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PERSPECTIVES OF AFRICAN AMERICAN ADULT STUDENTS

AND FACULTY ON THE USE OF ART-BASED LEARNING IN

HIGHER EDUCATION CLASSROOMS

A Dissertation in Adult Education

by

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to explore the learning experiences of African American students in higher education who have taken classes that included artistic ways of knowing to learn more about what engages their learning in light of the faculty's purposes for incorporating such ways of knowing into their classrooms. Cynthia Dillard's (2006) notion of an Endarkened Feminist Epistemology guided this qualitative study that was informed by both narrative inquiry and autoethnography. This theoretical framework of Endarkened Feminist Epistemology assumes: (a) a responsibility to cultural and social community; (b) research is a spiritual and intellectual process; (c) encourages dialogue within community as a means of assessing knowledge; (d) the application of knowledge to an everyday context leads to meaning making; (e) knowing and research are historical; and, (f) power relations impacts research. This theoretical framework provided the lens through which the teaching practices of African American professors and the concerns of African American learners were viewed.

The primary means of data collection in this study was in-depth narrative interviews with five professors who draw on arts-based ways of knowing and learning to determine their purposes in doing so and with nine of their students to determine what engages their learning when they have been exposed to arts-based ways of knowing. In addition, there was some classroom observation in order to understand both how the professors themselves draw on these forms of inquiry and to understand what the students are exposed to; documents such as field notes served as ancillary forms of data.

As a qualitative study informed by both narrative inquiry and autoethnography, findings of the study are first presented in the form of narratives with some autoethnographic reflections of both the professors and the students. Then, a cross case analysis of common themes in the narratives of the professors and the students are presented. Themes within the professor narratives indicate that they include arts-based ways of knowing because they serve as a means of: (a) engaging their students and themselves; (b) drawing on multiple ways of knowing and learning; and, (c) connecting with culture. Themes about the students indicate what they value in higher education classrooms are instructors and/or teaching activities that: (a) attend to cultural identity; (b) connect to others or the content through interaction and engagement; (c) create a classroom community; and, (d) deal effectively with classroom organizational issues.

This study contributes to the field of adult education in three primary ways. First, it identifies the importance of engagement and culturally responsive education. African American learners need to perceive that classroom activities affirm their history and experiences. Second, it highlights the importance of varying teaching practices, and drawing of multiple ways of knowing, which increases the possibility of engaging the learner in a way that is seen as relevant to his or her life. Finally, it underscores the benefit of creating an interactive teaching/learning community in the higher education classroom that engages African American students and their peers and helps them learn from each other. Suggestions for further research are discussed as well as some implications for adult education theory and practice.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

ACKNOWLEGMENTS

I begin this day as I do every other day with these words: Thank you God for:

The love that emanates from your steady hand;

Parents, siblings, a niece, nephews and family members that love and

share love;

A partner who his separate, but inseparable;

The shoulders of so many that continually boast me;

And,

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acknowledge me and engage me.

With sincerity I say Thank you to you all! And I say thank you many more

times!

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents, Franklin G. Mont, Sr. and Sylvia B. Mont. Your committed spirits paved the way for me to achieve this latest accomplishment. The encouraging words, faithful glances, sense of humor, and reassuring embraces made it all possible. I am blessed to receive your continued support and your needed reminders "to keep on keeping on."

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

There has been much discussion in recent years on the experiences of African Americans in higher and adult education. Since the early 1990s scholars in adult education have critically highlighted the lack of representation of people of color not only in the scholarship from the field, but also in the curriculum of many adult and higher education programs. This has resulted in scholarship by people of color and other marginalized groups in the field (Colin, 1994; Guy, 1999a; Johnson-Bailey, 2001a; Sheared & Sissel, 2001). These cited scholars also note that often embedded in the classroom pedagogy are teaching practices that are centered in the experiences of the White majority. Thus, both the curriculum and classroom pedagogy can serve to marginalize some students because of their race, class, gender, ethnicity, culture, or sexual orientation. At the same time, curriculum and classroom pedagogy support the interest and beliefs of those representing the White majority. Those who critically assess higher education procedures and classroom practices have made similar observations; some scholars suggest that marginalization of people of color within these settings can prevent them from even applying to or entering within higher education because of the non harmonious nature of these environments (Howard, 2000; Johnson, 2005; Jones, 2000).

Many of these scholars note that the curriculum and pedagogy are often based on the insights and interests of the White majority, which suggests that many higher education institutions are not as culturally responsive to the concerns and needs of students of color, including African American students. This was the particular focus of this study. Despite this, all students regardless of cultural identity are expected to achieve based on the same

academic standards. The task of achievement for African Americans often becomes a challenge because the curriculum is often more representative of the dominant culture. In addition, academic pursuits require confronting and negating a prevailing ideology held by many members representing the dominant group who question Black competence (hooks, 2003). While this many be changing, this commonly held belief has existed since the harsh ravages of slavery, through segregation and into contemporary times. Most African Americans are keenly aware of such a commonly held belief; thus, the task of achievement requires a concerted effort on our part to suppress and dismantle such a belief, while simultaneously dealing with the rigors of gaining an education. Thus, the question is how can we not only develop a curriculum that represents the interests of all learners, but also develop a pedagogy that could appeal to a wide representation of learners, African American students in particular? Part of my own story might shed light on the wider story of how this question developed.

As an African American woman I have dealt with the consequences of the prevailing ideology of the dominant group many times in my academic life in higher education, but the strongest memories occurred when I was a traditional college age student 30 years ago. There were times when I felt distracted and disinterested within the classroom because it is seemed so irrelevant. I forced myself to overcome these feelings because I was determined to succeed. For as long as I can remember, my parents stressed the importance of a college education, and I consciously and unconsciously affirmed their beliefs. I did not think twice about going to college, so it was only a matter of where.   I firmly believed that graduating with a college education would lead to my success. However, I was not fully prepared for this experience within higher education. The educators lectured endlessly, often without any

regard for the learners. My classmates, who were mostly White people, appeared comfortable in this environment. I realized the best way to function was to mimic their behaviors. So, I took pages and pages of notes, memorized the contents of those pages and prayed for recall during examinations.

The grades I earned were commendable, but I do not believe that my comprehension of the material was commensurate with most of the earned grades, until I became a potter. Somehow, pursuing an interest in pottery along with coursework made the academic environment more palatable, and I discovered my artistic talents. I noticed that if I designated time for working with clay along with the completion of my course assignments, then my retention levels increased and my comprehension also grew. Additionally, I immensely enjoyed working with clay and I became very good at building clay forms using hand-building techniques. I spent hours in the art studio after completing my daily coursework. It seemed the combination of those activities made me a better student.

I cannot attribute my improved academic capabilities solely to working with pottery. Additional factors also seemed to influence my success. There were occasions when my academic achievement was related to connections with professors, and there were other periods when it resulted from classroom activities. Some professors broke from traditional lecturing patterns and included learning experiences that were engaging. Students were invited to participate in the discussion within these classrooms. The participatory learning activities included group debates, oral reports, theatrical plays, role plays, or the creation of art work. For some reason these experiences generated a tremendous amount of energy, and I seemed to personally thrive. As a result, I realized I needed to select courses that were

taught by educators who were engaging, and I needed to cultivate my artistic talents on a daily basis.

The change I experienced because of my new-found talent is not a unique one, for human beings are gifted with a large number of talents. Accidentally, my collegiate experiences enabled me to apply more than one of my talents. Human talents are known to range from theatrical performances to theorizing about physics to completing employment applications. This wide range of talents includes artistic, intellectual, and physical capabilities (Almon, 1999). However, when I assess my collegiate experience, most of the instructors did not draw on other aspects of knowing and learning beyond rationality, and I speculate that their reluctance simultaneously limited the acquisition of cognitive knowledge. The majority of decision makers and educators from the institutions I attended placed a high value on the limited role of rational abilities and ignored other equally important aspects of learning. Their exclusive focus on the intellectual talents created formidable and needless challenges within the classroom for me and possibly for other learners. Furthermore, as many scholars in adult and higher education who are concerned with multicultural and culturally relevant or culturally responsive education have noted, most of the curriculum in higher education has revered the works and interests of those who are White and represent the dominant culture (Banks, 1993; Guy, 1999a; Johnson-Bailey, 2001a; Ladson-Billings, 2000). Sometimes the curriculum is not very culturally responsive to people of color. Including arts-based ways of knowing might be a way that learners can easily include their own cultures in the learning. This could be particularly important to African American and other learners whose cultures are often not represented in the curriculum.

Artistic Ways of Knowing

There has been much discussion in recent years about other ways of knowing in adult education, such as through spirituality, emotions, and embodiment (Dirkx, 2001; Freiler, 2008; Tisdell, 2003). Attention has also been devoted to artistic ways of knowing in the wider field of education (Eisner, 1972, 2001, 2002, 2005; Greene, 1995), and there is some discussion of it in adult education as well (Clover, 2006; Finley, 2005; Lawrence, 2005; Wesley, 2006). Elliot Eisner and Randee Lawrence suggest that artistic expression broadens cultural perspectives by allowing and honoring diverse ways of knowing and learning; Wesley (2006) has also recently completed a research study of its use in community based adult education setting. These educators take a social constructivist view towards learning. As social constructivists they view learning as a process of creating new connections in experiences thereby recognizing different modes of thinking. These educators also maintain that classroom activities that involve the arts are likely to help learners make these new connections and transcend previous limitations because the learners are inspired to be creative and to use their imagination. Furthermore, Greene (1995) adds that a combination of creative expression and cognitive practices in classrooms designed for adults uncovers hidden knowledge that is not easily expressed in words.

As such, the arts can elicit a learner's imagination by engaging the heart, mind and body (Tisdell & Tolliver, in press). Tisdell and Tolliver argue that classroom activities that fully engage the learners allow them to absorb new knowledge in multiple ways until it ultimately "becomes them" (p. 6). Learning activities that include artistic forms of expression typically engage learners in a way that acknowledges their identity and simultaneously enhances their ability to reflect on and relate to learning experiences. For

example, when I became an accomplished potter I realized I needed to learn more about creating clay forms. I decided to take a summer course. I selected a course on Korean methods taught by a professional potter from a Maryland college. The course instructor provided an extensive background on the Korean culture and their method of hand-building pottery. As she spoke and reviewed photographic slides I connected my experience/capabilities with the Korean cultural experience. I imagined the rhythm of the potters' hands and it became easier for me to adapt to the different technique. Although this instruction demanded a good deal of effort initially, I was eventually able to imitate the proper technique. This classroom experience helped me locate the common ground in our methods, which represented my western Africa influence and her interpretation of Korean techniques. Eventually, it became easier for me to perform a new task. This personal experience also typifies the way the arts can reveal hidden knowledge; I was able to bridge previously learned coiling methods (used to create pots) with similarities in the Korean coiling technique.

On the surface, it may appear I learned this new coiling technique through experiential learning, but artistic ways of knowing, unlike experiential learning in general, involves more than experiencing a life event or occurrence and the subsequent knowledge. Artistic ways of knowing include another significant component; according to Eisner (2005), it also results in achievement. The skills to negotiate life are learned through experience, but they are refined through accomplishments and engagement with the arts. It is through the accomplished talent of Romare Bearden that viewers of his paintings are able to experience the Harlem Renaissance without residing in Harlem during this timeframe, and similarly, I created a clay form using Korean coiling methods without residing in Korea.

Artistic expression in the previous examples involved the use of three-dimensional forms. Artistic expression also includes other forms of non-performing and performing art. The non- performance form of creative expression includes paintings, drawings, or creative writing, while the performing arts include dramatizations, the creation of films, music, or dance. Creative expression and artistic expression are used interchangeably in much of the adult education and the education literature in general (Dewey, 1934; Finley, 2005; Greene, 1995). Eisner (2001) and Lawrence (2005) suggest that these forms of expression present a way to build group identity and solidarity, which can lead to collective knowledge. Wesley (2006) saw evidence of this in her research study of community based art programs that had a social justice agenda.

There are several key assumptions that inform an artistic way of knowing. Maxine Greene (1978) notes that these assumptions are: (a) the learners and the educators are engaged by becoming active participants; (b) arts-based activities provides learners with a vocabulary to name what they are seeing and hearing and offers educators a means for recognizing commonality and differences with their vocabulary; (c) arts-based learning offers a way of noticing the learner's and educator's needs; and, (d) activities based on the arts connects the cultural and personal identity of the learner with the educator.

A key notion about this way of knowing is that it stimulates imagination and creativity in a way that reflects the experiences of those present. Goldberg (2006) indicates that working with and through the arts in classrooms can generate surprises and excitement. Learning with the arts, a form of engagement, involves studying about a particular subject using artistic methods, such as songs or poetry, to learn about a particular culture, such as African culture. In addition, learning through the arts (another form of engagement) entails

expressing understanding of a subject through an art form, such as a mini-drama about African history (Goldberg).

Applications for this alternative way of knowing seem to vary, but one has to wonder if empirical evidence exists that supports the use of these methods. Most educators can easily think of the supposedly "poor" student who excels when artistic methods are used or of learners who perform poorly on tests, but are gifted poets or painters. A few educators have supplied empirical evidence that support these notions (Eisner, 2001; Rauscher, Shaw & Ky, 1993). These educators have basically documented that the arts increase learner capabilities, and they imply that traditional teaching methods limit expression and/or learner capabilities.

For example, a recent study of secondary education students who had 4 years of art courses revealed they earned 40 points more on their college entrance exams than those who only had 1 year (Eisner, 2001). Another study suggests that there is a temporary increase in the spatial reasoning ability of college students who listen to music (Rauscher et al., 1993). These findings could suggest that college-aged learners might also perform better in environments that incorporate artistic ways of knowing. Additionally, one could speculate that this way of knowing could lead to a transformative learning experience.

Use of Artistic Ways of Knowing in Higher Education Settings

Many teaching in higher education have given little thought to how to incorporate art as a way of knowing into their pedagogy. Perhaps this reluctance occurs because most in higher education were hired for their content expertise and many have not received training on how to teach. Thus, they rely on cognitive ways of knowing that emphasize rational

thinking/learning practices. As Gardner (1983, 1999, 2004) observes, this can result in students who are not fully engaged and who are not motivated to remain in these settings.

Some educators suggest we should move beyond cognitive practices and the sole reliance on an autonomous view of relating to thinking/learning and the associated intelligence levels (Gardner, 1983, 1993, 1999, 2004; Lawrence, 2005). In fact, Gardner defines intelligence as the capacity in one or more cultures to solve problems or to fashion products that are valued research. He asserts that there are seven forms of intelligence: (a) logical/mathematical-logical or numerical patterns; (b) linguistic-sensitivity to sounds, rhythms and meanings of words; (c) musical- ability to produce and produce rhythm, pitch and timbre; (d) spatial-to perceive visually; (e) bodily/kinesthetic-control of body movements; (f) interpersonal- response to others; and (g) intrapersonal- to draw upon one's own feelings to guide behavior. The intelligences are not independent entities; they can at times affect or enhance another form of intelligence. These categories are further separated by their relationship to external objects. External objects otherwise known as structures with particular functions are embodied in some intelligences. The intelligences that rely on objects are the spatial, logical, and bodily intelligences. These intelligences are fashioned by the physical world. Artistic ways of knowing emanate from spatial intelligence and rely on interaction with objects created by the physical world.

Humans have evolved in a manner that they embody a range of these intelligences. Yet, as previously stated, most educators within higher education settings are preoccupied with two forms of intelligence, the logical/mathematical and linguistic (Gardner, 1983, 1993, 1999, 2004). Many fail to acknowledge the similarities that exist between the arts and rational thinking. These educators do not see how the arts and rational forms of thinking rely

on similar prototypes to classify, represent, compare and appraise the qualities of the world (Eisner, 2005). Each form of intelligence and each form of our senses help us convey meaning in our experience. Scientists are known to lecture students and other interested individuals about the flow of blood through humans and they typically use intricate artistic renderings to visually clarify their explanations. To a certain extent the disciplines are co-dependent. More educators need to recognize that all subjects have aesthetically significant features, from the process of making to the final form it takes.

Despite the prevalent preoccupation with the logical and linguistic form of intelligence by most educators, there a few educators who support the reexamination of the traditional practices within higher education. These educators are concerned with the cultural aspects of the higher education setting (Cajete, 1999; Tisdell, 2001). They suggest that traditional practices hinder needed assistance due to their over reliance on rationality, which ratifies a way of knowing predominately associated with Euro-American, White culture. Their interest in reexamining collegiate practices proposes other ways of knowing that are as intrinsic or as necessary for other groups as rationality is for the dominant culture. Specifically, Tisdell calls for a merger between "heart knowledge" (p.160) and rational forms of knowing to induce transformative learning. Heart knowledge is about engaging the learner's heart and soul, as well as his or her minds. Tisdell suggests a process of knowing and meaning making that is essentially imaginative and extrarational, rather than solely reflective and rational. Higher education classrooms that honor the emotional aspects of learning can help learners connect their inner self with the outer world. The arts can facilitate this process because it engages all of our senses and awakens our imagination and intellectual capabilities.

The Perspective of African American Higher Education Learners

Many scholars in higher and adult education have written about the importance of developing a multicultural curriculum that can be culturally responsive to all learners (Banks, 1993; Guy, 1999a; Johnson-Bailey, 2001a; Ladson-Billings, 2000). One of the complaints from students of color in higher education over the past 30 years has been the persistence of a curriculum that is heavily reliant on the dominant culture.   These students imply that their experiences and contributions made by members of their culture have been marginalized and in some cases omitted (Howard, 2000). Moreover, these marginalized students have requested the development of curriculum that mirrors their experience.

James Banks (1993, 2006) and many of his colleagues argue for the importance of a multicultural curriculum and pedagogy. While there are a variety of approaches to multicultural education, some are more attendant to issues of power relations based on race, class, and gender than others. But all of these approaches advocate a purposeful inclusion of the experiences of all the cultures represented within the classroom. A truly inclusive higher education classroom could potentially include artistic ways of knowing through its multicultural emphasis. For example, if an educator is interested in facilitating learning experiences that are based on storytelling (a teaching method which relies on artistic way of knowing), they should acknowledge the stories and storytelling strategies of all learners present within the classroom.

Like Banks, Gloria Ladson-Billings (1994, 2002) also speculates that learning experiences that primarily reflect the needs and/or interests of the dominant culture hinders learning for other groups. Specifically, she considers factors leading to the

underachievement of the people of color, women and poor people. Ladson-Billings indicates that the primary aim of culturally relevant teaching is to assist in the development of a "relevant Black personality" that allows these students to pursue an education while maintaining their African American culture. Cultural relevance as defined by Ladson-Billings moves beyond language to include other aspects of student and school culture. She promotes using the student's culture in order to maintain it and to transcend the negative effects of the dominant culture. The major goal of this and Banks' viewpoint is to modify the structural make up of educational institutions in a way that would eventually offset cultural hegemony that excludes people of color. Furthermore, Guy, Reiff, and Oliver (2004) argue that to properly infuse multicultural education within an institution, organizational change needs to occur.   They suggest that it is key to change the organization's values and norms for they impact internal policies and procedures.

Most of the educators cited above who discuss multicultural or culturally responsive education do not specifically address artistic ways of knowing; however, their views do imply that classroom practices should reflect the experiences of people of color, women, and poor people, and they imply support of this form of knowing. Many cultures are rich in artistic experiences; the African American culture exemplifies this in their form of communicating, dress, and forms of celebration (hooks, 2003). Perhaps educators need to consider using methods that are informed by artistic ways of knowing with a multicultural emphasis. These methods could address the concerns raised repeatedly by African American higher education learners and ultimately enhance their learning.

The literature devoted to the needs of marginalized adult learners does not respond to this pressing concern. Despite the fact that some educators do address artistic ways of

knowing and marginalized learners (such as African American learners), there is a lack of empirical research that explores how marginalized learners respond to these ways of knowing in the higher education classroom. The literature does offer some conceptual work which promotes the use of multicultural art in the classroom (Blocker, 2004; Povey, 1969). Indirectly, the use of multicultural art impacts artistic ways of knowing through its introduction. This conceptual work asserts that multicultural art education increases diversity by considering non-European art work and art traditions, but it does not specifically relate to a way of knowing. These educators do advocate that art used in the classroom should reflect the demographic make-up of the classroom, such as including Asian, African, and Native American art along with European work. Valuing multicultural work within all classrooms is important because historically work prepared by marginalized people (such as Latino and African Americans) has been generally set aside, thereby minimizing cultural connections. However, the previously mentioned manuscript does not address how multiculturalism influences artistic ways of knowing.

In spite of the call for multicultural curriculum within the classrooms, African Americans have not received the specific attention of educators that incorporate artistic ways of knowing. Perhaps this omission results from their struggle with determining the best means possible to include arts-based methods. However, Maxine Greene (1978) suggests, that educators must first experience breaks with the conventional in their lives and that they should keep pushing themselves to develop new perspectives. Participatory involvement with the arts is generally known to help educators appreciate its use and it also makes the learners feel that they and their identity are acknowledged, but educators need to ensure that the classroom is an inclusive experience. Working with the arts in a multicultural way may

help educators see more, hear more, and consciously recognize the impact of daily routines and become more capable of determining how these routines suppress intellectual growth (Goldberg, 2006).

Diverse aesthetic experiences can be considered viable mechanisms for releasing the conventional within educators and learners because it requires conscious participation with the art form, it causes the movement of energy, and it places focus on the selected medium. At the same time, it values the cultures/experiences of those present. Unfortunately, the literature does not present a response to this concern from the African American perspective.

Purpose and Research Questions

Concern about the achievement level of African American students in higher education impacts the field of adult education and higher education because these learners possess a noteworthy presence in the collegiate environment; the numbers of other students of color are also growing. Given that retention statistics indicate that enrollment levels among African Americans are often not maintained through to graduation (Department of Education, 2002; Why aren't there more Blacks graduating from college?, 2000-2001) those involved with higher education need to become more concerned with addressing the educational needs of this growing segment of the classroom and their low graduation rate. The 2000-2001 report prepared by *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education* cited that 28 of the 54 prestigious colleges and universities surveyed indicated that Black graduation rates are 10 percentage points or more below the graduation rates for White students (includes Caucasians only); further, there are at least eight other highly-ranked colleges and universities with a 20 percentage point or more lower graduation rate for Black students. While the causes for lower graduation rates are multiple, this trend should provoke educators

to assess their teaching practices as one among many potential causes and to determine how they might employ a more culturally inclusive pedagogy.

There is much discussion on the importance of multiple ways of knowing in higher education and adult education (including the arts), but there are some key factors overlooked by the current literature, such as: how drawing on these ways of knowing in the curriculum can facilitate learning on multiple levels; how these ways of knowing affect cognitive knowledge; and how these ways of knowing can be used within culturally responsive pedagogy. African Americans are entering higher education in record numbers despite lower retention rates; while there is some research on multiple ways of knowing, some research on culturally responsive education and African American learners, there is a lack of research specifically on incorporating arts-based learning and its effects on African American learners. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to explore the perspectives of African American students in higher education who have taken classes that incorporate artistic ways of knowing about what engages their learning, in light of the faculty's purposes for incorporating such ways of knowing into their classrooms. The primary research questions that guided this study were aimed at the students and included:

a. How do students perceive the use of artistic ways of knowing within the classroom?

b. How do they perceive the combined use of cognitive experiences and arts-based experiences is affecting their overall learning?

In order to have a fuller understanding of the student's context for learning, a secondary research question is aimed at the faculty who teach such classes, and it is simply, "Why do

faculty include arts-based approaches in the learning environment, and how do these approaches relate to their overall goals for student learning?"

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of this study is grounded in the work of those such as Eisner (2005) and Goldberg (1997), who advocate the importance of arts-based knowing in the learning environment and who also note that learners eventually develop intellectually and emotionally as they develop greater understanding and comprehension. It is also grounded in Cynthia Dillard's (2006) notion of an Endarkened Feminist Epistemology, an epistemology that includes teaching practices that address the concerns of African American learners. Dillard's framework embraces a need to make the world a better place and recognizes that teaching practices are not solely for the mind, but they are dynamic and creative.

The Endarkened Feminist Epistemology is grounded in the historical roots of Black feminist and feminist thought. This epistemology is distinguishable because it considers the intersection/overlap of culturally constructed socializations of race, gender, and other identities, but it mainly considers the historical and contemporary contexts of oppression and resistance for African American women. This study draws on aspects of Dillard's (2006) epistemology, mainly race, but not so much on gendered aspects. Dillard does encourage educators to examine their own motives and methods and seek to understand various members of the social and/or cultural communities.

