Student

Amy Morrison, 29 Everett St., Cambridge, MA 02138, 781.956.4230, [amorris5@lesley.edu](mailto:amorris5@lesley.edu), Lesley University's Internal Review Board [irb@lesley.edu](mailto:irb@lesley.edu)

APPENDIX I

General Dissertation Study Guidelines and Interview Guide

## APPENDIX I

## General Dissertation Study Guidelines and Interview Guide

For today, I would like you to think of something you would like to draw and create.

First I would like you to draw, it is your choice of what you draw, then you will be creating the same thing in three dimensions.

After you are done creating art, both pieces of art then I will ask you some questions about what you made, the materials you chose and if you liked working in two-dimensions or three dimensions better and a little about why that is.

Usually in this room you are learning and the adult is teaching- but here now, I am learning from you and you are the teacher. You will be teaching me by sharing with me your thoughts and feelings and by having a conversation about what and how you are creating.

For the talking part I may ask some questions:

Can you tell me about your choice of subject, what you created?

Can you share with me the art materials you chose and how you made decision to use certain art materials?

What it was like for you to use \_\_\_\_\_ art material ?

How it feels to work with a certain material and/or how does it makes you feel?

Can you tell me about the materials you chose and if you like one material more than other and why this is?

Did you like creating in two dimensions as in drawing or in three dimensions as in sculpting or constructing better?

If you could choose again would you do anything differently?

What do you like the most about this experience?

What do you not like very much?

I have been asking about your preferences, what you like and don't like about art, do you usually get asked questions like these?

How was it for you to be asked these questions and to be involved in this interview?

Can you tell me about yourself as an artist and the kind of things that you like to create?

What materials do you usually make art with?

What do you enjoy the most about art making, what do you like the least?

General questions about art making in your home

General questions about family members or friends and art making

APPENDIX J

Dissertation Study Art Materials List

## APPENDIX J

## Dissertation Study Art Materials List

## Two-dimensional materials

Pencil with eraser  
Colored pencils  
Ballpoint Pen  
Black Sharpie- thick and thin  
Fine point markers  
Thick markers  
Craypas  
Crayons

## Three-dimensional materials

Grey Self Hardening Clay  
A 24 pack of plasticine non-hardening clay, a variety of colors  
Wire and wire tools  
Newspaper with masking tape  
Wood sticks and Wood Glue



APPENDIX K

List of Formulated Meaning Units

## APPENDIX K

## List of Formulated Meaning Units

1. Participant prefers to working in mixed media
2. Participant chooses subject that is familiar and has personal meaning
3. Participant prefers to work in clay
4. Participant is thoughtful about material properties
5. Participant thought of a plan before beginning the two-dimensional drawing task.
6. Participant experiences confidence when working with clay.
7. Participant acknowledges three-dimensional art would be exhibited
8. Participant is thoughtful about using tools when working with clay
9. Participant prefers working in three dimensions
10. Participant appreciates the sensory and kinesthetic qualities of working in clay
11. Participant appreciates working with a variety of materials
12. Participant appreciates the process of working with new materials
13. Participant experiences choice of subject and material as important
14. Participant creates art at home
15. Participant enjoys creating functional art
16. Participant enjoys art materials that offer a variety of color
17. Participant enjoys creating with a variety of art materials
18. Participant enjoys sharing art and inspiring others to create
19. Participant enjoys the process of creating art
20. Participant experiences joy when creating art
21. Participant experiences pride in creating art
22. Participants art is appreciated at home
23. Participant is encouraged and supported to create art by family.
24. Participant enjoys creating art near others.
25. Participant has an artist identity
26. Participant enjoys the sensory aspect of drawing materials
27. Participant prefers materials that cover space easily
28. Participant experiences messy art as fun
29. Participant appreciates the reparative quality of working in three dimensions
30. Participant enjoys spending time creating art
31. Participant prefers ample time to create art
32. Participant experiences aspects of creating in three dimensions as challenging
33. Participant experiences being more imaginative when working in clay
34. Participant experiences a meaningful connection to the material of clay
35. Participant experiences catharsis when working with clay.
36. Participant prefers to create drawings from her imagination

37. Participant acknowledges that working in clay offers experiences of engagement with the materials that differs from working with a pencil
38. Participant experiences drawing as meaningful in a variety of ways.
39. Participant has an acceptance for all art and an open definition of what art can be.
40. Participant prefers materials that are easy to control.
41. Participant enjoys non-traditional art materials.
42. Participant experiences art museum trips as meaningful
43. Participant prefers to create art that is personally meaningful.
44. Participant values art for expressing feelings
45. Participant experienced frustration when drawing
46. Participant prefers creating realistic art
47. Participant experiences art as enriching to
48. Participant enjoys creating memories through art making with others
49. Participant experiences being understood through creating art
50. Participant prefers origami to drawing.

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