The central component of Dillard's (2006) work as the theoretical framework is that it prescribes a connectedness between educators and learners; further, Dillard states that "research is both an intellectual and a spiritual pursuit, a pursuit of purpose" (p. 20). Arts-

based ways of knowing can sometimes connect to this notion of a "spiritual pursuit" or a spiritual consciousness because it asks the learner to draw on her or his creative expression and imagination, which some suggest potentially could relate to spiritual consciousness (Dirkx, 2001; Tisdell, 2003). Within a cultural learning environment spiritual consciousness is engaged mentally, physically and spiritually to mediate and clarify classroom activities and struggles (Dillard).

Dillard (2006) formulated a theoretical framework that is related to Ladson-Billings' (1994, 2002) definition of culturally relevant learning environments. As previously stated, Ladson-Billings suggests that the primary aim of culturally relevant environment and teaching is to assist in the development of a "relevant Black personality" that allows these students to pursue an education while maintaining their African American culture. The Endarkened Feminist Epistemology recognizes this viewpoint and makes additional allowances for the needs of the poor, gender-related concerns, and other social identities. It specifically addresses those African Americans' who define themselves and their identity based on racism, sexism, classism, and other 'isms," thereby influencing who we are not and who we are.

As will be discussed in further detail in chapter two, there are six assumptions that inform this theoretical framework: (a) it recognizes that self-definition forms one's participation and responsibility to one's community -the researcher/educator is responsible to the members of their community and for their well-being; (b) there is both an intellectual and a spiritual component to doing research; (c) dialogue between community members positively impacts the research process; (d) "concrete experience within everyday life form the criterion of meaning, the 'matrix of meaning making'" (Dillard, 2006, p. 23); (e) there is

a connectedness with the past; and finally, (f) "power relations, manifested as racism, sexism, homophobia, and so on structure gender, race and other identity relations within research" (p. 26). Broadly speaking, this framework connects with artistic ways of knowing because it also broadens cultural perspectives by allowing and honoring diverse ways of knowing and learning.

<div align="center">Methodology Overview</div>

This was a qualitative research study. According to Merriam and Simpson (1995), one of the goals of qualitative research is to achieve an understanding of how people make sense out of their lives and how they interpret what they experience. As such, it was the most appropriate form of research for this study because, as the researcher, I am interested in the perspectives of the participants and their views on how arts-based learning impacts them. Further, some forms of qualitative research can easily reflect the cultural standpoint of the researchers and the research participants (Tillman, 2006). A qualitative approach grounded in some of the principles of an Endarkened Feminist Epistemology attends to cultural issues in that it incorporates a "methodology of surrender" (Dillard, 2006, p. 82) that provides an intimate research space that heeds the wisdom of ancestors and the Creator. Therefore, this study respected the culture of the participants and transcended the negative influence of the dominant culture.

While this study is grounded in the principles of an Endarkened Feminist Epistemology that highlights the importance of attending to cultural issues and how participants make meaning on a deep level through a spiritual and cultural approach, the methodology for the study is informed by autoethnography and narrative analysis. While this will be explained in detail in Chapter 3, a brief discussion of it here is helpful.

There are many types of qualitative research. Autoethnography, as a research methodology, connects the perspectives of the researcher and the participants. It is an autobiographical genre of writing and research that reveals the multiple layers of consciousness. This study incorporated participant stories largely in the form of narratives and my own story as the researcher, but it did not include the lengthy observations normally associated with ethnography or autoethnography. Instead, the traditions of narrative analysis were used to review and situate each story, while also drawing on many of the principles of autoethnography.

Narrative analysis was appropriate because it reflected the oral and/or written accounts of the students' views on arts-based classroom experiences and revealed the meanings they made of these experiences. In particular, narrative analysis is noted for providing a forum for sharing the stories of marginalized people, such as African American higher education students. Telling their stories may create a space for their perspectives within the arts-based literature and simultaneously inform interested educators (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

The study was primarily concerned with how African American students perceive experiences of arts-based ways of knowing in higher education classrooms and their perceptions of how it influenced their learning. However, I also interviewed five faculty who specifically draw on artistic ways of knowing in their classes to have a better understanding of how and why they incorporate such ways of knowing in the classroom. I also observed the faculty to increase my understanding of what it is that they do. My primary interest, however, was how the students experienced these ways of knowing and what they learned from them.

That said, my primary means of data collection was in-depth interviews with nine African American students who have been in classes where the instructor draws on artistic ways of knowing; an interview was also conducted with five faculty who teach such classes. In addition, data collected during the interviews with observations of African American educators who use artistic ways of knowing was enhanced by keeping a retrospective journal. These notes helped me as the researcher become more familiar with classroom experiences that contain creative expression, and the notes were supplemented by information obtained through other data collection methods. Dependability and credibility of the study was enhanced by conducting member checks with participants through the triangulation of data collection methods and ongoing consultation with my advisor.

Overall, a modification of autoethnography, including a narrative analysis, was appropriate for the purpose of this study because it disclosed descriptive information that details the participants' experience and that of the researcher's. The detailed description allowed the researcher, the participants, and readers to understand the core of their experiences. The integration of these perspectives presents a holistic view and increased the depth of understanding.

<div align="center">Significance of Study</div>

This study is significant for several reasons. The primary significance of this study was to increase understanding about the role of artistic expression within higher education classrooms, and to relate this understanding to the needs/concerns of African American learners. Ultimately, the classroom should be a place where information is stored and retrieved into memory and reasoning, and it should include both emotional and rational experiences, while at the same time connecting with the cultures of those present. Further

learning about the role of artistic expression offered insights for educators that related to the needs/concerns raised by African American higher education learners.

Second, this study is significant because it revealed how the use of artistic expression helps African American higher education learners uncover hidden knowledge that cannot be easily expressed in words and/or communicate ideas that are difficult to express (Lawrence, 2005). Artistic expression is known to create connections between the affective and cognitive thought processes in a way that ultimately renders the learner with a deeper understanding and with an ability to communicate their understanding. As Dewey (1934) stated, the aesthetic should be stamped on any intellectual idea in order to make it complete. Therefore, the use of artistic expression can inform an educator's understanding of how to facilitate learning in a manner that will benefit those African American learners who need more than cognitive approaches.

And last, this study is intended to help educators from higher education settings create vital connections with the African American lived experience. Eisner (1972) suggests that the arts complete intellectual ideas because they add certain elements to thinking. He indicates that the arts provide visions (mental pictures) about the application of information that can be subliminal. These visions can be hindered by human emotions, concerns, and fears, but they are released through artistic expression. Further, study about the role of artistic expression may help educators take a fresh look at the taken for granted or the overlooked contextual needs/concerns of African American learners.

Ideally, educators should be interested in achieving this connection between the cognitive and the affective within their classrooms, but they may struggle with determining the best means possible. Educators should keep pushing themselves to develop new

perspectives that will help them connect with the needs/concerns of African American learners. When they work with the arts they may see more, hear more, and consciously recognize the impact of daily routines and become more capable of determining how these routines suppress intellectual growth. Aesthetic experiences are considered viable mechanisms for releasing the conventional within educators and learners (including African American learners) because it requires conscious participation with the art form, it causes the movement of energy, and it places focus on the selected medium (Greene, 1978).

As the researcher, I personally benefited from the completion of this study. As an African American female, I truly believe that higher education facilitates personal and professional success. Although there is no single solution to the high attrition rates of African American higher education students, exploration into classroom practices should produce more viable learning experiences. Incorporating alternative ways of knowing into classrooms with a multicultural focus offers a positive response that could reverse the current trend. Perhaps what is more important is that African Americans need to involved in learning environments that have a multicultural emphasis, and these classrooms are facilitated by educators who are invested in our success.

<div align="center">Assumptions and Limitations</div>

There are a number of assumptions that I made in this study. There are also some limitations. These are outlined here.

Assumptions

1. Most African American higher education learners have completed courses that are based predominantly on cognitive teaching/learning practices.

2. Educators and educational decision makers are interested in increasing the achievement levels of African American higher education learners.

3. Participating in higher education courses that use cognitive and artistic expression jointly will positively impact African American higher education learners.

4. African Americans higher education learners are capable of communicating their concerns/needs about their learning experience in the classroom.

Limitations

1. This study is limited to African American higher education students and professors who have experienced/facilitated cognitive and artistic expression within the classroom.

2. This study is limited to African American higher education students who have also completed courses that use cognitive and artistic expressions within the last 5 years.

The findings of this study should not be generalized due to the small sample size, limited classroom experiences, and the use of semi-structured interviews. Nevertheless, in spite of these limitations, the study promises to make an important contribution to how arts-based approaches affect students' engagement in learning in higher education settings.

<div align="center">Definitions of Terms</div>

African American: Americans of African descent.

Artistic ways of knowing: Artistic expression includes forms of non-performing art; such as paintings, drawings, or creative writing and performance arts, such as dramatizations, films, music, or dance are also considered a form of artistic expression. Creative expression

and artistic expression are used interchangeably by educators (Dewey, 1934, Greene, 1995, Goldberg, 2006).

Culture: Culture is the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes one group from another, for survival in and adaptation to its environment. The cultural program consists of knowledge, concepts, and values shared by group members through systems of communication. It also consists of the shared beliefs, symbols, and interpretations within the group (Hofstede & McCrae, 2004).

Culturally relevant: Entails a purposeful inclusion of the experiences of all the cultures represented within the classroom (Banks, 1993).

Cognitive learning: Emphasizes rational thinking/learning practices (Gardner, 1983, 1999, & 2004).

Intelligence: Capacity in one or more cultures to solve problems or to fashion products that are valued research (Gardener, 1983, 1999, & 2004).

Potter: Is someone who makes pottery (Wikipedia Encyclopedia, 2007).

Race: Sociologists currently struggle with creating a singular definition of race. Omi and Winart (1994), indicate that race is an unstable and decentered set of social meanings that are constantly transformed by political events. Therefore, in their opinion race is a term that signifies and symbolizes social

conflicts and interests by referencing particular human bodies.

Jacobson (1998), on the other hand, indicates that race was

recast as color by the 1950 UNESCO report, entitled *The Race*

Concept. The authors of this report characterized the three

great races based on color; namely, Caucasian, Negroid and

Mongoloid.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this study was to explore the perspectives of African American students in higher education who have taken classes that incorporate artistic ways of knowing about what engages their learning, in light of the faculty's purposes for incorporating such ways of knowing into their classrooms. The primary research questions that guided this study were aimed at the students and included:

a. How do students perceive the use of artistic ways of knowing within the classroom?

b. How do they perceive the combined use of cognitive experiences and arts-based experiences as affecting their overall learning?

In order to have a fuller understanding of the students' context for learning, a secondary research question is aimed at the faculty who teach such classes, and it is simply, "Why do faculty include arts-based approaches in the learning environment, and how do these approaches relate to their overall goals for student learning?"

Three bodies of literature were pertinent for this study. First, the literature review begins with a discussion of the theoretical framework which informs this study. Following this is a review of the research literature concerning the achievement levels of African American higher education learners, and African American faculty responses to the issue of achievement of African American students. Third, there is an overview of the artistic ways of knowing and culturally relevant teaching.

Theoretical Framework: Social Mobility, Cultural Relevance and Endarkened Feminist

Epistemology

There are intersecting bodies of literature which attempt to offer explanations for the

discrepancies surrounding the achievement levels of some African American learners. The

theoretical framework for this study is primarily grounded in what Cynthia Dillard refers to

as "Endarkened Feminist Epistemology", but this discussion will make more sense following

the consideration of social mobility and culturally relevant education.

Social Mobility

Those that discuss social mobility suggest that it reflects the movement of people

between economic or social strata using a socially or culturally approved strategy for getting

ahead within a given population or a given society (LeVine, 1967; Ogbu 1974). Some

writers theorize that the limited mobility of African Americans is a cause for low

achievement levels, while others speculate about measures to increase the quality of

institutions and educators and some even emphasize the need for culturally relevant

education. John Ogbu discussed social mobility theory as early as 1974; there has been much

continued discussion of social mobility in relation to the academic achievement of African

Americans building on Ogbu's (1974) early work by himself and others (e.g. Fordham &

Ogbu, 1986; Ogbu, 1992a,1992b,1994a, 1994b; Sampson 2004).

To understand the social mobility theory one needs to also consider the historical

ecological structure for most African Americans. Within their ecological structure, Black

Americans traditionally received substandard schooling when compared to the White

American perceptions of the educational needs of Black Americans (Fordham & Ogbu,

1986). As a result, some Black Americans developed "survival strategies" to cope with limited access to good jobs, wages and other benefits commensurate with their academic accomplishments. These strategies included creating colleges and universities dedicated to their concerns and establishing peer-reviewed journals and professional organizations. The need to increase social mobility developed from these aspirations. According to LeVine (1967) and Ogbu (1974), social mobility also takes into consideration the way parents raise their children and how they inculcate the competencies, qualities and behaviors they consider essential for competence in adulthood, which also considers their social and economic realities.

Ogbu (1974), Fordham and Ogbu (1986) and Sampson's (2004) ethnographic research considered the cross sections of race, class and gender to a lesser degree. Although, Ogbu, Fordham and Sampson focused on the achievement levels of K-12 African American learners, their insights also correlate with the experiences of higher education students. Ogbu and Sampson in separate reports indicate that parents are transmitting contradictory ideas about education to their children and thus learners believe that education does not pay-off for themselves or for other minorities. According to these authors, learners come to believe that even with an education they will be placed in low-paying jobs, thus getting an education is viewed as a waste of time. For the most part, these findings were supported in a subsequent study conducted by Ogbu with Fordham in 1986. However, during this study they also discovered that some African American students considered receiving an education as "acting White" (p. 177). Their characterization of "acting White" did not reflect an interest in becoming a White person, but referred to the adaptation of cultural practices normally associated with White people. These findings suggest that this ambivalence towards

education is relayed through generations and Ogbu speculated that it results from the stigma of being "involuntary immigrants" (p. 178).   According to Ogbu and Fordham, involuntary immigrants are children of immigrants (minorities) whose ancestors have been coerced into becoming a part of a culture or forcefully placed in a culture. Thus, the forced enslavement of Blacks leads to the development of secessionist-like tendencies in certain areas of their lives, including education.   Ogbu and other educators that align with this theory call for the development of educational environments that seek to understand and recognize this historical perspective and for the development of interventions that are likely to make African American learners and other involuntary immigrants, such as Native Americans, successful.

As previously mentioned, Ogbu (1974, 1978, 1986, 1992a,1992b, 1994a, 1994b) and Simpson's (2004) work is primarily concerned with K-12 learners, but facets of their insights regarding cultural difference and low achievement levels can be applied to higher and adult education environments. The mismatch between the learner's culture and the cultures of adult educational institutions are likely to be the same as found within the K-12 environments. Generally, one can assume that the culture of institutions devoted to adult learners in predominantly White settings will represent the dominant culture (Perry, Steele & Hilliard, 2003). For the most part, these environments have focused on the language, beliefs, etc. of the White mainstream.   Therefore, the institutionalized practices of these organizations may be grudgingly accepted by African American learners, which may impact their achievement levels. What is needed is greater attention to the learners' culture, which leads to the following discussion of culturally relevant education.

Culturally Relevant Education

Several authors discuss the importance of culturally relevant education both in the K-12 setting and in adult and higher education. Gloria Ladson-Billings (1994), a noted scholar who writes and speaks about African Americans, suggests that not only should educational environments recognize the history of African Americans, but also be culturally-relevant. Ladson-Billings indicates that the primary aim of culturally relevant teaching for the Black community is to assist in the development of a "relevant Black personality" (p. 17) that allows these students to pursue an education while maintaining their African American culture. Cultural relevance moves beyond language to include other aspects of student and school culture. It uses the student's culture in order to maintain it and to transcend the negative effects of the dominant culture. Clearly, her view of culturally relevant education is centered on the needs and interests of African Americans. She does make additional allowances for the needs of the poor and gender is also considered.

This learner-centered approach is based on several assumptions, namely that *all* students can succeed, teachers should see themselves as part of the community and be willing to "give back" and relations with learners should be fluid, equitable and extend beyond the classroom. Therefore, she suggests a connectedness between the educator and the learner that is based on the African American culture (Ladson-Billings, 1994).

Ladson-Billing's (1994) work was based on a study of successful teachers of African American children. She explored how these teachers were able to draw on the students' culture in the educational process. While her insights are based on the teachers' work as educators of children, these insights are also relevant to adult and higher education. There are also adult educators who ascribe to the significance of culturally relevant classrooms; however, they suggest that unilateral inclusion of all cultures is not enough (Guy, 1999a,

1999b; Peterson, 1999). For these educators inclusion does not guarantee equity. According to Guy (1999a, 1999b) and Peterson (1999), educational norms, processes and goals must be reassessed to determine how they impact marginalized learners. Thus, the principle focus on the cultural nature of the classroom experience does not necessarily minimize exclusion because the administrative aspects of the environment must also receive attention.

Endarkened Feminist Epistemology

Cynthia Dillard (2006) offers a culturally-relevant theoretical framework that also takes into account social mobility in her discussion of Endarkened Feminist Epistemology, which serves as the primary theoretical framework for this study. While this study is not a feminist study given that gender is not a primary unit of analysis, there are many aspects of Dillard's framework that are germane to this study, particularly her emphasis on the African American experience. Her Endarkened Feminist Epistemology considers teaching practices and addresses the concerns of African American learners largely from a black feminist perspective drawing on the work of both Patricia Hill Collins (1991) and bell hooks (1994, 2003). This framework embraces a paradigm that embodies a need to make the world a better place and recognizes that teaching practices are not solely for the mind, but they are dynamic and creative.

Dillard (2006) focuses on multiple intersections and cultural spaces, namely the academic disciplines of education, African American studies, Black feminist studies and spiritual studies. Fundamentally, the theoretical framework presented by Dillard is similar to those offered by other educators who discuss African American experiences and /or feminist experiences (Flannery & Hayes, 2001; Guy, 1999a; hooks, 2003; Johnson-Bailey & Cervero, 1996; Sheared, 2001; Smith & Colin, 2001; Tisdell, 2003). Dillard's Endarkened

Feminist Epistemology is grounded in the historical roots of Black feminist thought as discussed by Patricia Hill Collins (1991) and bell hooks (1994, 2003)and feminist thought more broadly. Hooks (1994, 2003) offers insights about how to make classrooms places of liberation where learner and educator work together in partnership. To bring a spirit of partnership into learning environments, hooks proposes that educators need to recognize that learning should take place inside and outside of the classroom: she views learning as an experience that enriches life in its entirety. Furthermore, she challenges educators to share their knowledge beyond their classrooms, to keep up with the changing world. Secondly, hooks holds that educators should commit to giving their best in classrooms and serving their students. Serving learners according to hooks is determined by the degree to which educators nurture both the emotional and academic growth of their students.

From her viewpoint Dillard's epistemology is distinguishable from hooks' and other feminist thinkers because it considers the intersection/overlap of culturally constructed socializations of race, gender and other identities, but it also considers the historical and contemporary contexts of oppression and resistance for African American women, as connected to a sense of spirituality. The connection with feminist thought also becomes evident with a review of work prepared by educators who align themselves with this perspective. For example, Flannery and Hayes (2001) indicate that as educators they rely on feminist perspectives for a number of reasons, which includes placing women at the center of their consideration. These educators suggest that feminist perspectives offer unique ways of understanding human identity. Like Dillard they take into account the intersections of race, class, gender and other social identities (Flannery & Hayes). They also recognize that these intersections cause differences among women and ultimately enable a multitude of identities;

however, Dillard's epistemology centers itself more prominently on the resistance and oppression of African American women, as related to or grounded in spirituality. However, she does expand her viewpoint to include all social positions. She suggests that the educator should be careful to examine their own motives and methods and seek to understand various members of the social and/or cultural community.

Other educators have also noted that culturally relevant education can have a spiritual component to it (Tisdell, 2003; Tolliver & Tisdell, 2006), but Dillard discusses this particularly from an African American feminist perspective. Dillard's Endarkened Feminist Epistemology (2006) framework also proffers the connectedness between educator and learner, in the form of what she refers to as "spiritual consciousness" (p. 41). According to Dillard, spiritual consciousness involves a relationship with the divine power of all things and his or her influence on decision making and subsequent actions. Therefore, within a culturally relevant learning environment this consciousness is engaged mentally, physically and spiritually to mediate and clarify classroom activities and struggles. In this sense, Dillard is making a similar argument to that offered by Ladson-Billings (1994), for Dillard is referring to education that is indeed culturally relevant. As previously stated, Ladson-Billings (1994) suggests that the primary aim of culturally relevant environment and teaching is to assist in the development of a "relevant Black personality" that allows these students to pursue an education while maintaining their African American culture. Dillard builds on this by making additional allowances for the needs of the poor and she also considers gender and other social identities. On the other hand, she does specifically indicate that the African Americans' definition of themselves and their identity has been impacted by racism, sexism, classism and other "isms," thereby influencing who we are not and who we are. Therefore,

she suggests that a culturally-relevant learning environment that is also "spirituality-centered" (p. 54) best acknowledges this reality. The "spirituality-centered" nature of an educational environment is based on the notion that:

(1) the classroom is a personal and social endeavor;

(2) the classroom is intimate, connected and often requires educators and learners to be vulnerable and to remember our collective humanity;

(3) classroom experiences engages diverse ways of being and knowing;

(4) a sense of integrity is required in the lives of the educators and learners and significantly in the role of the educator; and,

(5) the classroom should be a place where deep listening to stories from diverse and multiple contexts and peoples of the world occurs because these stories can influence and help develop the competence and humility of multicultural educators and researchers.

These notions are of particular importance because they acknowledge how much spirituality informs teaching practices, learning and living. Dillard suggests that an awareness of this connection leads to a more balanced spiritual, emotional and intellectual cultural setting for educators and students. Some others have also talked about spirituality as Dillard does, and they further clarify its connection to the arts (Tisdell, 2003; Wuthnow, 2003). Tisdell and Wuthnow both suggest that there is potential close connection and that for some people the two are often inseparable. The practice of art sometimes becomes a means for accessing or understanding the spiritual, since as Wuthnow observes some artists note that the creation or appreciation of art is a spiritual experience. In this way, educators can draw from the arts to facilitate a holistic cultural setting.

What was discussed above are Dillard's (2006) ideas for teaching, but the Endarkened Feminist Epistemology also accounts for how learners and researchers construct knowledge in a way that is central to this study, and can occur through research as well as teaching. There are six primary assumptions that she makes about this epistemology and a way of constructing knowledge, drawing largely on the work of feminist sociologist Patricia Hill Collins (1991), that Dillard relates more specifically that relates to research and to teaching. First, self-definition forms one's participation and responsibility to one's community. The researcher is responsible to the members of their community and for their well-being. Their definition of cultural and social community also identifies their participation within the community and evokes a sense of responsibility. In the end, their experiences are qualitatively different from those existing outside this community.

Dillard's (2006) second epistemological assumption is that research is both an intellectual and a spiritual pursuit, a pursuit of purpose. The production of knowledge and the spiritual pursuit of uncovering and constructing truth are connected. This connection is revealed in three ways: (a) researchers need to be cognizant that they possess a powerful sense of self that is directly linked to the research purpose; (b) there are often multiple levels of vulnerability in a research endeavor, from a researcher's mere presence to the research participants views/concerns being suppressed; and, (c) the research project should demonstrate concern by recognizing and supporting individuality, validating arguments through emotions, and empathizing with another's opinion.

Her third epistemological assumption is that, only within the context of community does the individual appear and, through dialogue, continue to become. Dialogue is vital in both conducting research and in assessing knowledge claims; ultimately, providing a better

interpretation of the *truth*. The fourth assumption is related: concrete experience within everyday life form is a criterion of meaning making, referred to as the "matrix of meaning making" (Dillard, 2006, p. 22). The everyday experiences of African American communities, clarifies particular actions, expressions, experiences and community life in general.

Dillard's (2006) fifth assumption is that knowing and research are both historical (extending backwards in time) and outward to the world: to approach them otherwise is to diminish their cultural and empirical meaningfulness. Women of color have been excluded from the shaping of educational research, the production of knowledge in higher education and the research process. Feminist theories are known for giving *voice* to what's missing and for including African American knowledge. In particular, the Endarkened Feminist Epistemology presents a theoretical framework that reverses the impact of traditional omissions and distortions and opens the way for diversity in educational research. Dillard is cautious to note that the diversity of this framework does not suggest a monolithic view of social identities, but it engages in relevant cultural understanding and theorizing that is informed by those who represent the social identities. This relates to her sixth and final epistemological assumption that power relations, manifested as racism, sexism, homophobia, and so on structure gender, race and other identity relations within research. Therefore, this framework is dedicated to highlight how Black women, racial/ethnic, gender and other identities experience the world.

Dillard's (2006), framework highlights issues that other educators and sociologists have discussed, but she weaves a unique epistemological framework together from the threads of education, African American studies, feminism, and spirituality and applies it to

what it suggests for research and education. Clearly, many authors and researchers who discuss issues concerning African American learners and educators draw on some similar ideas to Dillard. Smith and Colin (2001), for example, have noted during interviews of African American educators that being "true to one's self and one's God was a common theme among those interviewed" (p. 58). In similar fashion, the first assumption of Dillard's framework is "self-definition forms one's participation and responsibility to one's community" (p. 18). It seems that for Dillard and those interviewed by Smith and Colin (2001) that "they [educators] rely upon an Africentric way of knowing … [and it] is a source of both empowerment and frustration" (p.58). This is similar to Dillard's point that really knowing something requires having a relationship with it.

Being an active part of one's community and seeking a better understanding of oneself also implies a familiarity with the rigors of research. This also addresses her views on the role of qualitative research, which modifies traditional viewpoints. She questions the viewpoint that the researcher should engage in research alone and separate from the research participants (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Patton, 2002). As indicated previously, Dillard (2006) suggests that research is both an intellectual and spiritual pursuit. She suggests that the sole concern of research is not the production of knowledge, but it should also reveal the "truth" of everyday existence. Dillard's "methodology of surrender" provides an intimate research space that heeds the wisdom of ancestors and the Creator. The six notions of her epistemology affects both approaches to teaching and research, which provides a fuller understanding of the purposes of education and research and guides subsequent applications. One could characterize Dillard as a scholar who is currently challenging the distinctions between the "real" and the constructed views of researchers and the research participants

(Denzin & Lincoln). This challenge does not appear to be an exercise designed to upset the

research community. It does however embrace a paradigm that is personal and cultural and it

reflects the unique combination of what it means to be an African American woman scholar

who has an awareness of the spiritual nature of life. Perhaps the emergence of this viewpoint

is partly due to the consistent focus within research on what is wrong with one person or

another and their effects and not on who they are. Maybe it is time to move the discourse

into other areas that would deal less with the faults of the individual cultures that make up

society and more with the strengths. Dillard specifically indicates that she is less interested

in "subverting the dominant paradigm than… in embracing a dominant paradigm [of her

own]" (p. 36). While Dillard's framework and the other frameworks previously reviewed

placed emphasis on the needs of African American learners, it is also important for the

purposes of this discussion to review what the empirical research indicates about the

needs/concerns of these learners. The following section will provide an overview of the

empirical research as it relates to African American learners.

<div align="center">African American Achievement in Higher Education</div>

The amount of literature concerning the achievement levels of African American

higher education students is extensive and this literature connects with the previously

reviewed theoretical frameworks. A number of writers have prepared scholarly accounts that

provide explanations for the proportionally lower achievement levels of African Americans

in this setting (hooks, 2003; Johnson-Bailey, 2001a). Some of these writers have indicated

that the lower levels result from socio-political factors, such as feelings of inferiority

resulting from the enslavement and subsequent discrimination (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986;

Ogbu, 1992a & 1992b). Others suggest that the lower achievement levels results from the

low value placed on education by their family members or support system (s) (Oswald, 2001; Sampson, 2004). Some even speculate that much of the reluctance has to do with dissatisfaction with the quality of education (Perry, Steele & Hilliard, 2003). There have been many discussions of the historical context, as well as research studies, and discussions by African American professors in higher education about how best to educate African American learners to increase their presence in higher education and to facilitate their achievement. The following subsections deal with aspects of these discussions.

A Historical Perspective

One could theorize from these accounts that higher education and education in general does not have a place of value within the African American experience. A brief review of African American history within this country, however, suggests otherwise. Since our entry into this country prior to and during enslavement, African Americans have valued the idea of education. A review of the slave narratives prepared by Fredrick Douglas, Harriet Jacobs and others reveals the yearnings these individuals had for learning to read and write. Douglas (1845/1968) wrote in his autobiography about the fears his owner voiced concerning the education of slaves and how this fear motivated Douglas. He states that when his owner discovered his wife teaching Douglas to read, Douglas better

> …understood the pathway from slavery to freedom. It was just what I wanted, and I
> got it at a time when I least expected it. Whilst I was saddened by the thought of
> losing the aid of my kind mistress. I was gladdened by the invaluable instruction
> which by the merest accident. I had gained from my master. Though conscious of
> the difficulty of learning without a teacher, I set out with high hope, and a fixed
> purpose, at whatever cost of trouble, to learn how to read. (1845/1968, p. 49)

This passion for learning did not end with the abolishment of slavery. Instead it continued to thrive within the African American experience. W.E.B. DuBois (1903/1969), noted lecturer and educator, chronicled the continued development of this passion in his text, *The Souls of Black Folk.* According to DuBois, education provided a means to "stamp out" the veil of slavery. However, the former slaves were tasked with teaching themselves, which lead to the establishment of schools to train African American teachers. These trained teachers drastically reduced illiteracy, but their efforts sparked a new debate: should the schools educate for technical skills or for professions requiring advanced degrees? Amid some criticism from peers, such as Booker T. Washington, he stressed the importance of the latter. DuBois' viewpoint acknowledged the worth of technical education, but his views about higher education set the stage for discussions surrounding its value. He suggested the best way to correct the wrongs of the past was to provide African Americans with a "cheerful striving" (p. 137) that would also induce "cooperation" with their White counterparts. He recommended higher education as the best means to achieve these improvements.

Contemporary African Americans have built upon DuBois' views. Malcolm X (1965), religious and civil rights leader, shared in his autobiography that his imprisonment taught him that it was his duty to his race to educate himself. He later became college educated and remained a veracious reader and writer. He encouraged and supported his followers in similar academic pursuits.

Juanita Johnson-Bailey's (2001b) text, *Sistahs in College: Making a Way Out of No Way,* shares the narratives of college educated woman who do not possess the fame realized by Malcolm X, but there are similarities expressed in their motivation to receive collegiate degrees. The connection between Malcolm X's views and the women interviewed by

Johnson-Bailey is strongly exemplified in Lynda's narrative. Lynda gave up a "good paying" civil service position to enter college. She indicated that her main reason was to set an example for her teenage children and because she wanted "… them to know the importance of getting an education now. I do not want them to wait like I did" (p. 75). Higher education for these contemporary African Americans is viewed as the gateway to success.

This short historical review of the African American experience suggests that generally these Americans believe in the value of higher education and as a group they correlate personal and cultural success with achieving degrees. Yet for the most part, the presence of African Americans within higher education settings remains relatively invisible (Johnson-Bailey, Valentine, Cervero, & Bowles, 2007). The enrollment statistics support this philosophical stance. As previously reported, enrollment statistics gathered by the U.S. Department of Education (2002) reflect in 2000 over one million Black students (3% of Black American population) were enrolled in undergraduate universities. These statistics also indicate that enrollment levels are not maintained until graduation. In fact, 2003 U.S. Census data reported by Marger (2006) reveals that only 17.3% African Americans nationwide actually hold degrees, while 30% of their White (non Latino) counterparts complete the degree requirements.

These stark disparities lead officials from the state of California to develop the government-sponsored UC Outreach Task Force in 1997 (Oakes, Mendoza, & Silver, 2006). Californian citizens and legislators became concerned about the proportional declines in the enrollment of Latino and African American students in collegiate programs and the subsequent low graduation rates. The task force was funded with the proviso that within 5

years the taxed supported universities double their number of Latino and African American students. The proviso also requested that these institutions monitor graduation rates. Although, no meaningful empirical data was compiled during this quantitative study to demonstrate goal achievement, there are some findings that suggest that to some degree economic status influenced success within California's tax supported higher education settings. In general, secondary schools operating in high income areas better prepared White students for the collegiate experience and these students were successful. However, Latino and African American students living in the same neighborhoods were less successful.

Studies of the African American Learner

The empirical literature available on African American students attempts to clarify the previously mentioned statistics in relation to higher education settings. While the following discussion focuses on the higher education setting, some K-12 literature was also included because the needs/concerns of African American adults and children within the classroom are more similar than dissimilar (Peterson, 1996). The number of studies available concerning the achievement levels of African American learners is far too extensive to review in their entirety within this paper, but I do intend to provide an overview of the most pertinent studies that relate to my inquiry.

Many of these studies are culturally sensitive research and they reflect the cultural standpoint of the researchers and the research participants (Tillman 2006). Additionally, they also attempt to clarify the social and political dynamics surrounding the African American experience within the classroom (Tillman). There are quantitative and qualitative inquiries available which provide the much needed clarifications of the African American experience. However, this paper focuses primarily on qualitative work because this type of research has

the potential to be more culturally sensitive and it consists of mechanisms that allow participants to co-construct their own reality (Patton, 2002; Tillman). According to Tillman, qualitative research makes more meaningful contributions to educational research, by revealing the nuances and subtle ways of cultures. Unfortunately, Tillman also indicates that much of the research regarding the African American position is excluded from mainstream journals and their position has been culturally subordinated. The following analysis will attempt to bring to the forefront quantitative and qualitative findings that address the achievement levels of African Americans.

Collectively, the studies suggest that there are dynamics that occur inside and outside the classroom that impact achievement levels for African American learners; from a look at an individual's personality to the flexible nature of programming to the responsiveness of programs and educators to the design of retention programs that are effective. Together the findings from these inquiries highlight the need for a multifaceted approach to address the achievement levels of African American learners.

James Baldwin's (1981) 42 item African Self-Conscious Scale assessed the college experience of African American students attending Historically Black Colleges (HBC) and Predominantly White Institutes (PWI). The results from this assessment lead to the development of the African Self Consciousness (ASC) theory. ASC outlines how the structure of Black personality impacts the achievement of some African American learners within collegiate settings. Baldwin proposes that the worldview possessed by some African Americans is unique and is directly influenced by a spiritual essence that becomes misaligned when the learning environment does not nurture their ideas and values. Several other researchers have used the scales since 1985 (Baldwin, Duncan & Bell, 1987). Each of

these studies has consistently documented several key beliefs and behaviors that contribute to an individual's ASC. They are:

(1) awareness of one's African identity and African culture heritage, including the pursuit of knowledge of self;

(2) their first priority is recognition of African American survival and proactive development;

(3) respect for and active perpetuation of all African things, including African life and institutions; and,

(4) a standard of conduct towards all things non-African and towards those things that are anti-African.

These beliefs and behaviors were more prevalent in college students attending HBCs, as opposed to counterparts attending PWIs. The series of studies seem to suggest that African American identity for some differs as a function of a college setting. Baldwin does add however, that different is just "different" and the key distinguishing feature is the nature of the environment. He contends that an educational environment that is nurturing has a positive influence on achievement, whether it's a HBC or a PWI.

Baldwin's findings confirm that those with a relatively strong sense of identity will be successful in collegiate settings that are nurturing. Unfortunately, there are learners that face hardships in life and come from home situations that make it difficult to follow traditional (linear) paths through secondary and post secondary institutions. James Earl Davis (2006) is an advocate for the development of alternative programs that are more responsive to the lifestyles of these learners, which was supported by his qualitative study.

Davis (2006) interviewed 24 African American male high school dropouts to determine how the intersection of race and gender impacted the process of school engagement. All of his informants were former participants of the alternative educational program called Youth Build. Youth Build is a program that was started in Harlem, New York in 1979 to help participants achieve a GED diploma and obtain job skills. The program has high success rates and as a result it has been established in other urban communities nationwide. The success is attributed to a curriculum that is a mixture of job-site experience renovating homes, classroom work, and community service. Participants are able to exit and re-enter the program as needed. During their interviews the participants commented that the program's flexibility enabled them to operate on their own terms and from their own perspective.   Thus, Davis recommends the development of similar alternative programs because they seem to mirror the non-linear life and personal development of some African American male learners.

The Baldwin's (1981) and Davis' (2006) studies highlight the significance of external influences on learning. However, they do not offer insights about the dynamics that occur within the classroom. There are questions that are unanswered by excluding classroom issues, such as how important is the communication between educator and learner – or – Do learners need to relate their everyday experiences to academic subject matter? Carol Lee's (2006) micro ethnographic study attempted to respond to these questions.   Lee is an educator that is interested in improving classroom practices by studying how the students learn. She suggests that learner's linguistic patterns can reveal how they link everyday knowledge to learning academic subject matter. Using the Cultural Modeling Project (CMP), Lee assessed the vernacular of African American high school students during a three year qualitative

study. CMP requires a detailed analysis of routine practices, examines modes of reasoning, and reveals concepts and habits of mind used to solve everyday problems (Lee). Lee conducted interviews, gathered field notes, and observed English classes to chronicle learner language patterns. The information gathered from these sources helped teachers scaffold the existing knowledge possessed by students to a better understanding of classical literature.

It appears from Lee's (2006) work that communication styles also impacts the learning styles of some African American learners. This additional insight helped the educators in her study teach in a manner that connected to their learner's experiences. The research efforts of Gloria Ladson-Billings (1994) also support the connection between a learner's experience and teaching practices. Ladson-Billings received a post-doctoral grant to qualitatively study successful teachers of African American children. This three year ethnographic study monitored the practices of eight secondary education teachers. Their comments and actions permitted the researcher to document characteristics that were common among culturally relevant teachers and those she labeled as "assimilationst" (p. 34). As documented previously in this paper, culturally relevant teachers are individuals who assist the development of a "relevant Black personality." Assimilationst, on the other hand, are technicians that are only concerned with fulfilling administrative mandates.

Ladson-Billings (1994) categorized the characteristics of culturally relevant teachers according to their conceptions of self and others, social relations, and conceptions of knowledge. The notion that seems common throughout these categories is the bond between educator and learner. This bond acknowledges the value of both parties.

The qualitative study conducted by Williams (1981), as part of her dissertation work, also explored the relationships between educator and learner and its impact on achievement

and retention patterns in a collegiate setting. Williams interviewed a group of African American students enrolled in the University Of Huston Cullen College Of Engineering's Program for Minority Engineering Students (PROMES). Black students under the auspices of PROMES received emotional and social support, and simultaneously received academic assistance. PROMES members had higher success scores over those minorities that were not part of the program. The mentors helped the students understand principles presented in class and provided supportive relationships. Thus, this program provided a practical response to Ogbu's (1974, 1992a, 1992b, 1994a, 1994b) call for a support system that recognizes the impact of historical occurrences.

Collectively, these studies suggest that it is incumbent for educators interested in being culturally responsive to find pathways to include African American achievements and history in their courses; which suggests that it is important for educators to recognize the influence of human interest and life experiences on the creation of knowledge.

Practitioner Viewpoints

There are several African American educators who have discussed how to educate African American learners and other students of color in light of a culturally relevant or culturally responsive perspective. These culturally responsive perspectives move beyond language and operational concerns to include other aspects of student and school cultures. One of the complaints from students of color (African Americans, Latinos, etc.) in higher education over the past 30 years has been the persistence of a curriculum that is heavily influenced by the dominant culture (Howard, 2000). These students imply that their experiences and contributions made by members of their culture have been marginalized and in some cases omitted (Howard). Moreover, these marginalized students have requested the

development of curriculum that mirrors their experience. There are some educators who espouse this same concern and they suggest, as Freire did in 1971 that no education is politically neutral that the notion of neutral knowledge is a fallacy (Banks, 1993, 2006; Dillard, 2006; hooks, 1994; Ladson-Billings, 1994, 2002). These educators offer multicultural theories and strategies to address concerns raised by these learners. Banks (1993, 2006), a leading advocate for the multicultural approach, proposes the incorporation of this approach (also considered culturally relevant) in faculty development programs. In his opinion, when faculty are exposed to this approach their classroom practices reflect an increased knowledge and awareness of non-White groups. One of his goals is to change the structural make up of educational institutions in a way that would eventually offset the cultural hegemony.

Banks' (1993, 2006) multicultural approach is limited to the experiences of people of color, women and poor people and how their exclusion from institutional considerations leads to their underachievement. Although, he does not specifically name other social identities, his ideology does offer attributes that are applicable to other marginalized peoples.

A closer examination of instructor practices may provide a deeper explanation of how quality-related theories are applied differently then the culturally relevant theory within classrooms. The work of J. Arthur Jones and William Johntz, as reported by Perry, Steele and Hilliard (2003), underscores the role of good K-12 teachers and quality institutions. Their noteworthy accomplishments may be applicable within higher education settings. Jones, a former employee of the National Academy of Sciences, demonstrates the power of good teaching practices by improving the mathematical capabilities of African American students who have been designated as poor performers by their school administrators. He is

credited with reversing these labels within a relatively short period of time. Over 50% of his students eventually develop an ability to perform advanced mathematical calculations. Like Jones, Johntz's Project SEED has also improved the mathematical performance levels of students. Using the Socratic questioning method, Johntz has also repeatedly improved the capability of students who were considered un-teachable.

There are other theories that address quality-related issues, that aren't necessarily coming from an endarkened feminist epistemological perspective, or even a culturally responsive perspective per se. Lee Jones in his 2001 text indicates that several trends are emerging recently that are having noteworthy influence, namely Total Quality Management (TQM) and Learning Paradigm. Neither of these approaches addresses any of the social identifications or the cross section of these identities, but instead they project a universal application.

According to Bryan (1996), TQM is a philosophical stance that impacts institutional operations. Staff members working within these institutions become more committed to a vision, set of values, attitudes, and principles that are dedicated to improving service. Institutional operations face constant review for improvement, and rely on practices which gather customer input. This focus on customer feedback leads to several beneficial outcomes for African American learners. First, it increases opportunities for African American students to voice their viewpoints on institutional policies and procedures. Second, it creates reliance by institutional leaders on their intellectual, cultural and financial concerns.

The Learning Paradigm theory, as noted by Jones (2001), also offers strategies that lead to the creation of an environment that is learner-centered. This theory encourages a change from traditional instructional practices to the creation of environments and

experiences that allow learners to discover and construct knowledge for themselves. In this environment educators serve more as coaches, counselors, and collaborators with learners, instead of lecturers. The benefits derived from this theoretical viewpoint are similar to that of TQM, but the Learning Paradigm theory seems to increase student and educator interaction.

The Role of African American Professors

The theory or philosophy educators selects to guide their practice is to some degree dependent upon how they define their role. According to Pratt (1992), educators define their role based on cultural, social historical and personal realms of meaning: "to teach means different things depending upon [their] values, beliefs, and intentions" (p.203). Therefore, educators in general and African American educators in particular will likely make choices and select practices that resonate with their lived reality. For African American professors and other minority groups the daily academic life is different then that of White faculty, particularly White male faculty (Gregory, 1995, 1999). Some African American educators indicate that they are at times confronted by personal and institutional forms of racism that minimizes their knowledge, history, and culture (Dillard, 2006). While their White colleagues are likely to be mentored and recognized in a way that acknowledges their knowledge, history, and culture.

The divergent career paths of African American and White professors are clarified in the published stories of Juanita Johnson-Bailey (African American female) and Ron Cervero (White male) (Johnson-Bailey & Cervero, 2007). Johnson-Bailey and Cervero are full professors at a large land-grant southern university. Separately, each professor shared the story of his or her journey to become a part of the academy. From the first time Johnson-

Bailey mentioned her interest in becoming a professor out loud, until her actual selection for the professoriate, she traveled a more arduous path then Cervero. One of Johnson-Bailey's White professors warned her that she was "...aiming mighty high" (Johnson-Bailey & Cervero, p.316). These words did not deter Johnson-Bailey, but they were fortuitous in predicting the challenges she would endure. She received warnings from colleagues and was the subject of protest lodged by a White faculty member against her appointment. On the other hand, Cervero's appointment occurred without much tribulation, as a matter of fact he refers to the process as "smooth sailing" (Johnson-Bailey & Cervero, p.317). He was recruited to join the staff of his present institution without any cautionary comments or protests.

West (1993) contends that there are two basic reasons why Johnson-Bailey and other professors of color experience these occupational difficulties. First, many universities only reward the African American scholars who imitate the dominant culture paradigms. He holds this practice stifles intellectual creativity especially for those who view the dominant paradigm problematic. Second, many African American scholars distance themselves from some academic privileges by choosing to focus on an analysis of Black culture and its relation to American society and find that there are a limited number of outlets for this type of discourse. As a result, African American professors are often conflicted by trying to maintain allegiance to their community and dealing with the culture of the academy (Thompson & Dey, 1998).

Although, the difficulties West (1993) speaks of hinders some, there are those African American professors who are able to transition their academic and social worlds in comfort, referred to as navigate "insider/outsider status" (Ladson-Billings, 2000). According to

Ladson-Billings interpretation of Delgado-Gaitan's notion, individuals (professors in this case) initially begin as outsiders and gradually they gain enough trust to be granted insider status. On the other hand Ladson-Billings does also seem to acknowledge the views held by West, when she asserts that this movement from "outside" to "inside" can be a form of oppression and colonization that leads to frustration and conflict, which at times initiates imbalance in classrooms.

There is some empirical research that documents how traversing these transitions impacts the person and capabilities of many of African American professors (Smith & Colin, 2001; Thompson & Dey, 1998; Vargas, 1999). Vargas' 1991 qualitative study of professors of color, mostly females, indicates that dilemmas faced by the participants were uniquely based on personal characteristics, social location (i.e. rank), and the context of their teaching experience. Each of the participants communicated their experiences in a different voice. However, they did generally indicate that classroom dynamics, their classroom performance and the type of cooperation they received from the learners were subjected to racial and gender overtones. The professors commented that their competence was judged by their students from their first encounters until the end of their timeframe together.

Thompson and Dey (1998) assessed the occupational stress resulting from these types of encounters and other workplace inequities. They focused their quantitative study on African American faculty working for predominantly white institutions (PWI). Thompson and Dey relied on McGrath's definition of stress for this study; "stress exists where the element of threat is related to the availability of resources for successfully meeting the demands of one's job" (Thompson & Dey, p. 340). Generally, African American female faculty, regardless of university type, experienced greater levels of stress than African

American males, particularly in the areas of time constraints and concerns related to promotions. Both groups of individuals did have a point of agreement; each indicated that the more stress they experienced related to promotions, the less likely they were satisfied in their position. Thus, balancing the demands of academy with varied levels of marginality presented difficult challenges.

The participants of Smith and Colins' (2001) qualitative study formulated some guiding principles to deal with these workplace realities. The eight African American professors that participated indicated that they decided being true to themselves and their God were their primary objectives. They maintained these objectives by remaining connected to their culture, history, and spirituality mostly because it empowered them and it grounded their spirit.

It appears from this discussion that there are some concerns that African American students and African American professors have in common; particularly since they share a racialized identity inside and outside the classroom. Yet, despite the limited support, close scrutiny and the continued use of monocultural materials African Americans continue to voluntarily enroll as students or to procure teaching positions (Humphrey-Brown, 2001). One has to wonder what the nature of our perseverance is. As Humphrey-Brown contends many contemporaries still connect the success of our people with gaining success in the classroom. As such, African American professors and African American learners are willing to go the extra mile to gain the needed information so they can continue to be viable members of their communities.

A significant question leaps from this and the previously mentioned data: if there is such a large amount of data/information available which clarifies classroom realities then,

why are so many African Americans less successful within the collegiate environment? The next segment of this paper will explore possible responses to this concern by discussing artistic ways of knowing and how this form of knowing impacts African American learners, followed by a review of related empirical research and close with my concluding thoughts about research needs.

<div align="center">Artistic Ways of Knowing and Culturally Relevant Teaching</div>

What specifically are some educators doing within a classroom that makes them so successful with African American higher education students or any other higher education students? According to Freire (Horton & Freire, 1990), the fundamental role of an educator is to help learners discover within difficulties there is a moment of pleasure and joy. Freire's viewpoint generates another question as it relates to the context of this paper: how does an educator assist the Black higher education student through difficult times? Tisdell (2001) recommends that the traditional practices of higher education should be reexamined. She suggests that these practices hinder the needed assistance due to its over reliance on rationality, which reifies a way of knowing predominately associated with White culture. In her opinion, educators need to look at other ways of knowing because they are as intrinsic or as necessary for other groups as rationality is for the dominant culture. Therefore, Tisdell calls for a merger between "heart knowledge" (p. 160) and rational forms of knowing to induce transformative learning. According to Tisdell (2001), "heart knowledge" is about engaging the learner's heart and soul, as well as their minds. In her later work (Tisdell, 2003), she also clarifies heart knowledge by referring to David Abalos' (1998) four faces of being; the personal, political, historical, and sacred faces. The sacred face is composed of

"heart knowledge." It can also be labeled the spiritual face, for it conveys the underlying forces we encounter during emotional experiences.

Tisdell's (2003) approach towards transformative learning breaks from the classical theory developed by Mezirow (1995). Mezirow defines transformative learning as rational learning that occurs from critical reflection. Tisdell's interpretation of transformative learning seems to agree with the viewpoints held by other educators (Dirkx, 2001; Johnson-Bailey & Alfred, 2006). In fact, Dirkx (2001) argues that meaningful learning is derived from the adult's emotional, imaginative connection with self and their broader social world. Additionally, Dirkx holds that emotionally charged images generated within the classroom initiate a deeper understanding. Thus, Dirkx and Tisdell see this process of knowing and meaning making as essentially imaginative and extra-rational rather than solely reflective and rational.

Artistic Ways of Knowing

Lawrence (2005) offers artistic expression as a method of cultivating the diverse ways of knowing and learning suggested by Dirkx (2001) and Tisdell (2001). Although Lawrence's interest is primarily limited to the use of two dimensional art forms, the definition is expanded in this manuscript to include the use of music, dance, dramatic performances, creative writing or three-dimensional forms as part of classroom instruction. Lawrence indicates that the use of artistic expression within the adult classroom helps the learners uncover hidden knowledge that cannot be easily expressed in words. Lawrence's viewpoint seems to suggest that artistic expression creates a connection between the affective and cognitive thought processes in a way that ultimately renders the learner with a deeper

understanding. Dewey (1934) clarified this connection further by commenting that the aesthetic should be stamped on any intellectual idea in order to make it complete.

Eisner (1972) also suggests that the arts complete intellectual ideas because it adds certain elements to thinking. First, he indicates that the arts provide visions (mental pictures) about the application of information that can be subliminal. These visions can be hindered by human emotions, concerns and fears, but they are released through artistic expression. And lastly, the arts display man's sensibilities, referred to as "qualitative intelligence" (p. 9). According to Eisner (1972), qualitative intelligence is the ability to care about the inner aspects of an experience. Maxine Greene (1995), on the other hand, characterizes it another way. She suggests that the arts create qualitative intelligence because it provides the ability to take a fresh look at the taken for granted and without it most of us would be submerged in the habitual. Ultimately, the goal of an educational experience is to unleash the cognitive and affective thoughts of the learner in a manner that enhances their learning. The exclusion of arts-based learning can hamper the learning experience.

Several empirical studies conducted in K-12 and higher education settings also support the connection between the affective and the cognitive. First, Eisner's (2001) study revealed that secondary education students who had four years of art courses earned 40 points more on their college entrance exams than those who only had one year. Second, Rauscher, Shaw and Ky's (1993) study, suggests that there is a temporary increase in the spatial reasoning ability of college students who listen to music.

Imagination and artistic ways of knowing. Ideally, all educators are interested in achieving this connection between the cognitive and the affective within their classrooms, but they may struggle with determining the best means possible. Maxine Greene (1995)

discusses the connection between artistic ways of knowing and imagination and connects the cognitive with the affective. Greene suggests that educators must first experience breaks with the conventional in their lives and that they should keep pushing themselves to develop new perspectives. From her perspective participatory involvement with the arts can help educators recharge their senses. When educators work with the arts they may see more, hear more, and consciously recognize the impact of daily routines and become more capable of determining how these routines suppress intellectual growth. Aesthetic experiences are considered viable mechanisms for releasing the conventional within educators because it requires conscious participation with the art form, it causes the movement of energy, and it places focus on the selected medium (Greene).

When educators become better aware of their own preferences they are more likely to assist the learner. They can introduce learners to shapes, patterns, sounds, rhythms, figures of speech, contours, and lines and help them comprehend meaning in their experience (Greene, 1978). This process of meaning making is essentially imaginative and extra-rational, rather than merely reflective and rational, which connects with Dirkx's (2001) previously discussed views. Dirkx suggests that imagination helps learners connect with the images behind their emotion and feelings and this connection transforms learning. Therefore, the learner is able to express and connect with a deeper reality. This reality is used to perceive and understand themselves and the world.

According to Dirkx (2001), the adult learning environment is a good context to explore the imaginative and extra-rational because it provides opportunities to develop a deeper understanding of the world and our relationship with it. In fact, he offers Daniel Goleman's (1995) empirical research on emotional intelligence as justification. Emotional

intelligence, as defined by Goleman, is the deep interrelationship between emotion and feelings that results from perceiving and processing information from our external environment. Since the classroom is the place where information is stored and retrieved into memory and reasoning is developed, it is the embodiment of emotional and rational learning.

    Artistic ways of knowing, spirituality and imagination. There are some educators who believe spirituality also plays a key role in shaping extra-rational and imaginative thoughts (hooks, 2003; Shahjahan, 2004; Tisdell, 2003).   For these educators there is a distinction between one's religiosity and their spirituality, but sometimes they are interrelated. Spirituality is more about how individuals make meaning through a higher source (Tisdell).   These educators support the acknowledgement of spirituality within the classroom. hooks states that spirituality is important to one segment of the student population. She suggests that it is the way many people of color construct knowledge. For this group of students, knowledge is created through images, symbols, art, music, ritual, gesture, and celebrations that connect with their cultural lives. Tisdell further suggests that these images and symbols often speak louder than words when any learner narrates their spiritual experiences.

    Honoring the cultural experiences of students can enrich the learning environment, as long as the cultural experiences of the educators are also recognized. To fully bring spirituality into the learning environment their spiritual beliefs must also be acknowledged. Therefore, educators are compelled to be grounded in their own spirituality and be willing to present it in an *authentic* manner (Shahjahan, 2004; Tisdell, 2003).

    Tisdell's (2003) viewpoints regarding cultural experiences are based on a qualitative study that offers applications for higher education classrooms. The classroom applications

are built on seven assumptions she makes about spirituality: (1) spirituality is a connection with a divine force; (2) influences meaning making; (3) is part of *moving forward* to authenticity; (4) religion and spirituality are different, but can be interrelated; (5) art forms can be a symbol of spirituality and be an unconscious process; (6) spirituality is always present in the classroom, but sometimes unacknowledged; and, (7) connection with the divine source often happens by surprise. Her suggested applications range from reflection papers, to opportunities to share joys and concerns at the beginning of class, to small group work which facilities discussions/ acitivites surrounding cultural experiences.

Wunthow (2001) adds to the discourse on the connection between spirituality and the arts within his text by sharing comments he gathered during interviews of 100 artists who are actively applying their craft. He provides commentary from a cross section of artists ranging from writers to painters to potters to dancers. These individuals represent various races, genders, and ethnic groups. Their artistic interests also vary. Following is a short listing of some of the artists he interviewed: Nancy Chinn (watercolor painter), she focuses on religious themes; Jenny Avila (folk singer and songwriter), her songs focus on social problems; Jamel Gaines (choreographer and artistic director), his dance troupe creates and performs spiritually themed dance productions for his Baptist church; Jon Davis (poet), his work attempts to make sense of autobiographical tragedies. Although, Wunthow did not provide a theoretical framework for his findings, nor did he reveal any of the methods used to analyze his qualitative data, he did however identify some common themes expressed in their thoughts about spirituality. The "unifying elements" (p. 27) of their spiritual beliefs are: (a) strong conviction that some reality, being, or force exists, which can be experienced partially or momentarily, but not fully or permanently; (b) artists' views of spirituality are closely linked with how they *pursue* and *interpret their* artistic work; and, (c) artists' search for spirituality

resembles that of many Americans (most *believe* in God, but regard God as a *mystery*). Wunthow

commented that 95 % of his interviewees expressed that these beliefs resulted from trauma, which

motivated the artist to embark on a spiritual quest. The emotional trauma they endured influenced

their creativity and subsequent accomplishments. Their art work expresses their emotions and

reflects the introspection they experienced. These observations seem to depict Tisdell's "spiraling

back" (2003, p. 23) concept on spiritual development. Spiraling back is a process of being in the

present moment and reflecting on previous events and experiences and being shaped by these

occurrences as part of an ongoing development of identity.

There seems to be agreement between Daloz Parks and Tisdell. Each of these educators

considers the impact of past incidents/experiences on spiritual development. Daloz Parks on the

other hand, also relates spiritual development to its connection with imagination (similar to Dirkx).

Tisdell's interpretation of Parks, suggests that there is an evolution that occurs and this process

offers another way of interpreting Wunthow's (2001) research, because Parks offers that there is a

conscious or unconscious recognition of conflict.   As already noted, many of the artists interviewed

by Wunthow commented that spirituality began with some type of trauma. Following the

introduction of conflict, Parks speculates that individuals will take a "pause" which allows them to

temporarily move away from the cause of conflict. Many of Wunthow's interviewees indicated that

they embarked on a journey to discover explanations for their conflict, by practicing different

religions or pursuing answers inwardly. Parks, according to Tisdell, notes that this "pause "is not

always a conscious or semi-conscious separation from conflict, but it continually motivates

individuals to seek a response. Eventually, images or insights are perceived and the conflict is

resolved or re-cast in another way. For example, Wendy Ellsworth (bead artist) expressed during

her interview that childhood trauma alienated her from her parents. Ellsworth's subsequent spiritual

exploration made her realize that she could not find security within her childhood faith; therefore, she currently practices a completely different faith. Ellsworth's narrative also illustrates Daloz Parks' next element, re-patterning and release of energy. During this process perspectives are reordered in light of a new insight; Ellsworth's decision to practice a different faith exemplifies this outlook. The final stage of Daloz Park's view is interpretation or testimony about the experience. Each of Wunthow's study participants shared insights that suggested their interpretation of their developmental process.

One could surmise from Wunthow's (2001) data and Tisdell's (2003) interpretation of Daloz Park's perspectives that spirituality is so significant that most educators would support its introduction in the classroom. Yet many educators do not believe it should be initiated in the classroom according to the 2003 Higher Education Research Institute's (HERI) national study.   In fact, the findings on Spirituality and the Professoriate indicate that only 30% of the respondents believe spirituality should be introduced in the classroom. Although these faculty members rate spirituality as important to them personally, they believe they should separate their spiritual beliefs from the learning experience. It is interesting to also note that the 2003 HERI study of first year college students indicates that these individuals considered it "essential" and "very important" that the universities enhance their self-understanding, 69% of the respondents rated this as an important factor. These opposing beliefs may cause a disconnect within the classroom (hooks, 2003). Learners are seeking opportunities to enhance their spirituality while educators are suppressing important facets of their lives and the lives of their students.

Shahjahan (2004) is a supporter of centering spirituality in the classroom for several reasons. First, he suggests it is a way of making classroom discussions "live." In his opinion, when classroom discussions incorporate spirituality, they embody more than words they help learners

connect concepts with world events/situations. Second, the critical reflection normally associated with spirituality can guide educators to select culturally relevant materials. Spirituality also connects with the multiple ways of knowing, and thereby it empowers diversity amongst learners. And third, it presents a way for educators to be "authentic," which allows them to model respectful ways of handling differences among people.

African American Learners, Artistic Ways of Knowing, and Spirituality

Previous discussions make a case for generally recognizing the preferred learning styles and spiritual beliefs of higher education students. However, another pertinent question arises from this dialogue: does the literature specifically address the needs of African American higher education learners in this regard? There is no empirical literature on African American learners and artistic ways of knowing. Yet the above discussion does seem to indicate that drawing on the experience of art and imagination sometimes connects with spirituality for some people. While secular higher education settings are concerned with cognition and learning, these dimensions of education cannot always be separated from the affective. Further, as Dillard (2006) suggests, learning that is culturally responsive should tap into people's passion, what they care about, and into the affective and other domains. For many African American students this is conceptually spiritual because many African Americans are spiritual people (Dillard, 2006; hooks, 2003). Wheeler, Ampadu, and Wangeri (2002) in their critique of Erikson's Life Cycle stages, proposed that the unique spiritual nature of African descendants developed as a means for dealing with the longstanding history of oppression that occurred on a worldwide basis. As a result, African descendants have developed "varying perspectives, assumptions, expectations, levels of trust, issues of identity, coping styles, and self esteem" (Wheeler et al., p. 72). In fact, there are studies focused on the effects of internalized oppression and the long term consequences on the African American psyche. Similar to

the previously discussed study conducted by Jones (2002), their study specifies that racial

stereotyping can create stigmas that are associated with some psychological factors, such as affecting

coping ability or perceptions about self-confidence.   As a result, African Americans developed

spiritual traditions to deal with the struggle against and victory over local methods of oppression.

According to Cervantes and Parham (2005), not only does exposure to racism

influence development of spiritual traditions for people of color, it also impacts how these

traditions are expressed.   They indicate it can be expressed in the following ways: "(1)

orientation that seeks protection from negative forces; (2) belief system that dichotomizes

good and evil, furthering development of internalized racial/ cultural oppression; (3) reliance

on religion or spirituality without an personal effort to change or challenge life

circumstances; (4) invitation to religious passivity to deal with conflict as a result of an

attitude of learned helplessness; and, (5) development of prayer life or meditation

consciousness that can run the psychological range of anger for one's life difficulties to silent

acceptance of oppressive social forces" (Cervantes & Parham, 2005, p. 75).

Even during the height of traumatic events such as natural disasters, the spiritual

traditions of the African Americans are known to surface. The devastation caused by

Hurricane Katrina, in New Orleans, Louisiana on August 29, 2005, will mar many American

souls for a long time, but somehow the victims of this storm survived and their cultural

beliefs stayed their souls. Wynton Marsalis, New Orleans native and jazz composer,

indicated during an interview with Spike Lee (2006) for a documentary film on the disaster,

that the meanings attached to death tie together African and Christian traditions. Many of the

residents believe that death should be celebrated in the form of a *jazz funeral* because the

afterlife is rich and full. Once an individual departs from this earth, he or she leaves behind

pain and sorrow to face an eternal life of happiness. Marsalis stated that the *jazz funeral* provides a "way not to put a hush over death" (Lee). Traditional interment practices and musical performances are vital during these celebrations. Music is so much a part of the African American everyday experience that one week after the hurricane struck, one of the popular jazz bands, the *Hot 8 Brass Band*, was reorganized and performing in various parts of the country.

These types of traditions are so prevalent that they influence many other aspects of the African American existence, including the learning that occurs or does not occur in higher education settings. The Ross-Gordon and Brown-Haywood (2000) study documents the significance of real world experiences and student- teacher relationships for African American undergraduate students. The factors that related to race and class and a few other social identifications were important in shaping the participants' academic experience. What they experienced outside of the classroom was mirrored inside and they noted their reliance on similar coping mechanisms. This study and others previously discussed suggest that the spiritual may be intertwined in the cultural experience of African Americans. One could expect that there is empirical research which reports on this strong connection; what follows is a review of the related research.

Culturally Relevant Responses

Increasingly, adult educators and community activist are relying on arts-based programs to respond to social issues (Clover, 2006). To some degree this will be clarified by a review of three qualitative studies of the use of art as a means for social reform; namely, the Walker (2001), Wesley (2006) and Clover (2006) studies. Walker's (2001) ethnographic study of two photographers working on transmitting Louisiana culture to African American

learners offers some insights that will aid all educators interested in using artistic ways of knowing and becoming more culturally relevant. The themes that emerged from her interviews can be related to culturally relevant theories previously mentioned; namely, the changing race relations in Louisiana following the civil rights movement affected the dynamics of the African American community (reflecting Cervantes & Parham, 2005,views on the influences of racism); both artists expressed an obligation to their community and commitment to documenting their culture (Wheeler et al., 2002), art is a means of retaining connection to the past (Tisdell, 2003), the artists believe in presenting a vision as a way of providing positive images for young people (Blocker, 2004), and these artists consider spirituality as an essential element of their work (Dirkx, 2001; Shahjahan, 2004; Tisdell).

Wesley's (2006) ethnographic study also supports Wheeler's (2002) findings. Wesley explored if, and in what ways, participating in small to mid-sized arts programs helps adults learn to understand and/or value multicultural diversity. Wesley relied on a phenomenological case study of people who participated in small and mid-sized arts programs to clarify how art was used to: educate, communicate, and connect with the study participants' understanding of multicultural diversity.

It appears the aspects of the programs that related to education were important to these participants. Their comments revealed that by including the arts as a teaching practice the program content was diversified, it provided a springboard for learning methods, and it had its own way of teaching and learning and modeled difference. As far as communication is concerned, the participants suggested the art allowed them to communicate across language difference and provided an unconscious ways of knowing and empathy. And

finally, the participants indicated that the arts gave them something in "common," built a bridge and bond and created place and way to engage with difference in its complexity.

Three Canadian community arts-based programs studied by Clover (2006) also provided some insights into the use of art to garner social reform. Clover conducted a comparative case analysis of arts-based programs in British Columbia and Ontario to determine their contribution to cultural and antiracist adult education. The unstructured interviews of the program participants and educators revealed that the arts can be, along with other learning experiences, valuable tools for facilitating social change.

Clover's (2006) first case study consisted of a review of quilting project in Vancouver. The second case involved the *Arts and Culture* project in Vancouver and the remaining case was the *Kingston Road Project* in Toronto. She selected these cases because they relied upon group efforts, and they were based in different provinces using different educational processes and art forms.

Similar to Walker (2001) and Wesley (2006), Clover (2006) concludes that generally a culturally relevant pedagogy is fundamental for most adult learning experiences. Specifically, she identifies several notions that are supported by her study's findings. First, the arts provide a useful way to increase critical dialogue from a multicultural perspective and it ultimately increases learner engagement. Second, arts-based learning engages and strengthens connections among diverse populations, even if the aim is not about race. Third, it is important to work with the community, particularly in multicultural communities (Clover).

These beliefs relay some pertinent observations for educators. They indicate the importance of involving the learner's community in classroom dialogues, demonstrate the

importance of respecting the learner's culture, recognize the struggles resulting from localized oppression and its impact on learners, and they validate alternative forms of artistic expression.

Concluding Thoughts

The authors noted within this literature review do not provide a strong response for artistic ways of knowing in higher education classrooms for African American students, or for any other student who relies on this way of knowing. Perhaps the limited amount of conceptual and empirical literature related to African American learners and artistic ways of knowing can be attributed to what hooks (1995) refers to as visual politics. hooks characterizes visual politics as:

> …the production of art and the creation of politics of the visual that would not only affirm artists but also see the development of an aesthetic way of viewing as central to claiming subjectivity have been devalued. Taking our cues from mainstream White culture, Black folks have tended to see art as completely unimportant in the struggle for survival. (p.3)

Thus, in hooks' opinion, the paucity of work devoted to the arts is a conscious act on the part of African Americans to separate themselves from the dominant culture and to assign value to cultural experiences they deem appropriate. This behavior is problematic for hooks, as it is for me, because it seems to contradict known segments of the African American experience, such as the use of dance to celebrate joyous and sad occasions, or the development of colorful murals displayed on buildings in our communities. The arts play a significant role within the African American experience, but survival needs may be suppressing its overt expression in a manner that is similar to segments of the White culture.

The literature does seem to suggest that the dominant White culture recognizes the value of art, but there is also evidence that suggests they have relegated their interaction with it to certain locations and the classroom is not one of them (Eisner & Day, 2004; Greene, 1995). This literature reveals that generally educators believe it is good to create museums to view and interact with art and to even give it prominence within their homes, but their overall rational view towards the classroom has minimized its use in this setting. Winner and Hetland (2000) appeared to recognize the general existence of this variation of visual politics when they called for more qualitative research that explores the ways in which the arts may change the entire atmosphere of a school. Perhaps the continued recognition of the artistic ways of knowing will ultimately benefit all ethnic groups represented within the classroom. Additionally, it is important to remember that the teaching style sets attitudes and actions that open the formal and informal world of learning to students; this notion also influences the learning experiences and educational outcomes of African American higher education students (Ford, 1996). As Ford speculates, when there is a mismatch between learning style and teaching style, poor achievement may result, given that the learning styles of African Americans are often different from those of Whites.

The literature reviewed in this chapter identifies the need for an investigation of the use of artistic ways of knowing in the higher education setting as it relates to African American learners. What follows in the next chapter is an explanation of this study's components.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to explore the perspectives of African American students in higher education who have taken classes that incorporate artistic ways of knowing about what engages their learning in light of the faculty's purposes for incorporating such ways of knowing into their classrooms. The primary research questions that guided this study were aimed at the students and included:

a. How do students perceive the use of artistic ways of knowing within the classroom?

c. How do they perceive the combined use of cognitive experiences and arts-based experiences is affecting their overall learning?

In order to have a fuller understanding of the student's context for learning, a secondary research question was aimed at the faculty who teach such classes, and is simply, "Why do faculty include arts-based approaches in the learning environment, and how do these approaches relate to their overall goals for student learning?"

This qualitative study was designed to learn more about African American students' perceptions of arts-based practices and how they perceived these practices influences their overall learning. According to Merriam and Simpson (1995), one of the goals of qualitative research is to understand how people make sense out of their lives and how they interpret what they experience. As such, qualitative research was the most appropriate form of research for this study because it will help clarify the perceptions held by African American higher education students on how the use of arts-based experiences in their classes affects their learning. Further, some forms of qualitative research can easily reflect the cultural

standpoint of the researcher and the research participants (Tillman, 2006). A qualitative approach grounded in some of the principles of an Endarkened Feminist Epistemology, as discussed in the last chapter, directly attends to cultural issues in that it incorporates a "methodology of surrender" (Dillard, 2006, p. 82). Dillard suggests that the "methodology of surrender" embraces "an intimate research space that is both meditative (that is, that listens and heeds the wisdom of the ancestors and the Creator) and faith filled (that is, prayerfully attentive and grateful to the spirits and the Creator)" (p. 82). Therefore, this study respected the participants' culture and the multiple ways they construct knowledge.

This chapter provides an overview of qualitative research, a review of how my positionality and story as it relates to the research, presents my research background, reviews the research type, reviews participation selection and data collection methods, and explains what verification methods used.

<div align="center">Qualitative Research Methodology</div>

There are several features of qualitative research that supported the purpose of this study. First, in qualitative research the researcher is the primary research instrument. Researchers consider the participants' context, process collected data, refine data collection procedures, clarify and summarize information, and verify their interpretations with research participants (Merriam & Simpson, 1995). With the accomplishment of these tasks the data is filtered through the researcher; since he or she conducts the interviews and does the observations, the researcher then becomes the primary research instrument. During the collection and analysis of data, qualitative researchers attend to the physical and verbal realms of research (Janesick, 2000). Researchers listen (the physical), view (the physical), talk (the physical and verbal) and interpret (the physical, verbal, and intuitive or internal)

while conducting research. Contemporary researchers, particularly those who discuss autoethnography and narrative forms of qualitative research, have expanded these commonly held views of qualitative research to include reflexivity. Reflexivity in these kinds of qualitative research specifically acknowledges the researcher's self-awareness, political/cultural consciousness, and ownership of their perspective (Patton, 2000). Such researchers are encouraged to recognize how their perspectives and/or voices in research affect the research process itself. Thus, those who discuss reflexivity (Dyke, 1997; Lather, 1991) recognize that qualitative research is an interactive process between the researcher and the participants. Reflexive views are partially shaped by the researcher's views and perspectives and those of the participants. While the final research story might primarily represent the perspectives of the participants, to some extent, the perspectives and views of both participants and the researcher evolve into a collective story that represents everyone involved (Dyke, 1997; Goodall, 2000; Lather, 1991; Patton, 2000).

Qualitative research also draws from interpretive schools of thought that focus on how the participants' make meaning and interprets a phenomenon (Merriam & Simpson, 1995). The primary goal of this interpretive research is to explore how humans make sense of an experience. This exploration helps the researcher identify the important and legitimate understandings of phenomenon. Researchers achieve this by capturing and describing how the research participants perceive, describe, feel, judge, and remember some phenomenon (Merriam & Simpson). Hence, the researcher is able to express and connect with a reality held by the research participants. This facet of qualitative research was particularly relevant to this study because it explores the perceptions held by African American higher education learners about the use of arts-based practices. Connected to this interest in their perspectives

is a strong desire to reflect the primary precepts of the Endarkened Feminist Epistemology (Dillard, 2006). As discussed in detail in Chapter Two, this theoretical framework supports the preparation of empirical research that communicates the voice and viewpoints of African Americans and takes into account the multiple ways that they construct knowledge, the role of the researcher in the process, and recognizes that research is a pursuit of passion for the researcher, and must aid the research participants and their community (Dillard, 2006).

There are several types of interpretive qualitative research: narrative studies, which examines how people make meaning; ethnographies that study culture; and ethnomethodology explores how people behave in socially acceptable ways. The difference among these qualitative approaches depends on the originating discipline. For example, narrative studies emphasize the personal story of the participants told in their own words and is influenced by the phenomenology arm of philosophy; ethnography emerged from anthropological practices; ethnomethodology combines phenomenological interests with social order. Despite these foundational differences, all qualitative approaches possess a common feature: each offers a way to analyze and gain knowledge about social phenomenon from the perspective of the individuals themselves, while they are in their natural environment. A combination of narrative inquiry and a type of ethnography (autoethnography) were the selected forms of inquiry for this study, which is described later in this chapter.

In addition to selecting the appropriate method of inquiry for a study, qualitative researchers need to be adept at using a variety of data collection methods to better understand a particular social issue. Typically, data for qualitative studies are frequently obtained via individual interviews, observations, focus group interviews and analysis of documents or

artifacts. Each of these data collection methods attempts to clarify the research participant's perspective through slightly different measures. The typical one-on-one interview allows the researcher to enter into another's perspective through questioning techniques; where observational data describes the setting the researcher observed; like observational data, document analysis assesses meanings projected within a group or by an individual, but through records and/or artifacts; and, the group interviewing that occurs within focus group meetings allows the researcher to gain a picture of a collective interpretation of a social phenomenon. This study utilized individual interviews and participant observation. Additional details about the actual implementation plans are provided later in this chapter.

Narrative Inquiry Informed by Autoethnography

As previously indicated, there are many types of qualitative research. This particular qualitative study is informed both by narrative inquiry and to some extent, by autoethnography, a particular form of ethnography. Ethnographic studies focus on how individuals create and pass on culture. Autoethnography is an alternative form of describing lived experiences that is derived through cultural interaction and incorporates autobiographical information about the researcher who produces the text. Autoethnography is related to narrative inquiry in that researchers often rely on some form of narration (i.e., short stories, poems, etc.) to communicate their understanding of their own lived experience in dialogue with the culture and lived experience of the research participants. Autoethnographers conduct narrative interviews to receive descriptive accounts. They then analyze these narratives by turning an analytic lens on themselves and their interactions with others. The following discussion provides a more detailed overview of both forms of qualitative inquiry.

Autoethnography in the Context of Ethnography

Since ethnography serves the foundation for autoethnography it is important that a brief overview be provided before moving to an in-depth discussion of autoethnography.

Ethnography. Ethnography is a research method developed by anthropologists that involves writing about or describing people and culture, using first-hand observation and participation in a setting or a situation. Ethnographers gain first-hand knowledge by conducting research in situ. The localized research is conducted in communities, within organizations, at workplaces or at other places where people congregate.

Ethnographic research is based on three assumptions. First, the phenomena studied can not be deduced but requires observation, meaning observation of the research community helps the researchers understand lived experiences and make sense of it. Second, during ethnographic research it is assumed that the researcher will remain open to elements that cannot be coded during the study. The objective here is to accept new or unexpected data as it evolves within the experience. And last, ethnographic research grounds phenomena in the field. The researcher is expected to connect observed facts to the context in which they occur (Silverman, 2004). Typically, the primary means of data collection in ethnographies are long-term observation in the natural setting. While this study included some limited observation of teachers and students in classes that make the use of arts-based ways of knowing, it is not ethnographic in the traditional sense. Instead, it draws on the insights of autoethnography, (which is an outgrowth of ethnography, and is discussed next) and of narrative inquiry.

Autoethnography. Autoethnography is an alternative to and an outgrowth of ethnography. Ethnographic accounts virtually exclude autobiographical information about

the individual who produces the text. The ethnographic focus on the observation of others, according to Goodall (2000), results in authoritative, omniscient narration that the reader is supposed to trust simply because of the manner it is presented.

The ethnographer's dependence on knowledge constructed primarily from observation of culture was questioned during a 1984 gathering of prominent ethnographers. During this meeting another type of intellectual awareness developed. This new awareness had a post- modern influence and called for the consideration of knowledge gained from senses beyond observation because these researchers recognized that humans acquire information from multiple influences that are derived from all of the senses (Goodall, 2000).

The work and insights of these interested individuals shaped a new type of ethnography. This cultural turn in the discipline tends to make autoethnographic writing indistinguishable from other forms of writing, such as literary journalism or creative nonfiction. Autoethnographic writing is based on an alternative form of describing lived experiences of culture that is more like impressionist tales. These impressionist tales are communicated through drama, poetry, or personal letters, but they are written in a scholarly fashion (Goodall, 2000). Autoethnographers rely on these formats because they are concerned with the reader's interpretation of what is written, what the reader will think, and how the reader will feel (Ellis & Bochner, 1996).

Autoethnography is a form of autobiographical writing and research that attempts to vividly and dramatically pique the reader's interest in the topic. Autoethnographers gain this awareness by including informants beyond themselves and the language they use shapes the research account into a coherent narrative that is meant to resonate with the life experiences of the intended reader. The narrative and supporting structure (episodes, passages, turning

points, etc.) are constructed out of ordinary and extraordinary life occurrences that allow the

reader to determine meaningful patterns. These meaningful patterns emerge when the writer

is able to tie together everyday events (conversations, thoughts, observations, etc.) to create a

better understanding of the phenomenon. Thus, autoethnography is a storied research

method (Goodall, 2000). Ellis and Bochner (2006) suggest that once the reader reaches the

conclusion of an autoethnography, the reader receives an account of what happened that is

constructed from the writer's memory that may be extrapolated to some sort of theoretical

understanding of the broader social phenomena. While there will be an autoethnographic

component of this study, in the sense that I will include some of my own perceptions and

some of my story, it is not purely autoethnographic. It is also informed by narrative inquiry.

Overview of Narrative Inquiry

As previously mentioned, autoethnography is based on the connectedness between

the researcher and the research participant. Autoethnographies typically bridges this

connection of shared voice and culture using narrative inquiry (Chase, 2005). While

narratives may be oral or written conversations about a particular event or person, Chase

holds that researchers use several forms of analysis when interpreting the means projected

within these stories; this discussion is limited to those that related to autoethnography and the

purpose of this study. First, researchers treat narratives, whether written or oral as distinct

discourse that provides a retrospective view of the narrator's experience. The narrator's

experience expresses his or her emotions, thoughts, and interpretations about past

occurrences. Second, "researchers view narratives as verbal actions-- [which entail] doing or

accomplishing something" (Chase, p. 657). Actions portrayed in narratives may be in the

form of complaints, challenges, or represent other forms of activity; however, these

descriptors are primarily used to tell the story as the narrator experienced it. Third, narrative researchers recognize that narratives are enabled and constrained by the social circumstances that influence the narrator's existence. Researchers will take into consideration the narrator's community, local setting, organizational or social membership, and cultural and historical location. They are known to use this form of analysis because this lens tends to accentuate similarities and differences between narratives. And finally, narratives are considered socially situated reenactments by researchers. Narratives are geared to a particular audience, for a particular setting and for a particular purpose; therefore, it becomes a creation of the narrator and the listener. This particular lens receives a lot of attention within autoethnographies. Autoethnographers are known to write, interpret, and/or perform their own narratives about their experiences to reveal something of cultural significance (Chase). Thus, narrative inquiry contains key features of autoethnography. This study draws on key features of narrative inquiry and attempted to gather stories of how students perceive that artistic ways of knowing affect their learning and include stories of why faculty who teach such classes draw on these methods in their teaching.

Autoethnography and Narrative Inquiry Applied

As previously mentioned, autoethnography includes the traditional form of narratives. The writing practice of this genre focuses on descriptions of a phenomenon and key themes; together these research elements highlights insights regarding the influences of artistic practices within the classroom. The "heartful" nature of autoethnography, as described by Ellis (1999), also links with the research conditions prescribed within the Endarkened Feminist Epistemology. Ellis refers to autoethnography as "heartful" because it

includes researcher's vulnerable self, emotions, bodies and spirits to produce

evocative stories that create the effect of reality; celebrates concrete experience and

intimate detail; examines how human experience is endowed in meaning; is

concerned with moral, ethical, and political consequences; encourages compassion

and empathy; helps us know how to live and cope; features multiple voices and

repositions readers and "subjects" as coparticipants in dialogue; seeks a fusion

between social science and literature. (p. 669)

The detailed immersion of the researcher into the account makes these forms of qualitative

inquiry more relevant, and the final account possesses many intriguing facets. What are most

intriguing are the connections with the world of experience, where other forms of qualitative

research seem to be guided by a stronger need to simply report knowledge and theory.

Autoethnography moves beyond theoretical percepts to a point where the researcher and

reader are also able to know, feel, taste, sense, and live in an experience.

<div align="center">Positionality and Background of Researcher</div>

The positionality and background of the researcher is important to any qualitative

study, though it is often unstated. This is a narrative inquiry heavily informed by

autoethnography; thus my background and positionality is particularly important. Given that

both autoethnography and narrative inquiry focus on story, here I share elements of my own

relative to the study. Next, I discuss how my own story is likely to affect the research

process.

My Own Experience: Informing the Study

Does the personal truth of my own discovery about the role of pottery that I shared

earlier resonate with other African Americans similarly situated? This clearly informed the

focus of my own study. In my opinion, the "truth" that evolved in the relationship I developed between arts-based activities and academic studies deserves an in-depth investigation of this phenomenon. I am interested because I continue to be an African American higher education student, and I am interested in facilitating methods that help a number of my peers who are African American receive their degrees (Patton, 2002).

Being an African American female student, I am periodically reminded that I am not part of the dominant culture inside and outside of the classroom. My experience with marginalization is all too familiar. As previously mentioned, these recurring challenges also impact one's ability to achieve an education. Perhaps taking a brief look at several personal education-related experiences will shed more light on the difficulties that may be a regular part of the lived experience of other African American students.

During my childhood years I was trained by family and friends to recognize and deal with the subtle and overt realities of racism. This training makes me consciously and sub-consciously aware of my surroundings, what W.E.B. DuBois (1969) refers to as a form of "double consciousness" (p. 45). For a person will never know when he or she are going to be called upon to defend his or her self inside or outside the classroom. Even during seemingly innocent events racism will rear its ugly head. I can recall several incidents where the injustice was striking, one inside and the other outside of the classroom. I was a straight "A" student throughout my high school years. My family moved during my senior year to a predominantly White suburb of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. I continued to do scholarly work in most of my academic courses at the new school, which meant I was in line to be inducted in the local chapter of the National Honor Society. However, my typing teacher had other thoughts about the matter. I was refused entry into the society because of the "C" I was

carrying in this minor, which I only took to assist with the preparation of college term papers. In her opinion, anyone with average typing skills did not deserve such an honor. Despite vehement efforts by my parents to have the teacher's decision reversed by school administrators, I was not inducted. On the surface this may appear to be an inconsequential incident, but my parents and I realized that induction would have provided national eligibility for scholarships, grants, and recognition. This setback did not keep me from going to college nor to did it frustrate my parents' determination to provide the needed resources. Eventually, I earned two bachelor's degrees and a master's degree. In the end, my personal drive and my parents' unceasing support enabled me to earn these degrees, and our collective desires were stronger than that teacher's interest in hindering my success. But one has to wonder what the motivation behind this teacher's actions was: was she equally adamant about grades with other students?

Even outside of the classroom the absurdities of racism have tried to hinder my progress. Purchasing supplies for graduate school developed into a trying experience. As I stood with a group of people huddled around the cash register, I wondered how the cashier was going to select the next customer. I waited to see if she would make her selection based on who was next or whether she would make her decision according to race. Being next did not matter on this occasion, race did. She bowed her head to avoid making a choice and forced us to choose by shouting, "Who's next?" Of course, I expected to go next and did. The White male who entered the line long after me also expected to be first, and he voiced his resentment towards her for not giving him automatic priority. She ignored his comments and rushed the completion of my transaction. The cashier's hesitancy may have been a reflection of her familial and societal training about the superiority of Whites when dealing

with other races, or it could have been an attempt on her part to avoid an expected confrontation. Like the cashier, I also expected a confrontation, but my training taught me to be selective when determining how to confront racism.

When I am working with coils and slabs of clay I engage in an individualized undertaking that allows me to minimize the influence of these types of racist acts. Cares and thoughts resulting from these incidents slowly dissipate. Once the clay is in my hands, instinctively I mold and shape it without having any preconceived ideas about what to create. While I am working with the clay, my mind and body transcend my physical space, and a feeling of peace and harmony rests on my soul. Thoughts related to experiences with other humans somehow move to the recesses of my mind. The latest confrontation with co-workers no longer receives my attention, nor does the discussion I had with a retail employee about my ability to shop without stealing enter into my consciousness; their hostile looks and harsh words no longer matters. Yes, there are times when working with clay is a form of escapism from the unpleasant realities of living as an African American in the United States.

Perhaps my work with clay is more than a hobby; maybe it can also provide an analogy for my existence as an African American female residing in this country. Contained within this analogy is another realization about creating clay pots that may further clarify my existence in a race conscious society. When creating clay forms it is important to remove any existing air pockets. Air pockets can cause cracks or destroy a piece during the hardening process. Clay pieces are hardened when they are placed in a kiln and heated to extremely hot temperatures during a firing process. The potter's skillful hands helps artwork weather the extreme temperatures and enables the subsequent structural transformation. My lived experience as an African American female is not restricted to my personal journey, but

it is skillfully crafted and molded by God through the lives of the African Americans who preceded me. Their journey through the temperatures of their figurative kiln provided me with more opportunities and the strength to endure life's challenges. Their loss of property, physical abuse, and forced separation from their children and other family members are part of my conscious and subconscious existence. I view it as my responsibly to perform in and out of the classroom in a manner that honors their sacrifice. I hope my legacy offers the same substance to the generations that follow me.

At a deeper level, I need to have a better understanding of how this phenomenon impacted my ability for self-improvement and the subsequent achievement of three collegiate degrees, while at the same time I am invested in knowing how arts-based classroom activities impacts other African American students. These desires arise from a pressing need for me to facilitate the development of educational strategies that will assist other educators interested in increasing the achievement levels of these students.

My Own Positionality in the Research Process

As noted above, there are two qualitative methodologies that bridge my personal interest with investigating the perspectives of African American learners: autoethnography and narrative inquiry. Specifically, these methodologies are known to aid researchers by revealing the experiences and accounts of others that are eventually intertwined with their own. According to Ellis and Bochner (2006), the autoethnographer's account "shows struggle, passion, embodied life, and the collaborative creation of sense-making in situations in which people have to cope with during dire circumstances and loss of meaning" (p. 433). Autoethnographers pointedly divulge these revelations through narratives because they want readers to care, feel and possibly take action (Ellis, 2004). As a result, multiple layers of

consciousness are presented through the combined use of these methodologies, which directly correlates with the purpose of this study because the higher education setting for far too many African Americans contains multiple layers.

As the researcher, I made a concerted effort to try to account for how my positionality shaped the research process while conducting this study as it is always a factor to some degree in any study. The participants observed that I am an African American female, and they realized that I am conducting this research as a doctoral student; this was one obvious way my positionality was present in the study. I did not intend to overtly share aspects of my story unless it became a natural part of our communications. I thought this was unlikely to happen with the student participants, though I thought it would happen with the faculty participants, since they were more likely to have strong interest in the topic and would be more likely to be curious as to why I was studying this topic. In any event, the participants and I unintentionally engaged in communications with each other that include a number of nuances that are unique to the cultural experiences we share; this resulted from an insider's perspective. This insider's perspective afforded us some liberties in our verbal and nonverbal communication. Our exchanges contained language that is part of our commonly held heritage and reflected a familiarity with the underlying meanings of certain ideas/expressions. I more specifically discuss this issue within the data collection section of this chapter.

<div align="center">Participant Selection</div>

Qualitative studies tend to focus on the unique circumstances that involve the people being studied. Typically, these studies rely on small and purposeful sampling to select participants. Purposeful sampling involves selecting study participants based on the data

they are able to provide the researcher about the phenomenon being studied (Patton, 2002). Researchers resort to sampling techniques like purposeful sampling when the populations for the study are too large or unwieldy, usually resulting from a limited amount of resources, time, or personnel available to conduct a large-scale investigation (Schensul, Schensul, & Le Compte, 1999). A number of strategies are used to gather purposeful samples; such as case sampling, critical case sampling, or snowball sampling.

The approach selected to ascertain the information for this study was snowball sampling. Snowball sampling aids researchers by locating information-rich participants or critical cases (Patton, 2002). Researchers recruit subjects by asking informed colleagues to identify individuals for the study. These recruited individuals are also asked to help recruit additional participants.

Faculty Participant Selection

While this study was primarily concerned with student perspectives, I needed to understand the context of their learning and the goals for using arts-based activities from the viewpoint of faculty members. So, first I located three faculty members. They were identified with the assistance of some professional contacts. These professional contacts eventually led to the names of four African American social science professors working in the Eastern and Midwestern segments of the United States, and one was a colleague of mine from the east. These individuals met the following selection criteria:

1. each educator has worked within a collegiate setting for at least 3 years;

2. they use creative practices (such as drama, poetry, creative writing) as part of their teaching practice; and,

3. they self-identify as African Americans.

The selection criteria responded to several issues for this study. First, data collection is limited to the practices of African American professors because they are likely to possess an awareness of the needs of African American students. African American professors have experienced first- hand the challenges of operating within a collegiate environment as an African American and they know how to maneuver through and within higher education settings (Johnson-Bailey, 2001). Second, each of these professors has relied on creative practices within his or her classrooms for at least 3 years. This amount of time should provide them with rich insights about their experiences. And last, the Eastern and Midwestern regions of the country were identified because of their proximity and the availability of economical transportation to these locations.

Student Participant Selection

Participants for this study were solicited from the classrooms of the faculty members selected for this study. During the class meetings the research project was explained, and their participation was solicited using a planned script (see Appendix A).

The adult students who agree to participate in this study also met certain selection criteria:

1. They were either currently enrolled in or have completed an undergraduate course that included creative expression within the last 3 years. Three years was elected as the cutoff because of the uniqueness of collegiate courses that include artistic expression, and this timeframe increases the likelihood of locating study participants;

2. The selected participants were limited to African American higher education learners who are adults; and,

3. They self-identified as African Americans.

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) reported in 2000 that there are seven characteristics that define adult students. According to the NCES, adult students often: (a) have delayed enrollment into postsecondary education; (b) attend part time; (c) are financially independent of parents; (d) work full time while enrolled; (e) have dependents other than a spouse; (f) are a single parent; and, (g) lack a standard high school diploma. For the purposes of this study all of these characteristics defined adult students and met the selection criteria. The selected participants met any or all of these characteristics, with several additions. Adult learners was also defined as individuals 18 years or older who attend on a full-time basis. The selected age range for this study was lower than some traditional definitions that consider learners 21 and over as adults (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999). The younger age level was meant to capture data from the larger age range who attend colleges/universities. Full-time attendance was also added as selection criteria because the researcher was interested in sampling from the entire student population and was opposed to limiting an already exclusive sample.

Because qualitative research focuses on studying a particular phenomenon in depth, sample sizes are typically small. The sample size for this study followed a traditional form and was small; it included 14 people in order to do the in-depth exploration of narratives needed to assemble an autoethnography.

The design for this research and the procedures established to protect human participants were approved by the Pennsylvania State University Office of Research Protections. The Office of Research Protections approved several documents prepared for this study. The approved informed consent form includes an explanation of the study's intent, structure, and purpose (see Appendix B). Each participant received a copy of this

document, and the researcher maintained the signed copy within her records. In addition to the consent form, the Office of Research Protections also approved the previously mentioned script for soliciting participants. Participant confidentiality was preserved by assigning pseudonyms that replaced his or her true identity and the informants reserved the right to withdraw at any time from the study without suffering any penalty or retribution.

Data Collection

Qualitative research typically makes use of four major types of data collection methods, including interviews, observations, and reflective journals (Merriam & Simpson, 1995). Given that this is a narrative inquiry informed by autoethnography, the primary means of data collection was in-depth narrative interviews. In addition, there was some classroom observation in order to understand both how the professors themselves draw on arts-based forms of inquiry and to understand what the students are exposed to. There was an ancillary form of data collection; field notes. These data collection methods are discussed roughly in the order they were collected.

Classroom Observation

Data for this study was chronicled during one visit of three classrooms, and the information was integrated with information obtained from the interviews. During the classroom observations as the researcher I: (a) gained first-hand awareness of the verbal exchanges between the educator and the learners; (b) witnessed how arts-based practices are incorporated; (c) participated in the learning experience in a minor manner, and (d) interpreted educator and learner relations.

Observations are foundational for research that is based on ethnographic principles, though my observations of learning activities in this study were minimal given that the

purpose of the study was to focus on the participants' story. An observer may fulfill one of several roles while examining a social phenomenon, namely (a) become a complete participant in the study group and conceal his or her observational role; (b) be a participant observer who does not conceal his or her role, but observation is secondary to their participation in the group; (c) observe as a participant with public awareness of this role and participation becomes secondary to the activity; and (d) be a complete observer whose role is hidden or unnoticed by the research participants (Schensul et al., 1999). To some degree I fulfilled the participant observer role during my single classroom visit. It was expected that in this capacity it will be possible for me to get a sense of how the faculty draw on arts-based practices within the classroom and how the students respond to their use. I did take detailed field notes. Again, given that I did only one observation of each class, this was not the primary means of data collection, but one that gave me a sense of how the faculty and students interact in the learning environment, and how students respond to artistic ways of knowing.

Semi Structured Narrative Interviews

The primary means of data collection was the semi structured narrative interviews. These were appropriate because they attempt to understand the complex behavior of the participants rather than explain their behavior (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, 2005) from their own perspective. Semi structured narrative interviews contain some forms of structure; there is a setting, topics of interest are expressed through an interview guide, and research informants are identified. The difference between structured interviews and those that are semi structured lies in the questioning methods. Semi structured interviews do not consist of close-ended questions nor do they adhere to formal forms of interviewing that encourage

researchers to distance themselves from respondents. Key to the narrative interview process is it has the potential to reveal the details of the lived experiences and perspectives of the participants, which may be enhanced by the data obtained during the classroom observations (Merriam & Simpson, 1999).

This study's research questions formed the foundation for the questions listed on an interview guide (see Appendix C). The interview guide ensured that the same basic questions were considered during each interview. Generally, these interviews were consistent with the previously described questioning parameters and provided the parties with opportunities to engage in unplanned discourse (Patton, 2002).

Each interview opened with an account of the researcher's interest in the topic and how this knowledge of self impacts what the interviewee offers. The conversations, thoughts, observations and practices were captured during the tape-recorded sessions helped the researcher piece together the everyday occurrences within classrooms that include artistic ways of knowing and the resulting impact on African American higher education learners. The interviewee's commentary was incorporated within the final story, along with the researcher's story. Therefore, this final version of the autoethnography was a composite of our interactions and revealed the nature of our relationship.

This study's participants, both the students and faculty, were interviewed on one occasion, followed by a member check. During the interview with the students an interview guide was used (previously described), lasted one hour for the most part and were tape-recorded. The recorded comments were transcribed. Each student received a copy of the transcript for review and verification. The student interviews were followed by a conversation via electronic mail. During this follow up conversation the students had an

opportunity to discuss the initial transcript, make additional comments and/or clarify any misinterpretations. For the most part, the students did not add any new information: in two cases they corrected the demographic information regarding their age, and one student clarified the title of her course.

The interviews of faculty followed the same pattern established for the student interviews. Their interview was guided by an interview guide, tape-recorded and lasted for 1 hour, for the most part. This interview was transcribed, and each participant had an opportunity to review the transcript for the verification via electronic mail. Most of the faculty did not add any new information. One professor corrected her title from Associate Professor to Assistant Professor. The only additional change occurred because one faculty member made some oral comments regarding her course after the tape recorder was turned off. The interview transcript was modified to reflect her additional comments, with her approval gained via electronic mail.

Research Journals and Field Notes

Another source of information for this study was extracted from a personal journal kept by the researcher, which included both field notes from the one observation of each of the classrooms and my ongoing journal. Ordinarily journals chronicle the occurrences of each day and record the researcher's personal feelings, ideas, impressions, or insights regarding the day's events. Journals are generally a source of data that allows the researcher to trace his or her development and biases throughout the investigation (Schensul, et al., 1999). Most autoethnographic notes on the other hand, may be recorded days, weeks or months after an experience (Ellis, 2004). Similarly, my journal contained retrospective notes of classroom experiences that occurred during the last 4 years in order to reflect on my own

experiences and compare them with the participants' experiences and to come to deeper insights. This was part of the ethnographic component of my study. It included the details of being a doctoral student within three classrooms using artistic ways of knowing. These details concentrated on the researcher's emotions; the dialogues held and provided vivid descriptions of the settings. As previously mentioned, this information was integrated into the write-up along with participant accounts.

I also collected field notes. The field notes contained data generated from the participant observations. Field notes are generally prepared while the researcher carries out tasks in his or her chosen setting or location and they capture the lived experiences of others (Schensul, et al., 1999). Given that I did one classroom observation, field notes in the traditional sense were gathered during the observations. However, the field notes in combination with my research journal of my own reflections depict a more in-depth representation of the lived experiences of these African American participants because of my inward gaze into similar (and different) experiences and outward gaze at the lived experience of the research participants (Goodall, 2000). This inward and outward gaze minimized an authoritative, omniscient feel to my narration.

The field notes of this study recorded: (1) verbal exchanges between or among persons within the classrooms; (2) a description of the learning activities; and (3) and contain my analysis of meanings derived from verbal exchanges and the practices of the classroom participants. Collectively this information presents a legitimate consideration of the use of artistic ways of knowing within the selected higher education settings and also presents an interpretation largely from the participants' perspectives of how the learning activities impacted these students.

Since this qualitative study is informed both by narrative and autoethnography, and is not a classic autoethnography, the data from the researcher's journal and field notes were crucial to the study in documenting how the researcher's insights unfold, and how they potentially relate to artistic expression, and how they relate to the write up of the study.

Data Analysis

"Qualitative data [provides] detailed descriptions of situations, events, people interactions, and observed behaviors [of a social phenomenon]" (Merriam & Simpson, 1995, p. 157). As such, the information gained through data collection methods guides someone doing narrative analysis with influences from autoethnography to write up the individual stories in the context of a larger cultural story. But, the cultural story is based on the analysis and coding of conversations and daily practices, along with interpreting the meanings of these occurrences. The format for collecting the data was semi-structured narrative interviews. These interviews provided a forum for the study participant and me, as the researcher, to gain a mutual understanding of their perspectives (Silverman, 2004).

As previously mentioned, an interview guide with open-ended questions was used to receive the students' and faculty members' views on higher education classrooms that employ the use of artistic ways of knowing (see Appendix C). These interviews were tape-recorded, transcribed and analyzed as texts (Gubrium & Holstein, 1998; Silverman, 2004). As the interviewer, I received full descriptions from the participants and engaged in dialogic communications, which made it easier to analyze the communications using culturally rich methods.

Gubrium and Holstein (1998) offer a method of narrative inquiry that has the potential of being culturally rich. They suggest a form of analysis that assesses how a story

is told and what the narrator chooses to tell. During this process attention is given to the composition of the narratives and the methods used by the narrator to release the story's plot, themes, and to share the local and broader cultural experience(s). The interview is analyzed, and communications are then organized according to the themes that become evident. The themes will present commonalities between ideas, actions, assumptions, or consequences. Gubrium and Holstein seem to support the narrative collaboration experienced within autoethnographies, but they also caution researchers to be aware of the issues related to collaboration. Participants and researchers need to collaborate on the "whats and the hows" (Gubrium &Holstein, p.181) within a narrative, to invoke a more authentic portrayal of cultural meanings. Gubrium and Holstein also suggest the use of the participants' and researchers' biographical information as it relates to the narration, as typically done within autoethnographies. Gubrium and Holstein's form of narrative inquiry appears to be informed by the practices of autoethnography and offered an appropriate method of data analysis.

In applying Gubrium and Holstein's (1998) approach to analysis of my data, first, the transcripts were analyzed individually around particular themes of this research study, such as culture and reflections on arts-based and other ways of knowing. Next, drafts of their stories were created drawing heavily on their narratives. Then, my personal reflections were added in relation to each participant's narrative. In so doing, I also incorporated insights from the literature and theoretical framework that informed the study, since that literature also informed my own story (autoethnography) and view of the world. Each of the draft narratives were then presented to my Thesis Adviser for her input. Following slight modifications the approved summary narrative drafts were forwarded individually to each participant for his or her feedback to check for accuracy, and as a member check. All

modifications requested by the participants (those mentioned earlier in this chapter) were

incorporated in the final participant stories, which appears in Chapters 4 and 5. Indeed, these

stories are a combination of each participant's narrative and my own reflections, in light of

my autoethnographic analysis, particularly in relation to my understanding of the literature.

The second task of my data analysis was to highlight the perceptions of the

participants regarding their collective classroom experiences to the fullest extent; by detailing

the context of the classrooms, communicating the professors' goals and purposes, and

recording the learners' reactions. This involved a thematic analysis and then a theme

comparison across the transcripts. The student and faculty transcripts were carefully coded,

and then analyzed and reanalyzed to determine their common aspects. The themes were

charted to further clarify the commonalities and differences in the participants' comments.

The third and final task of this data examination was a constant comparative analysis

to determine the final thematic names. During this process I endeavored to include the

commonalities of each participant's story into the selected theme names, as suggested by

Gubrium and Holstein (1989). This final collective thematic analysis appears in Chapter 6.

Verification

The integrity of qualitative research data is reflected in the verification of the

collections methods used. There is currently some tension surrounding the verification of

qualitative research studies of all kinds. The tension developed when Lincoln and Guba

(1985) published their seminal text that questioned the use of verification processes that

derived from positivist research methods. The positivistic terms "validity" and "reliability"

were often used extensively in qualitative research to describe verification strategies. The

term "validity" represents the degree to which researchers actually have discovered what they

think the results show and the applicability of the results to other populations (Merriam &

Simpson, 1999; Silverman, 2004). "Reliability" on the other hand, indicates the ability to

repeat the research results overtime, to different sites, populations, and with different

researchers (Merriam & Simpson; Silverman).

Lincoln and Guba (1985) rejected the basic realist assumption of these definitions of

validity and reliability. In their opinion, reality is not external to the perception of it, making

it difficult to assess the *truth* and *falsity* of an observation externally. Therefore, these

researchers called for the replacement of positivist and post-positivist criteria (Denzin &

Lincoln, 2005). Different terms were proposed to judge the quality of research. They

proposed the use of credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability. This study

relied on these forms of verification because it was a narrative study informed by

autoethnography. As Lincoln and Guba suggest, it is difficult to take an external view of

one's own reality. Since I incorporated my own perspective within the autoethnography and

with my interpretation of the narratives, it was important to verify my views through the

perspectives of others in a similar situation.

Credibility

Credibility involves the establishment of procedures that are deemed credible by the

research participants (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). It assesses the degree to which the responses

obtained from the research participants are valid interpretations of their feelings and thoughts

regarding a topic (Patton 2002). In narrative and ethnographic work information is typically

verified by using member checks. Member checks involve the researcher and the

participants (Ellis, 2004). As noted above, I did member checks with the participants in that

I sent the narrative transcripts to them, and asked them to comment on them for their

accuracy and to give further comment. I also gave them copies of the narrative that I wrote about them, in order to verify my own interpretation.

Further, this researcher also hoped to overcome the intrinsic bias that results from singular methods of analysis by triangulating data. In particular, I relied on triangulation of data sources. Triangulation of sources includes analysis of data collected from multiple sources, such as interviews, observations, and research journals (Patton, 2002). Data gained from interviews, observations, and my research journal was cross checked, and was followed by an assessment of the results by my advisor. The narratives were prepared following this analysis. Typically, the researcher prepares the original draft of the cultural narration that is reviewed by the research participants. This narration results in a co-constructed story. Then of course, in the autoethnography section I made my own interpretation of the participants' stories and my own interpretation in light of their story.

Transferability

Transferability refers to the degree to which the research representations can be applied to other groups (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Unlike credibility that assesses the accuracy of descriptions, this form of verification addresses whether or not the same or similar research results can be applied to other groups (Patton, 2002). Achieving transferability for narrative or autoethnographic research is troublesome and presents some challenges. However, I provided enough details in the narratives for the reader to be able to determine whether or not what is said is transferable to their own situation, and this is how transferability can be determined (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Translatable research provides independent researchers with the ability to assess the value and appropriateness of the

research. They are able to fulfill this task by reviewing the research theories, constructs, and methods, which should be commonly understood and well explained.

The second challenge presented by transferability results from relationships established between the researcher and the research participant (Patton, 2002). During narrative inquiry that is informed by autoethnographic research, researcher-participant relationships are normally affected by the study setting. The study setting contains unique facets that are difficult to re-create, such as classrooms with exactly the same learners reviewing exactly the same material (Ellis, 2004). Therefore, the research setting has to be carefully documented in order to create the same or a very similar cultural scene.

Dependability

Dependability focuses on the replicability of the research. Primarily it is concerned with the likelihood that research results can be repeated (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Qualitative researchers need to take steps that account for the ever-changing nature of this form of research. The researcher is responsible for describing changes within the research setting and how the changes affected the approach to the study. Generally, researchers rely on the use of "inquiry audit" (p. 32), where they review both the processes and product of the research for consistency (Lincoln & Guba). The audit trail describes, explains, and justifies the research by indicating the researcher's interest in the topic, stating the study purpose, explaining how data was selected and included, describing the research setting, and indicating methods of data analysis. The researcher's journal from this study and the Thesis Adviser audited this study's data and subsequent findings.

Confirmability

Confirmability demonstrates the degree to which the research results can be confirmed or corroborated by independent researchers (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). There are a number of strategies a researcher can implement to ensure conformability, such as member checking, triangulation, and seeking another researcher's review. This study relied on two forms: member checking and triangulation. As previously mentioned, member checking consists of the researcher and the participants validating the collected data. It was used while the narratives were being prepared. Triangulation involves the use of multiple instruments/methods of data collection and analysis. It increases the consistency of the research findings (Patton, 2002). For example, within narrative and autoethnographic research dependability results when the data used for the narration evokes the reader's feelings and thoughts about the research participant's life in relation to his or her own. The autoethnographer wants the reader to experience what the participant did through the reading of the report or story as if it was happening to him or her. Therefore, the researcher will usually draw from several data collection methods, such as interviews or observations. This study employed the use of multiple methods, but relied primarily on the narrative interviews.

Closing Thoughts

This chapter revealed how this study used narrative inquiry that is informed by autoethnography. The connections between these qualitative methods are natural, and together they offer a comprehensive portrayal of cultural experiences. Each method is based on habits that go beyond typical research processes, for the research sets forth a rich description of the participants' cultural experiences and also details the frequently overlooked viewpoint of the researcher. The written documents prepared by narrators and autoethnographers reflect communication patterns between the participant and the researcher.

According to Goodall (2000), there are three pertinent issues that impact this form of writing: (a) the writing is relational; (b) it attempts to accurately describe people's experience; and (c) it may be transformational for the study participants and readers. As such, the narrative inquiry informed by autoethnography prepared for this study should help readers formulate connections between their lived experiences and the lived experience and cultural meanings held by the African American higher education learners and the faculty who participated.

CHAPTER 4

NARRATIVES OF THE PROFESSORS

After coming to England, and seeing others write and read, I had the strong desire to learn...
                                   -Slave Narrative of Ottobah Cugoano

This opening quote reveals the fervent passion for education that has resonated with African Americans since and during our enslavement. As will become apparent in the pages that follow, the quote seems to reflect an underlying belief that is woven through the narratives of the African American professors whose stories form the basis of this chapter.

The number of African Americans educators who teach in higher education settings is small when compared to the total number of White professors. Therefore, locating five African American professors who include artistic expression within their classrooms was truly a gift. Having the opportunity to interview them and observe most of their classrooms was edifying. For the most part, I was able to discern the connection between the professors' words and their practices.

This chapter provides insights into these informative discussions and in most cases, reports on their actions within the classroom. This is achieved by providing a brief overview of each professor's professional experience, sharing notes from my classroom observation in all but one case, and imparting a summary of their narratives. As an introduction, it is important to note some of the general characteristics of the professors. All five of them are African American; all but one has doctoral degrees; and all include art-based activities in their classes as a tool for learning. Professor Theater, whose narrative is discussed first, teaches undergraduate social sciences in a public state university, in the northeastern region of United States. The next two narratives are of Professor Stage and Professor Music, who team-teach graduate students who are experienced teachers in an art-based graduate

education program in a large urban university, in southern United States. Since they team-teach, they were observed in the same classroom at the same time over an eight hour period: and both were observed in this same situation. The fourth, Professor Storyteller is an adjunct business professor who teaches undergraduates and graduate students at a Christian university in a small city, in the northeastern region of United States. Finally, Professor Authentic, a psychologist by training teaches undergraduates in a large Midwestern urban Catholic university; given that she was not teaching during the time this study was conducted I was not able to observe one of her classes. Thus, the professors teach in a variety of institutions and in a variety of contexts. Some of my own commentary will also be offered along the way since this is a narrative approach to autoethnography. For now, I turn to the narratives of these professors and their viewpoints.

Professor Theater

Professor Theater teaches for a major research university located in the eastern region of the United States, at a branch campus. Currently, she is a non-tenured, fixed-term Assistant Professor and she teaches in a behavioral sciences program. She has been teaching sociology courses for a majority of her 14 years in the academy.

Professor Theater became a part of this study through a referral from one of her colleagues. She graciously agreed to participate, and we discussed her views during a face-to-face interview, held in a university conference room. Following the primary interview, a shorter conversation occurred to gain additional clarification. With her permission, the original transcript was amended to include the additional insights. Professor Theater also invited me to observe one of her undergraduate sociology courses; this followed our second conversation.

During her undergraduate college experience Professor Theater received some theatrical training and remains actively involved in the theater. She currently owns a theatrical company. She draws on her theatrical training by incorporating role play and/or theater within her classrooms, along with cognitive experiences to give learners the opportunity to demonstrate what they know.

Observation of Professor Theater's Classroom

Eleven students attended the 2-hour evening sociology course that I observed toward the end of the fall semester; six White females, four White males, and a Black female. Professor Theater introduced me to the group and explained the purpose of my visit. She informed the group that I was a doctoral student investigating undergraduate and graduate classrooms that contain artistic activities and that this course was selected because it includes

dramatic exercises as a regular part of the classroom activities. No one asked for additional clarification or voiced any comments.

This sociology course increases the learner's awareness of social issues within the United States. In groups, the students researched the operations of community/social action groups (such as the Boys Club of America, People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, etc.) to become more familiar with the organization's mission. This increased familiarity with such community/action groups was shared during a mock press conference where one student was assigned to act as a celebrity spokesperson (in the case of the Boys Club it was Denzel Washington). The remaining students portrayed members of the board of directors. The overall purpose of the mock press conference was for the students to demonstrate their ability to increase public involvement and gain financial donations.

The students were placed into groups prior to the evening session I observed. The skits were 10 minutes long, and the front of the classroom served as their stage. During the presentations the performers were assigned to provide an overview of their organization and to raise the social consciousness of the general public. As members of the news media, Professor Theater and the remaining students interviewed the performers about their cause in a manner that would reveal the depth of the performers' knowledge. I was also asked to participate in this skit as part of the news media. Every group was well prepared; no one stumbled or seemed nervous about the process. Their performances were so natural, and it appeared they really put a lot of themselves into their roles.

The students were very eager about depicting these roles. I heard their excited voices as I approached the classroom. I arrived 15 minutes before the professor and had an opportunity to witness their preparation. They were rehearsing their lines and adjusting their

costumes, as if they were preparing for a major theoretical performance. I really got the feeling they were attempting to authentically portray their roles. They dressed in character and attempted to speak in their assigned character's voice.

Their research efforts included more than a review of the social issues; it also involved research on the assigned celebrity spokesperson. Each group fulfilled its obligation by sharing statistics on the level of need, reporting on associated cost, stating the impact of the issue on society, addressing the moral dilemmas, and including tidbits about the celebrity spokesperson's level of involvement. These presentations also included carefully prepared audiovisuals, and every group member had a speaking part.

Professor Theater conducted a short lecture following the student presentations, with a 15-minute break. The lecture reviewed the assigned reading on the historical development of social activity within the United States. The students were asked open-ended questions throughout the lecture. Professor Theater reviewed specific terms and historical periods. The students were asked to explain the significance of the information, and they were asked to supply analogies to current events. This process continued until the class ended.

"For Me Just Lecturing is Boring"

Professor Theater did not purposefully include drama in her courses; instead she stated it occurred through a natural evolution. She eventually realized that including that part of herself within the classroom was important and it provided a useful way to facilitate opportunities for her students to demonstrate what they learned:

I have to say that I did not give it that much thought. It was not a planned

thing. I did not sit down one day and say, I think I'm going to use drama. It evolved.

I have a theater company and so I'm always in drama. It's kind of how I see the

world. So I have to admit, it was not a planned thing. But, I did come to see that

demonstration for me is more important than students creating something in writing--

-Especially, during times when students can plagiarize so easily. So for me, students

can demonstrate that they know something by enacting it in some form. Then I know

they have it, as opposed to, them turning in a paper, and I'm not even sure they

created it themselves. So, that's where it kind of came from-- it evolved.

She incorporates drama in her classrooms because she wants to break away from

traditional teaching methods. Professor Theater's memories of classrooms laden with lecture

during her collegiate experience motivated her to facilitate a different type of classroom.

Instead, she combines cognitive activities and dramatic experiences (which I am classifying

as an art-based activity):

I have always done this. I guess I wanted to do things a little differently—I

remember how things were done when I was a student. And, I thought having

students form groups and having groups do some activity would be much more

interesting for students. Certainly, I was putting myself in the place of students. For

me, that would be much more interesting.

Lecture isn't the sole or even primary teaching method used by Professor Theater; she

also facilitates discussions with students. Some educators who advocate the use of art-based

activities support this practice of Professor Theater's because they indicate that the level of

engagement between the learners and instructor generally increases (Eisner, 2004; Greene,

1995). Professor Theater notes her reasons for facilitating two-way discussions:

...I try not to do straight lecture. I try to do--- even when I do lecture--I try to

present the material to them in a way that I am getting their comments. I am

soliciting their comments. For me just lecturing is boring. If I am bored, they are

going to be bored. So, I try not to just stand and lecture. I do not think I would even

know how to do that. So, what comes natural for me is to throw out some ideas and

to get them to respond. That is the closest I can come to a lecture. And, I even have

my--- when I do my lecture notes--I even write theatre text, ask these questions. So, I

have it to prompt myself to say, ask the students this. I also build in anecdotes.

Stories--- I have them in the lecture notes to cue myself to say them—to tell them.

She incorporates drama and other artistic methods because she finds it increases

learner retention. This belief is confirmed by her learners verbally and on course exams.

Like Professor Theater's students I prefer to rely on cues within my classroom notes. I

learned to use this technique during my undergraduate studies to help me remember

important information inside and outside of the classroom. I discovered that the cues I

established for myself triggered mental pictures and guided my recollection of needed

information. Professor Theater's students have similar reactions:

> … And I do this to help them remember things.   I even draw little pictures on the
>
> board. I do picture cues to help them remember. And I find when they do their exams
>
> they will write the right answer but, they will draw the picture cue next to it, to show
>
> me that they remembered it they draw the picture cue. It is helping them to retain the
>
> information and associate it at the same time---there are different types of learners.
>
> There are some learners who are visual. With the visual cues it sticks in their heads.
>
> And, then there are the auditory learners and there are the learners who like to do
>
> things themselves, the tactile learners.

Professor Theater believes classroom activities that are based on artistic ways of knowing are not suitable for all instructors; instead she encourages instructors to locate their "place of truth." Educators that converse on artistic ways of knowing would generally agree with Professor Theater, but they also suggest that there are many ways to interject creativity and connect with multiple learning styles (Eisner, 2004; Lawrence, 2005). Overall, Professor Theater stresses that an educator needs to have a certain level of comfort when selecting a method:

> I think it [the use of drama within the classroom] breaks with tradition, first of all.
> And, I think that as an instructor, one has to do, what one does best. And, I think
> performance is what I do best. And, so it is an easy way-- a quick way-- it is a
> positive way-- it is the best way I have to give the information to the students. And, I
> think that's why it's effective, because it is who I am. For other professors who are
> not so artistic, I do not think it would work. It is not necessarily the thing everyone
> should do but, it works for me. It is authentic. I think that is the word I was going
> for, it is authentic for me. And I think when you come from a place of truth then that
> is what students see.

The significant part of the learning experience for Professor Theater is witnessing student growth. According to her, the classroom is a place for critical thinking. The arts can facilitate a deeper level of thinking by learners because it engages both imagination and concrete thoughts:

> Generally they have a major presentation to do at the end of the semester depending
> on the class. For example, my Introduction to Sociology--- well, my Marriage and the
> Family---which is the one should I use--my Social Problems class--- well, I kind of

changed it ---The way my Social Problems class used to be is they form groups at the beginning of the semester and they were working more on a social problem. By the end of the semester they have to do a presentation involving a social problem; if they had all of the money they wanted and if they really were an organization how would they solve the social problem. And so, for me that is an aha moment. They come up with great ideas---they do---they come up with great ideas-- and they're serious about it--- and so, for me that is really an aha moment. That is a wonderful thing, especially because I believe this generation needs to be encouraged to think and not follow. And so, when I see them thinking on their feet--it is an aha moment.

Professor Theater believes African Americans come from a rich heritage that makes them inherently creative people. Some my question Professor's Theater's notion regarding the actual origination of talent for African Americans, because there are those who suggest that lived experiences plays a more prominent role in creating talent, rather then heritage. Personally I view both arguments as valid, but I did experience something spiritual in nature that connects with heritage more prominently. During a visit to the *Smithsonian National Museum of African Art* I discovered that I use pottery techniques that are similar to female potters from West Africa. I have never visited Africa nor did I know prior to viewing the videotape at the museum that this was their practice. I was astounded to realize that I instinctively gravitated to similar techniques despite my training and my teachers' instructions. Related to this point, Professor Theater states:

…but I do believe in terms of African Americans---this is something someone told me a long time ago---that African Americans all have some type of talent that they bring to the table. If we go back historically to the tribes everybody did something;

there were the singers, the dancers, the drummers, the painters. Everybody did

something, so if in fact we believe those genes have been passed down, than as a

cultural thing everyone can do something. All African Americans can do something.

My own experience as a potter resonates with what Professor Theater describes; I too was

guided by an unexplainable internal drive that connected with my heritage.

<div align="center">Professor Stage</div>

Professor Stage is an Assistant Professor in a tenured-track position. She has been

teaching education courses for 15 years and this is her first year teaching at this large urban

institution in this particular program, an arts-integrated master's program made up of

experienced teachers.

Professor Stage was referred by a colleague and was such a willing participant of this

research that she referred another colleague, Professor Music (whose narrative appears later).

Professor Stage and Professor Music co-teach within the arts-integrated graduate program

developed for experienced teachers. Students within the graduate level education program are

enrolled in cohorts. Each cohort has four faculty members. The faculty in each cohort

collaborates on their methodology and develops their curriculum. Professor Stage is one of

four faculty members assigned to the cohort that follows an arts-integrated model. The

faculty assigned to Professor Stage's cohort made a conscious decision to do the same work

as other educators within the department, but opted to use an arts-integration lens to

transform to the learners' personal and professional teaching roles. A face-to-face interview

was conducted with Professor Stage at a coffee shop located near her university.

Professor Stage is a trained actress and has been acting since she was 14 years old in

various community plays and school performances. She relies on drama and cognitive

experiences to facilitate learning activities because together they "make space" for the learner within her classrooms. I observed Professor Stage, Professor Music, and their other two faculty colleagues, and their students during their all day, eight-hour class session.

Observation of Professor Stage's and Professor Music's Classroom

I could not believe the size of the room when I entered. The classroom was set up in theater style and contained approximately 200 seats with writing tables attached. A podium and several chairs were mounted on a platform in front of the "U" shaped room. I arrived early so I could introduce myself to my contact and watch the students file in. Most of the faculty members were present. Professor Stage, who was my contact, arrived a few minutes after me; I chose not to disturb the faculty members who were present too long because they were in the midst of classroom preparations. Three of the cohort professors are African American (two females and one male) and one is a White female. There are 68 students within this cohort, and a visual inspection of the room leads me to believe that 10 are African American, 3 are Asian, 2 are Latino, and 55 are White.

The cohort met from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. on a Saturday in April for this qualitative research course. During the opening Professor Music (whose narrative is discussed next) asked the group to share announcements and updates, but very few students offered any comments. I was also introduced to everyone during the opening by Professor Music, who asked me to explain the purpose of my visit. I explained to the group that I was conducting research on the use of art-based learning activities within higher education settings and that Professor Stage invited me to observe this session. A few students asked questions about my doctoral program.

Student input increased substantially after the course opening, particularly after the

first learning activity. The first activity focused on *Poetry on Race in Education* was facilitated and read by Professor Stage and her colleague (who is one of the four cohort faculty members). The poetry resulted from the collective research efforts of these professors, using learners from another educational institution. The poetry is based on the views of African American, Latino/a, and Native American opinions of education. At the close of the poetry reading, Professor Stage recited her personal account of her educational experiences, which seemed to captivate the listeners. Although, the listeners appeared focused during the earlier poetry readings, they became less distracted when the speaker read her personal reflections. The professors alternated turns reading the poetry and used expressive voices, while background music was playing. The poetry readings initiated a good deal of discussion.

Following the poetry reading, Professor Stage and her colleague (a cohort faculty member) conducted a 30-minute lecture on autoethnography (a form of counter-narrative research about self and one's group) and arts-based educational research (ABER). The short lecture did not include any input from the students. The lecture linked the methodology used by Professor Stage and her colleague (the same cohort faculty member) to collect the poems to principles of autoethnography and ABER. Excerpts from the poems and the professor's personal account were used to clarify points introduced within the lecture. At the close of the lecture, the students were assigned to do group work for 15 minutes. They were asked to reflect on the poetry readings and the lecture, and to prepare questions/comments. During their group work, I circulated from group to group. I did not participate in this or any other activity throughout the day. I did offer to assist with facilitating activities; however Professor Stage requested that I observe without any input.

This activity generated a good deal of discussion when the smaller groups reconvened into a large group. For example, an African American female indicated, "This is the first time I have not been agitated---right-on!" Apparently, this student connected with the poems because they expressed "genuine" concerns she resonated with and she appreciated the authentic manner in which the poems were communicated. Some of the other African American learners within the classroom seemed to agree with her comments. I determined this by observing them nod their heads affirmatively and using other affirming nonverbal body language. On the other hand, some of the White students had different reactions and felt the poems were racially biased. One White female indicated that she was nervous about making her comments, but she asked, "Why were no Whites included?" Before the professors could answer this question, an African American female student answered her question by stating, "Now, you know how it feels to be excluded from the discussion and to have your views marginalized. Black people deal with this all of the time."

These discussions continued to range from emotional expressions in support of the poems to complaints for approximately 30 minutes. More of the White students voiced positive reactions to the poetry than those that complained. Some of the White students commented that they gained a better understanding of how their minority students felt. Often these comments were made through tearful voices: a few other White students expressed concerns about the limited sample. For the most part, the African American and Latino students reacted to the positive and negative comments raised by their White classmates. For example, a Latino male responded to the negative comment made by his White classmate by suggesting that she remember the feeling of being ostracized when she returned to her classroom. An African American female expressed a level of appreciation for her White

classmate's comments when she stated, "I am glad you had this opportunity today to learn how to relate more positively to all your students."

Professor Stage and her research counterpart also participated in this discussion, and they did explain reasons for the research limitations. The research included other races and ethnic groups, but the relationship between education and race was only introduced by the African American, Latino/a, and Native American participants; as a consequence, to discuss how the participants thought about race and education was limited to the African American, Latino/a, and Native American participants. Hearing the professors' explanations settled the conflict somewhat; however I had the impression that some students remained frustrated by the discussion. The students of color seemed troubled by their White counterparts' one-sided viewpoint and the White learners remained a little appalled by the exclusion of their race.

The day continued to be active, generating a lot of opportunities for student participation and in a less controversial way. The students wrote shaped poems (words from concise descriptions of their research arranged visually), met with research groups (referred to as *Passion Groups),* participated in an exercise where assigned partners were asked to share a work-related story that reflected marginalization, participated in *Australian Hypnosis* (a rotating exercise, where a leader guided followers from place to another without verbal communication), participated in a sculpting exercise (a rotating exercise, where a set of students arranged their partner's body into a position that represented phrases provided by two cohort professors), performed in a *Boal's Theater* (a theater that shares the experiences of oppressed people. Scenes concerning marginalization of learners by educational facilities and/or personnel were facilitated by Professor Stage and the other professors), received a short lecture on complex communication conducted by Professor Music that included

viewing clips of the movie *Crash,* and prepared evaluations of the day's activities during a closing exercise.

None of these activities engendered the controversy exhibited by the poetry readings. The learners moved around on a regular basis. And they were frequently engaged in art-based exercises that encouraged their analysis of the components of qualitative research.

The students' energy level seemed to dwindle as the eight hour day progressed. The room was very hot after the lunch period, and some technical problems developed with the electronic equipment. When the four o'clock hour arrived the students were moving around in their seats a lot, staring aimlessly while propping their heads on their fists, stretching, and a few packed up their belongings. Most of the professors remained energetic throughout the day, but one professor seemed to suffer from the room's heat.

"…One of the Things with Creativity…is it Makes Space!"

Professor Stage's involvement with the arts progressively evolved into her teaching practice. She discussed her beginnings with it, as well as how she believes the arts connect to learning:

I have been in theater since I was 14. So, it has been quite a few years. I have been working with children using the arts. From those two experiences I realized how important the arts are for organizing your internal emotions, thoughts, and processes---To help you express what is going on within yourself and also what is going on in the world. It also helps you to conceptualize things as you work through the art process that maybe unclear, but as you work through it becomes clearer and clearer---or---the more questions raised the more answers begin to emerge when you go back into it and work some more---just that process. Also, when you work with children,

most of them, particularly children of color, are put at risk by the educational system.

Watching them transform themselves from bored, alienated people to more engaged,

joyful, articulate people through the arts is so rewarding. So, when I started working

with adults, the arts are not the first thing you come to---the first thing you think of.

But, it became clearer to me, especially when I am working with multicultural

education (that kind of pedagogy) or those kinds of disciplines that require emotional

upheaval. The process of finding your frame of reference, and the way you're

thinking---and digging it all up, it was clearer to me that the arts would be a valuable

way of exploring.

The enthusiasm expressed by her students while working on a class project lead to the

incorporation of the arts in Professor Stage's higher education classrooms. She went on to

reflect on how she began to do it and noted:

Well, I am trying to remember the first time that I did it. I think there were a couple

of things. Number one, I think it first started happening in a social studies class. I

was teaching social studies to pre-service teachers. I was having them do art-

integrated projects and I saw the excitement that was occurring with them, as adults.

Yeah, that's when I thought there is some way I could bring that part of me and what I

know into the classroom--bringing my experience into the adult classroom.

Professor Stage further explained how some of the theoretical influences on her use

of the arts. She noted in particular that she was also inspired by Augusto Boal's use of the

theater:

And then, I found Augusto Boal's work---the pedagogy of the oppressed work--the

Forum Theater--where he used concepts and ideas that are basically critical

pedagogy. You do it through theater. I thought it was such a fascinating vehicle.

Professor Stage believes the use of the arts within the classroom enhances communication between educators and learners. Maxine Greene (1995) suggests that enhancing communication is one of the key assumptions that inform artistic ways of knowing because arts-based activities provides learners with a vocabulary to name what they are seeing and hearing and offers educators a means for recognizing commonality and differences with their vocabulary. In expanding on this point, Professor Stage noted:

> In the final analysis, what the arts do is give us the ultimate communication system.
> A different way of expressing what ever it is. So, we can say something like marginalization of bodies, and we can transfer it cognitively, physically, and emotionally . And also, we work with our bodies and our emotional self. The arts, give us so much more than simply looking at a pretty picture.

Not only is creative expression appropriate for post secondary classrooms, but she also believes it is an appropriate way to conduct research. Dillard (2006) and Goodall (2000) are among a few authors/educators that agree with Professor Stage's view. They indicate that research that involves artistic experiences tends to represent the perspectives and views of the participants and the researcher in a way that presents a collective story that represents everyone involved. Dr. Stage explained how she has used these ideas:

> It has been really great--before this, when I was at a [prior] university I
> used a lot of arts and relied on the research---the research that uses art as a means of
> analysis, as well as a means of representation. Additionally, when I was at that
> university, I had doctoral students who were working with me on arts-based research.
> We developed a performance using verbatim data, and we put it into a Reader's

Theater.

Dr. Stage notes that some adult students are reluctant initially to participate in art-based activities because they are use to traditional teaching methods, but she holds that they eventually become very comfortable with this praxis. Some educators attribute this reluctance by the learner to negative classroom experiences that occurred during childhood (Eisner, 2004; Greene, 1995; Lawrence, 2005). Professor Stage recalls that harsh criticism lead some learners to rely on the "expert" opinions of educators:

> They were used to being told what to do, and they were expected to regurgitate it---don't ask me think about it---don't ask me to engage myself--just tell me what I need to do to get the "A"---do not ask me think about it or engage myself in any of it---don't ask me any of that stuff. So, yes I find a lot of resistance. The class that you observed came a long way. I think during the first summer, which is two weeks in July, from 8:00 in the morning until 4:30 in the afternoon, they did not know if they were coming or going. They were trained in that educational system where that regurgitation method is used--the one Friere called the banking method---they were up and dancing. I had them out in the hall way choreographing a dance. I did not tell them why. They had no idea why. They were really having a hard time with it. But now, after all that happened, they are starting to talk about what imagination is, and the importance and purpose of teaching and learning.---what is creativity?---what is essential for the classroom teacher, a learner, a citizen and a worker?---why is creativity necessary?--especially in today's market---in today's world.

The significant part of the learning experience for Professor Stage is it "opens doors"

within the learning experience. Not only does this type of learning experience open doors, but some educators hold that when learning activities include artistic forms of expression they typically engage learners in a way that acknowledges their identity and simultaneously enhances their ability to reflect on and relate to learning experiences (Dewey, 1934; Eisner, 2004; Greene, 1995). Professor Stage elaborates on this further:

> The significant part I think is that it opens a lot of different doors in ways that are not evident at first. The door of going into the arts is threatening to a quite a few of them. Yes, it is scary. But, they are more willing to go into that door than go into the race door, or the homophobia door, [or even the class door]. Yes, yes---more of the last one than the former. But, once the arts door is opened they will find all of those other things are in there. It gives them a way of exploring things on multiple levels--- forming an ability to explore deeper--exploring political consciousness.

Creativity "makes space" within the classroom for all involved parties and ultimately leads to a more democratic learning environment, in her opinion. Professor Stage's definition of "making space" seems to recognize that a truly inclusive higher education classroom can also rely on artistic ways of knowing through a multicultural emphasis (Banks, 2006; Blocker, 2004) and she notes:

> …Creativity towards working with kids and families, developing curriculum, and creatively thinking of themselves as being part of a larger world. I think when you think of yourself as a creative being, there are a lot of repercussions. One of the things with creativity that we have not talked about is how it makes space. You've got to be able to make space. That's what creativity is about in my mind. They [some educators] get really upset about SOL's---what they really need to do is get

the test and creatively think about how they are going to teach those kids those

specific things. But, then put it in a package that is creative and engaging. There is

no contradiction in creatively learning 2+2. There is no contradiction there---you set

your arts goals and your disciplinary goals. They [the students] become better able to

handle those tests because they are engaged and excited. You've made space for more

possibilities than you thought possible.

Professor Stage agrees and other educators believe that the arts lead to a

discourse that helps educators and learners explain the world. Furthermore, Greene (1995)

adds that a combination of creative expression and cognitive practices in classrooms

designed for adults uncovers hidden knowledge that is not easily expressed in words.

Professor Stage ties this with the work of other educators theoretically and explained:

I was recently reading an article by Elliot Eisner and one of the things he said is that

discourse is developed to explain the world not the other way around. The world

exists, and we develop language to explain the world and all the other aspects of

language. We develop art to explain the world.

Professor Stage affirms that educators who choose to use the arts within their

classrooms should have an artistic background. Unlike Professor Stage, I believe educators

do not need a specific talent/skill, but they do need to demonstrate a willingness to rely on

diverse aesthetic experiences that are viable mechanisms for releasing the conventional

within themselves and their learners. Dr. Stage discussed the limitations of the traditional

educational system in this regard and noted the benefits of having some background in the

arts:

You know, we always teach the way we have been taught. No matter how many

people tell us---we can read about it---theorize about it---and say "boy that sounds good"---but when it comes right down to it, knowing how to do it is very different than how we think about it. And so, the complicated thing with using the arts in higher ed. is you have to have an arts background first. So, if you are a professor with no arts background, or at least an education that released your imagination and creativity, it is really hard to incorporate it into instruction.

Also, this model of rationality from the Enlightenment has been one that has served many well in maintaining the status quo--to maintain issues of race, class, and gender. That model is one that gets perpetuated over and over again--for lots of reasons.

So, it is a stretch at being creative because his or her practice is so bent on being rigid. It gets perpetuated because many have not been asked to be creative in the work they do.

<center>Professor Music</center>

Professor Music is a tenured Associate Professor at the same university as Professor Stage, where he has been teaching for 12 years. He is a trained musician and studied the arts. He incorporates music within his classrooms and facilitates cognitive activities in order to connect with the students' learning preferences. Professor Music was referred by Professor Stage. As mentioned previously, he co-teaches with Professor Stage in the arts-integrated program, and was one of the four professors in the team-taught arts-integrated program I discussed. His referral was extended and accepted during my classroom observation of the arts-integrated cohort.

From the start Professor Music was a willing participant of this study, and he provided some useful insights during a face-to-face interview held at a coffee shop located

near his university. Given that I already discussed my observation of the eight-hour class of the students and faculty in the arts-integrated cohort of which Professor Music is a part, I move directly to discussion of his narrative.

"The Arts are Powerful…"

In giving his story more context, it is important to note that Professor Music is a trained musician and artist. He thought it was appropriate to introduce the arts initially into his teaching experiences because he wanted to connect with different learning preferences, and stated:

I am a musician—an artist-- I have done a lot of work. In my workshops and teaching at that point, I started using the arts as a way to open up and teach around different learning styles. And also, it was a way to have people connect with things. It also is an expression of my own---it is the way I connect with the world. I thought it was effective. I used it when I first started teaching here and I got a very strong response from the teachers. They said it was innovative, it really helped them understand things, and it brought a better climate to the classroom. Educators that prefer traditional teaching methods resist the use of the arts because they fail to understand how the arts induce transformational learning experiences--- one of the things that happen to us is resistance to the arts-- a lot of people think the arts are fluffy and it is all about making crafts---not really learning--- So, this is a different experience for them [educators that rely on traditional method] because they do not really know that the arts are powerful and this is a transformation experience. Mixing cognitive and affective experiences within the classroom characterizes good

teaching, according to Professor Music. Dewey (1934), Eisner (2005) and other educators have also advocated combining these experiences because together they broaden cultural perspectives by allowing and honoring diverse ways of knowing and learning. He notes:

> For us [the arts-integrated professors], integrating a variety of different teaching styles and learning styles was just good teaching. So, lecturing all the time is just bad teaching. If you are just using the aesthetic, this is bad teaching. So, for us [the arts-integrated professors] you have to do the mixture. The arts are just one piece. We [the arts-integrated professors] are strongly committed to that. Several other people in my teaching group have a lot of experience with that. It was just the thing for us to do. There are other teaching teams [other cohorts within the Graduate School of Education] that do not have faculty that are comfortable with the arts.

Unlike other teaching methods, in his opinion when educators rely on the arts within their classrooms it requires some pre-planning. The amount of preplanning and coordination by Professor Music's teaching team was obvious during my observation of their classroom. The learning activities and the facilitators of the activities rotated throughout the day. The course opened with Professor Music's facilitation of an exercise, it was followed by the poetry readings of two other professors, then a mini lecture was presented by another professor, and this altering pattern continued throughout the day. To a certain degree, Professor Music and his teaching team members are modeling teaching strategies for his students (who are experienced teachers seeking advanced degree). He reflects:

> I had some experiences myself, in terms of why some people [learners] resist. So, for example, I noticed the first couple times when I played music some of the teachers were looking around the room or having other conversations. They were only paying

attention part of the time---so, I decided what if I had the lyrics. So, I learned that if I had the lyrics to the song it would be more than an oral experience and they could connect with the language through the lyrics. So I would set it up--- here's the music with lyrics, and I would give them a guided question. So they could really interpret the purpose. So I just tried using strategies like that, using music as a form of text, as opposed to a great song to listen to that just makes you feel good.

Connecting Cultural Identity

Professor Music suggests that, the arts help educators facilitate activities that connect cultural identity with "life" experiences. Likewise, Greene (1995) holds that one of the assumptions that inform artistic activities is they connect the cultural and personal identity of the learner with the educator. Professor Music elaborates on his views by sharing a personal experience:

I also started having experiences, where we were doing stuff around identity. I brought in some clips a couple of times from Marvin Bates, an African American gay male---and he is talking about that experience---it is a documentary. Then I had some other pieces--something from the Latino culture--so it was a theater experience with a mixture of spoken word, film, music and some poetry. That kind of kept-- people aware of the new experiences and voices of other, and to respond to it in a critical way. Things started happening, like there was one African American woman in the room, in her late 40s or mid 50s or something in that age range---right in the middle of reading a poem she got up, burst into tears, and ran out of the room---I thought, oh my God, what is going on? Afterwards, I am checking with her---what is going on? She said my family's house was burnt down by the Klan in Mississippi.

The connection with cultural identity may have some emotional consequences, but Professor Music notes that it also provides a democratic learning environment. Eisner (2004) suggests that this participatory involvement with the arts is generally known to help educators appreciate its use and it also makes the learners feel that they and their identity are acknowledged. Professor Music spoke to this point as well and noted how he and his teaching team do this:

> In our classrooms we set it up on day one. We tell them that we are going to model certain things for them to try. We asked them to think about themselves as a learner and a professional teacher---we asked them to get involved in the conversation and to state if something is not working--they need to figure out why it's not working for them. We are very clear about the ownership of their role as a learner, as it relates to the syllabus. And we're going to do what we are going to do then they need to figure out why something is not working. People are authorized to bring parts of their lives into the classrooms that typically are not there, unlike the traditional classroom, where people know there is a clear boundary against talking about your personal life. But, in our classroom they know we are going to talk about their personal lives, the way they think, their experiences, their values and their assumptions. All of this we believe shapes the type of teacher they are. I think this is the reason that we get a lot of crap! [He is reflecting on the ongoing critique from administrators and other educators about the effectiveness of using non-traditional methods within the classroom]

According to Professor Music, traditional educators and traditional education facilities are reluctant to mix cognitive experiences with affective experiences because of

their tendency to separate the mind from the body. Gardner (2004) suggests that the separation Professor Music refers to occurs because many educators fail to acknowledge the similarities that exist between the arts and rational thinking. Professor Music went on to explain:

> I believe it started with Rousseau, who believed emotions were for children and not displayed by adults. And from here, people have come to believe that knowing the connection of mind and body may be interesting, but not a legitimate part of learning.

In his opinion, educators interested in incorporating the arts in their classroom must be mindful of several things:

> First of all, it is really important to do this. And secondly, it is important that people who do this work become literate in the arts. You need to understand the role of emotion, you have to have skills in conflict resolution, have some clarity with developmental psychology, and a sense of how people learn. I think that is what arts-integration is all about. It all depends on your theoretical perspective—for an example, an architect may not do the same things I would but similar benefits would result--do what we call building scaffolds—that enables people to know where you are going and also where they might go—I heard someone the other day talk about the role of Border People, people who live in multiple communities, who see part of their responsibility to translate between cultures. I think this what the arts is about. It is a mechanism for doing that translation. If you are doing that translation work you have to know who you are and what the arts are all about. The arts with that border— that bridge—and help other people realize where they are coming from. So,… some people do that well—or—some people have more experience with words.

Professor Storyteller

Professor Storyteller has two master's degrees: Business Administration and Adult Education. He is an Adjunct Professor and an administrator for a Christian college in the northeastern part of the United States. Professor Storyteller has been teaching business courses for 5 years for graduate and undergraduate students. When contacted about this research he willingly accepted my offer and requested that I observe two sessions of his graduate level leadership course. We discussed his views during a face-to-face interview within his university office.

Professor Storyteller is not a formally trained storyteller and he does not align himself with a particular storytelling method. However, he believes that storytelling enables the listeners to link a story's purpose to their everyday experience. Therefore, he relies on storytelling as a way of enhancing cognitive experiences. He acquired this talent while observing family members, particularly his grandfather, who was a Baptist preacher.

Observation of Professor Storyteller's Classroom

Professor Storyteller's graduate level leadership course was observed on two occasions during a summer semester: in June and July, for 3 hours each. Eight of the nine students attended the first session; six White males and two White females. The only African American student (a male) had an excused absence. During my introduction to the group Professor Storyteller had each learner identify themselves and he added that three of the males work for paramilitary organizations. The purpose of my visit and a brief overview of my background were also explained at this time. He indicated that I was a doctoral student conducting research on collegiate classrooms that used artistic activities. One student asked

for my email address so he could gather information about the application process for my doctoral program.

The tables and chairs within the classroom were arranged in a "U" shape, making it very easy for everyone to make eye contact in the medium-sized room. From the outset of the session Professor Storyteller told stories. His storytelling followed a specific pattern. A 2– to 5-minute story was introduced after each lecture point. For example, he opened this session with a review of Colin Powell's leadership principles and shared a personal story concerning the value of dedicated leaders. Professor Storyteller inherited a disgruntled, disinterested employee when he was reassigned to a supervisory position at a different job location. This veteran of the Iraqi war was experiencing a few problems at home and was basically raising his children alone. Professor Storyteller's superiors suggested that he terminate the troubled employee. Instead, he decided to meet with the employee in order to learn more about his circumstances. Their discussions lead to a reassignment of the employee to a position that featured his skills. This reassignment facilitated substantial changes in this employee's work life: he earned several promotions, and the accolades of co-workers that previously labeled him a poor performer.

Most of the remaining stories shared by the professor were derived from his previous work experience. Occasionally, he supplemented these discussions by circulating written materials, a journal article on leadership and a copy of Colin Powell's autobiography.

Professor Storyteller is an animated storyteller. His uses a lot of body motions, moves around, alters his voice tone and changes his facial expressions while telling stories. The students seemed captivated by his teaching style. They laughed in the expected places, and at other times they appeared to be pensive. Their attention did not stray in an overt

manner. However, they did not participate in the discussion nor did they take notes. I do not know exactly why they were so silent. Perhaps this group adapted behaviors typical of classrooms including military and paramilitary learners. The reason for their silence notwithstanding, Professor Storyteller did most of the talking and used the whiteboard to clarify his points. Occasionally, he asked a question or asked the students for help when he could not think of a term. These were the only occasions when the students participated in the discussion. I had the feeling that he posed questions and sought their assistance periodically to make sure they were following the discussion. Even during their 15-minute break the students did not communicate with the professor. On the other hand, I found myself asking him for additional details and further explanations as the session progressed. He responded to my inquiries, and then returned to telling his stories. I was the only person participating in this manner.

The group dynamics did not change during the session held in July. This session was the last for this leadership course. Eight of the nine students attended this session; one African American male, two White females, and five White males. The missing student, a White male, was unexcused.

The cohort's capstone project advisor (another professor) spoke with the group for 15-minutes about their upcoming project before the official start of the course. Once again the learners' participation was limited. Professor Storyteller followed this opening with a short story and he provided a segue way into viewing movie clips. All of the selected clips were paramilitary or military movies that focused on leadership. Professor Storyteller provided context for each movie, showed the clip and followed presentations of the clips with a review of the previously discussed leadership principles, using PowerPoint slides. The

professor did most of the talking during the session. The students only answered questions when asked and did not freely share any comments. Their silent behavior continued through the course closing.

"I am Constantly Altering and Developing My Teaching Skills"

Professor Storyteller altered his reliance on traditional teaching practices because such methods did not work for him:

The first night I was teaching Human Resource Supervision---the first night I had 82 PowerPoints. It went like this----hello my name is M----or

whatever. It took me about 20 to 24 hours of preparation for that class. I read everything. I researched. I had case studies. I did everything. When I received papers I would use a separate sheet of paper and go through their papers, checking grammar and content. I really reviewed them carefully. Yeah, my mentor [not through the mentorship program], but a good friend of mine, he said to me, "You keep doing that you are going to drive yourself insane." He indicated the more you start teaching the less time you are going to have to be that thorough. And after my first class, I looked at the students and they were "shell-shocked." Nothing was sinking in.

Storytelling is a natural process for Professor Storyteller, and he feels he is more effective when he relies on it. He has a captivating way of sharing stories. I found his nonverbal behaviors and verbal manner to be so captivating that I intently listened to his stories. He explained where it came from and why he uses it:

I feel more comfortable. Yes, it should be what you feel more comfortable doing. I

come from a storytelling family--my grandfather and so forth. I feel more comfortable doing that and over the years getting feedback from the students. I run into my students at graduation time, the bank, or wherever, and they say, "I never forgot when you said this or that" or they say, "Remember that time you said this---I still use that story." So, I am constantly evolving and developing my teaching skills. I think they get more application when you can show them how it applies to the real world.

There is a specific pattern to Professor Storyteller's storytelling method and he relates his stories to major teaching points. The correlation between his teaching points and the stories unraveled as the course progressed. He describes his methods and preparation processes:

They are categorized. I have leadership stories, human resources stories, and cultural diversity stories. So, I have them in "banks" and I know how to use them. On the third night I use a story that is choreographed. It seems as though it is just blah, blah, blah. I put a lot of time and effort into it. It is very structured. I choreograph it the way I want it to be.

Professor Storyteller realized the importance of interaction with the learner while he was in training to be an organizational trainer. I attended similar training programs when I worked for the public sector and was exposed to similar techniques. I can recall this type of emphasis and I experienced a similar feeling, but I now wonder if these courses were more about entertainment than teaching. Professor Storyteller has a different assessment of his instructor development course:

A gazillion years ago when I took an instructor development course with the State

Police, which was my employer at the time---I was about to embark on teaching

stress management. We had to go through a 40 hour instructor development course. I

will never forget it---it must have been 20 years ago---the instructor that taught the

course was very animated. He would walk through the aisles. He would use his

hands and I was amazed. I was looking---and I was retaining what he was saying.

So, I look at him as the catalyst for my type of interactive, physical lecturing style.

Student involvement is the motivation behind Professor Storyteller's use of creative

activities, although this was not witnessed during my observations of his classrooms. As

previously mentioned, I observed his leadership course on two separate occasions. For the

most part, the students did not participate in the discussion, except for the occasional request

made by Professor Storyteller. Their low level of involvement is perplexing to me because it

leaves me with a question about why it occurred. Despite what was observed, Professor

Storyteller states he is interested in dialoguing with learners:

The students and I dialogue---I want the students to be involved in their

learning as opposed to me just telling them things. And when I am out and about and

I run into students my goal materializes when they say, "Yeah, I remember the time

you told us this and I use that---and it works"---or "I stole this from you." So, my

goal is for students to have a memorable experience in the classroom and to take

away something they can use.

Professor Storyteller believes a learner's "life" experiences impacts his or her

learning and educators need to be cognizant of its influence. I am particularly intrigued by

this realization because I have been accused of placing too much focus on the classroom

activities, at the expense of the participants. I can think of several occasions when the

learners accused me of ignoring their personal needs. Educators are occasionally placed in difficult situations that require them to determine when to be flexible towards the learner or when to hold the learner accountable. In my opinion, equitable decisions result from clear, upfront communication between the parties. Professor Storyteller does not indicate how to address the personal needs of learners, but he does discuss the need for empathy:

> I say I hope because that is my intent. If the students are not talking, I cannot tell if they are thinking about something else. I tell the students that this is very important for them to understand, but people have lives and when you look around people look like they are okay but, we do not know what they may be going through or what is on their mind. They may have received a phone call from an ill relative or they may have received a call that they won the Power Ball---I do not know---but when they go into a meeting [everyone in the MBA program is a manager or supervisor] you need to understand that there is a lot of stuff that is going on behind those glasses or faces of the individuals in that room. That is why when you assign something and a week later they did not do it. You think didn't we just talk about this. You have to understand that sometimes people are there physically, but not mentally.

Professor Storyteller reports that very few learners take issue with his stories, but other issues have surfaced. The use of art-based activities like storytelling does not eliminate the struggles that typically develop within classrooms. In speaking to this point, he noted:

> You can never please everybody. There have been times over the years when I have had negative experiences, comments, and so forth. As far as my style or my stories, I have not had any one come to me and say they were offended. I have not had that occur. I have had situations where I had to address a group [a cohort of students]

because of issues, and I did have students come to me say they did not appreciate the way I addressed the group [a cohort]. In the same group I had people say thank you because we needed to hear this---whatever.

Professor Storyteller monitors his learners when telling stories and he attempts to remove any overtly offensive comments. He told many stories about police work during the sessions I observed, but he did it a manner that did not seem to offend anyone's sensibilities. I have vivid recall of the stories and the corresponding leadership principles, which seems to affirm his reasons for using this method of teaching. He spoke specifically about these reasons:

Well, one thing I learned over the years is that being in front of the class your brain has to work at hyper speed and you have to assimilate a lot of information, interpret body language, and what they say. You have to be cognizant of people's background, sexual preferences. You constantly keep this in your head. You have to remember all this stuff, and filter everything that comes out of your mouth like a political candidate because what you say may offend. They may not come right out with it. It may manifest itself at a later point. They will not want to deal with you. So, I am constantly monitoring what I say. Because you never know, everyone comes to the table with their own issues and biases. They do have opinions. This is one of the hardest things to deal within a classroom, is not to offend people or distance them.

According to him, classroom activities like artistic activities engages learners in ways that increases their retention levels and they become more involved in the learning experience. In commenting on reasons for using stories, he highlights the importance of engagement and hoping students relate to the story:

I think when you are engaged and interested in what someone is talking about and you start to relate, time goes by quickly. You no longer pay attention to time. You are not sitting there watching the clock. You are using both sides of your brain.

<div align="center">Professor Authentic</div>

Professor Authentic is a tenured Associate Professor within the Adult Degree program that offers bachelors and master's degrees at a large Midwestern urban Catholic university. She has been teaching for 19 years. Currently, Professor Authentic teaches undergraduate courses relating to psychology, adult learning, and/or those that center around the African Diaspora.

Professor Authentic was on research leave and not teaching the particular semester I was conducting my observations; thus, I did not actually observe her class, and her narrative is based solely on our telephone interview about her vast teaching experience of drawing on the arts in educating adults. Professor Authentic is a trained psychologist. She uses centering" (a form of meditation), dance and music within her classroom experiences, integrated with some cognitive experiences to increase learner retention and interest in the subject matter. She is not a trained musician or dancer; therefore, she relies on musical recordings and personal renditions of movement.

"Because we all are Creative!!!"

Professor Authentic incorporated the arts in to her classrooms because she noticed how the arts impacted her learning. Goldberg (2006) holds that when educators are aware of their personal learning preferences, in the manner suggested by Professor Authentic, they become better educators for they are more likely to assist the learner. Professor Authentic speaks to this point:

I guess looking at myself personally, as a personal test case and knowing how important music is in my life, I also know how important creativity is, and doing things with my hands in a form of creative expression---adornments and those kinds of things, and how they connect in many different ways and help me learn things. The one thing that stands out in my mind is, sometimes I will say (but I'm trying to cut down on this) I am memory challenged. That is, I have a difficulty with memory. I can recall experiencing this when I learned something when I was young, young, in junior high school. But I can recall popular songs from then---you know, I can even relate them or associate them with things I was doing at the time. So, I know the power of things like music and poetry when they are treated like creative expression/artistic expression, it can support and enhance memory. It clarifies how we make meaning and how we associate. It seems to me that it is an important tool or technique for revealing aspects of ourselves and can be used in the learning process.

Music and dance are incorporated within the units of instruction by Professor Authentic and they are purposefully linked to the subject matter. She addresses this point:

> I use a combination of things. Music is fairly easy to use. What I try to do for the different courses that I teach is within the units I have music that is specifically associated with the unit. One of the courses I teach is called Classics from the African Diaspora. There is actually a unit in that course that focuses on Nina Simone's Music, as a way to learn about issues related to human rights and oppression, things like globalization, civil rights, spirituality and those kinds of things. I have another course that is called Psychology From An African-Centered Perspective. In that course we do a unit on racial identity, in that course I use the Nina Simone

song *Four Women*---where she talks about four persona of African women, and I use
that song to talk about the notion of identity and racial identity and how that has
shifted historically through the African Diaspora. So, that just made sense to me. So,
I love music and I love dance and it seem to me it was important to incorporate
things that I love in the classroom, so I can maintain my level of interest. I need to
be interested, because if I am interested and maintain my passion, then I will be able
to share that.

Professor Authentic believes music and dance enhances/validates some students'
preferred learning styles. Some educators agree that when artistic activities like dance and
music are combined with cognitive experiences they ultimately render the learner with a
deeper understanding (Eisner, 2004). She also discussed how this works in light of readings
and course content:

Well, it certainly makes it a little more interesting than having to solely read articles
on African identity or on Racial Identity Development Theory. It adds to the
learning, and if we think about the multiple ways of knowing and multiple ways of
learning, it certainly will tap into some people's preferred style more than others. I
think it enhances by making the unit of material more accessible to more people. I
think also there is something about music---I do a lot of work around African culture,
value systems and spirituality---one of the key elements in the African world is "life
world"--- so, in this culture (it is not just that culture, but that is where a lot of my
work is) rhythm does help one to learn. So, and a lot of people like music and I
introduce a lot of different kinds of music---it connects in a way that is not cognitive.
So, it validates a way of learning. I think there are things we can express through our

creativity. It means doing it in a different way than we do through scholarly and academic work---so it makes it more interesting for students. I think they [students] experience all of those things. It also enhances their learning by giving them permission to engage in learning in ways other than the visual, verbal and the academic ways of learning--- so it does provide more access to more people for the learning.

She notes that, traditional adult classrooms that do not include creative expression and often ignore the student's cultural experiences. In fact Tisdell (2001) suggests, that traditional classroom practices without attention to multiple ways of knowing hinder needed assistance due to its over reliance on rationality, which reifies a way of knowing predominately associated with the White culture. Professor Authentic notes her views:

…when you become an adult you are focusing on the written word and the visual. But, I also understand that looking at how different people learn---considering my background as a Clinical Psychologist, I have done stuff with testing and assessment in a former life---but a lot of that ---I was a Director of an assessment center when I was more actively a psychologist. I would see the disparate performance of children of color compared to White children. I would also see how children learned in the classroom when they were able to incorporate things that as a part of their culture. So, it made sense to me that if worked for children it would work for adults, it worked for me as an individual. So, in part it was so I could maintain my interest and energy, and make it more sensible to people. I have always been the person to do this any way.

She notes that, the academic experience suffers when students divorces themselves from who they are. I can personally testify to the impact of separating my passion from my

learning. As mentioned in another place in this manuscript, the early part of my

undergraduate studies was unduly challenging until I discovered my passion for pottery. I

attribute my scholastic improvements to the discovery of my talent and interest in clay.

Working with clay allowed me to process information and gain knowledge without

experiencing the typical obstacles. I shared this with her and she responded by stating:

> You know it is so wonderful to hear you talk about incorporating your creative
>
> expression in your academic work, because I think part of the difficulty people have
>
> is based on what you said---when you try to (what is the word) disengage parts of
>
> yourself such as the academic from something you do on the side---when that is who
>
> you are. So, then there is going to be an imbalance---A person cannot do as well
>
> because you are denying or oppressing a certain part of you. So, when we can
>
> embrace all of that in the service of learning or in the service of whatever we are
>
> doing it makes for better performance, better products, better living.

Demonstrating Knowledge in Multiple Ways

According to Professor Authentic, written papers pose some limits. She suggests that

there are a number of alternative methods learners can use to demonstrate their knowledge.

Like Professor Stage and other educators, Professor Authentic recognizes the benefits of

demonstration because it reveals a level of engagement between learners and instructors. She

explains some ways it works for her students:

> I will encourage students to do something other than a paper, because I want them
>
> to do more than write a 20 page paper---I want them to do a running series of
>
> portraits. To embrace the notion of doing something different and that is really hard
>
> for students. I really have to push them because we are all so accustomed to doing

the conventional thing, which is the 10, 15, 20 page paper---being bored doing that, but getting it done. We do not see other ways of reflecting knowledge, besides just doing that paper.

The use of alternative ways of knowing within the classroom is significant part of the learning experience for Professor Authentic and increases student engagement:

When I think about it from the educator point of view, it is using other ways of knowing. It really does increase the level of engagement for students in the classroom and in the work. It is different from giving you an assignment of reading an article and expecting them [student] to come in and talk about what they read. Even when they have an article, there are times when they have been given a reading assignment and I will ask them to develop a play or do something outside of writing a paper.

She finds that working with the arts is a bit of struggle for some students because it is different then traditional methods privileged within academia. Gardner (1983, 1999, 2004) agrees that there is a reliance on cognitive ways of knowing that emphasize rational thinking/learning practices within academia. Thus, learners have struggles initially because of their limited exposure. She discusses some of these difficulties:

So, they struggled with that concept, even though they could talk about it in many ways. It is like going backwards---from the concrete and going to the abstract---this aspect is a little more difficult---when we know what is privileged in traditional academia.

Professor Authentic admits that the struggle for learners in a learning environment that uses creative activities presents challenges; however as suggested by Freire (Horton &

Freire, 1990), the fundamental role of an educator is to help learners discover within difficulties there is a moment of pleasure and joy. She notes her responses to the learners' struggles:

> There are always issues surrounding who does what---and will they do their part of the work. That was really the only level of challenge that surfaced that was brought to my attention---but, after we talk some more about the assignment they seemed to get that. Yeah, I think that---initially, what I do (it is a function of being trained as a psychologist, which is different from some people) is I try to keep it open-ended, because I want people to really tap into their own creative ideas. I think for some people, they can really run with that, while there are other people who really do need more structure, because it is so outside of what they are use to getting. And even though we say adult learners are self-directed and they take initiative. Most of our students are returning after having been out of school or after not doing so well in school. So, there is a higher level of fear about will they make it or can they do it. So, for some of them they need structure and much more, which is important. When we talked a few times more about it, they felt more comfortable. Though I had some ideas about what I would have liked to seen, I was also open for what they would bring.

When students make negative comments about their creative abilities Professor Authentic confronts them:

> They say, "I am not an artist. I do not have a creative bone in my body." I immediately stopped them, even though we were joking because I take this so seriously---you know I have those things in my head also. I was not going to be a

party to the censoring of their creativity and I was not going to support them doing it too, because we all are creative! We all have creative energy, it may be manifested more in some ways than others, but I think we often have a sense of creativity or being artistic in one thing when it can be so many different things.

Learners within Professor Authentic's courses are also requested to display what they learned pictorially because of the depth of insights provided. As indicated previously, Lawrence (2005) indicates that this type of artistic expression within the adult classroom helps the learners uncover hidden knowledge that cannot be easily expressed in words. Professor Authentic explains how it works in her classrooms:

One of my questions would be to show pictorially what you learned, how you have learned? What you have learned in this classroom? And it was just fascinating what people came up with, in the midst of complaining. Let's see what were some of the things. I remember the major thing was showing the African perspective. I have had the most leeway with that class because it is an individual kind of course. The thing I remember most of all were pictures showing a lot of circles and people talked about the connecting information, the connection with other people and circles were prominent. Let me see, what were the other things? There were a few other things and I tired to write about this at some point---circles and images of light---candle light---I use candles in my class. Yeah, it is not surprising that they would use candles. A lot people had pictures that included the sun.

There are several items to keep in mind if an instructor is interested in incorporating the arts in his or her classrooms, according to Professor Authentic:

First of all, I would tell them about using themselves in the classroom. Because I

think that this is so incredible. (I think that---L----and I wrote about it)…being

authentic is so important for everyone. Sometimes I get people together and do

centering, some people call it meditation, but I call centering. Whatever you call it, I

come from the use of African symbols and African ideas, because that is what I am

familiar with. Someone in the group said they thought that it was very useful, and I

felt very comfortable doing what I did. And I tell them, you should not feel

comfortable doing what I did because that was me. You are not me, you ain't me.

You may not need to do this, because this is me. But, whether it is the arts or some

other kind of thing I think people have to have a sense of what is their authentic self

because I think that comes through, even in places where there are some uncommon

means of approaching or sharing knowledge and facilitating knowledge and

supporting learning. If one is in touch with one's authentic self and being genuine it

can get you through, even with people who complain. They are going to complain.

They complain when I play Nina sometimes. They are so radiant when they hear her

and they are not usually familiar with her, this is one of the reasons I include her. But,

even when using artistic expression, they complain but then they get into it.

She also suggests that it is also important for educators to seek out unique learning

opportunities for themselves to enrich their capabilities and to gain a better understanding of

learner needs/interests:

I am looking at something here---one of the things that I do because I was going

through so much here with all the work that I have to do, I said I need to get away and

do something different. So, I started taking some art classes in the middle of the day,

in the middle of the week, Wednesday morning. I love this story because I was

actually in a class for special education students. I did not realize it until I got there

and, the funny thing was I was always the slowest person in the class. They had

students that were diagnosed as developmentally disabled. It was a vocational

training program, but they opened it to any one. And, I realized that it was an open

class, but I thought there would be other people besides the vocational students. I

was the only one who was not a part of the program. They would be waiting for me,

because we were doing it at our own pace. People would be trying to clean up---to

finish their project and I was still trying to finish up. It was a very humbling

experience---but not---it was, very important to me because of what happened to me.

I was able to use that experience of being in that classroom. I considered my personal

learning process. It allowed me to be more open to what my students were doing in

my class. In addition, it allowed me to think about other types of artistic things my

students could do, to present their learning in the class.

Because I think sometimes---higher education and continuing education and the

academic process stunts us. It stunts our ability to think and do, rather than freeing us.

Thinking about what is good and how it should be presented. There are all of these

parameters that are sometimes stifling. I think that it hindered me.

Chapter Summary

The professors interviewed for this research teach at very different universities and teach very different students, but they possess some common beliefs. Their primary goal seems to be making the learning experience memorable for their students using alternative ways of knowing and modifying traditional, positivistic classroom practices. They do this to increase the level of engagement of their students and to also increase their personal level of engagement. It is important to note, that they consider the integration of cognitive and aesthetic practices as essential elements of a holistic learning environment. Now it's vital to hear what students make of such efforts, as I discuss in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 5

INTRODUCTION OF LEARNERS

So I read to the minister; and he said to me, "You read very well and very distinct"; and asked me who had learnt me. I said that the Lord had learnt me last night.
-Slave Narrative of John Jea

This quote from the slave narrative of John Jea characterizes the lengths to which a learner will go to achieve personal goals. Given a strong desire, a pressing need, and the appropriate circumstances to achieve their goals, learners will educate themselves in spite of the type and level of restraints placed on them. This conviction is manifested within the souls of many contemporary African American learners and is ratified by the commentary found within the following student narratives.

The following chapter introduces nine student narratives that were compiled for the most part from face-to-face interviews. These narratives are for students of the five professors presented in Chapter 4. The narratives represent four undergraduate (three current and one recently graduated), and five graduate students. The students articulated preferences and insights that led to our mutual exchange of classroom experiences and philosophical viewpoints. I was personally awestruck by how similar my conversations with the students were to those I had with their professors.

The interviews of the students were essentially semi-structured and pseudonyms were used in the narratives, to protect their confidentiality. Each interview commenced with the same question: What was your favorite college course, and describe why? The students were selected because of their exposure to courses that contained arts-based activities taught by African American professors. They were students in one of the classes of the professors discussed in the last chapter. However, they did not always choose to discuss the particular

course presented by the professors represented within this study. In a number of cases, chose different courses that also included arts-based activities and/or included active participation: sometimes it was the fact that the class included active participation rather than the inclusion of arts-based activities that was more important to the student. Occasionally, some of the students also chose to talk about administrative issues that typically detract from learning environments, such as grading polices, poorly facilitated group assignments, apathetic learners, etc. Arts-based or interactive courses can be subjected to the same restraints experienced in more traditional courses, if the administrative aspects of the course are not aligned with it creative purposes. Learners may experience a disconnect between the creative learning activities and administrative procedures that are perceived to be formal or rigid. Therefore, some of the following narratives reflect commentary that considers the whole context of the courses they attended. Some of my own commentary is also offered along the way since this is a narrative approach to autoethnography.

Gigi

"It Was Not Just Learning From The Book!"

Gigi is an African American female who has been faithfully pursuing a baccalaureate degree for a few years; she also attends to the needs of her family, and is attending college with one of her daughters. She is a non-traditional student at a university located in the Eastern part of United States and was one of Professor Theater's students. Gigi was one of the students I observed during Professor Theater's sociology course. She is 46 years old and is also a respected full time employee of this university.

When she discovered I was seeking research participants for this study she volunteered to participate. Our interview was held in a university conference room. Her favorite course was a Western civilization course that includes some arts-based activities and involved a lot of interaction. In our interview together she highlighted that: "It was not just learning from the book!"

Reflections on Arts-based and Interactive Course

Gigi enjoyed this Western Civilization course because it included various learning activities that exposed her to other cultures. This course contained interactive learning activities, in addition to the traditional lecturing methods and review of textbooks, which included analyzing the contents of the *Tao Te Ching*, viewing a large number of culturally based films, etc. The creative experiences within this course provided Gigi with a deeper understanding of how others acknowledge and celebrate their cultures, in comparison to her own. Gigi notes her views:

> Because you learned different---aside from your own beliefs---you learned other
> cultures, and what they believed and what they worshipped and why. It was just

exciting. We had a professor who was not from the United States and we had a lot of smaller books. I think I will pronounce it properly, when I say Tao, it is spelled T-a-o. It is pronounced Tao. We had a lot of different books, and we saw movies in the classroom, on different things. Like on China: what they worshipped, how they worshipped. We saw a movie on tea rooms, traditional tea rooms. So, it was not just learning from the book.

Tisdell and Tolliver (in press) suggest, that the additional insights gained by Gigi typically occurs when learning activities engage the student in a way that acknowledges their identity and simultaneously enhances their ability to reflect on and relate to the learning experiences.

Gigi goes on to explain that the variety of learning activities made the course more interesting and realistic. These activities sparked her imagination in a way that placed her in the countries she studied. She comments on the impact of these learning activities:

It made the class more interesting. And, it made it more real. You were almost put in that environment… It opened the door to something other than what you are used to.

Dirkx (2001) argues that the type of meaningful learning endorsed by Gigi is derived from an emotional, imaginative connection with self and the broader social world. Additionally, he holds that emotionally charged images generated within the classroom initiate a deeper understanding.

Exposure to the various cultures, particularly in the way religion/spirituality was also included in that cultural exploration, facilitated Gigi's re-examination of her own spirituality. Gigi explained how this connection to spirituality was important for her as an African American woman, and compares her experience to others:

I was an adult. You know, I was married. At that time I had already been a widow

with two children. So my perspectives—people's perspectives are different—

[depending on] where they are in their lives at that time.

It made me investigate and check more into my own spirituality. Yes, as an African

American and as a woman. In general, being here in the United States---what's

normal for us and what's normal for them---why I believe what I believed. I am more,

I am more spiritual. People define spirituality in different ways. When I say

spirituality, I am referring to my beliefs.

Hooks (2003) speculates that many students, particularly students of color need to examine

their spirituality, just as Gigi did, because they often rely on it to construct knowledge. For

many, knowledge is also created through images, symbols, art, music, ritual, gesture, and

celebrations that connect with their cultural lives.

Another aspect of this course noted by Gigi was that earning good grades is easier,

when one is truly engaged with the material. She provides a personal account of her

appreciation for these types of experiences:

It was a personal enjoyment. I can't quite remember the grade I received, but I do not

think it was a grade I was not pleased with. It was easier because you were

excited and you want to know more. It makes you want to read more, read the

books and it was easier---In terms of learning or comprehending.

Gigi's recall of courses that include creative activities is more vivid, as opposed to

courses that do not include these activities:

When I have to reflect back on classes that I did take, those classes that were

interactive, more artsy, I can remember. I can remember right now having a male

teacher. I think the class might have been psychology. But, how exciting can you

make psychology? It was not all that---it was not that memorable to me--that course

to me was basically book and lecture.

Eisner (1972) indicates the arts impacts recall because it creates visions (mental pictures)

about the application of information that can be subliminal, but in Gigi's case, her recall was

more overt.

College classrooms that include artistic activities, according to Gigi, highlight the

learner's potential. She reflects on the quality of her experience:

It teaches you what you are capable of and what qualities you have that are better than

others. What things stand out more for you---things that you are better at than others.

That would be it. It makes you aware of everything else in your life. Well like—

Professor Theater's class. I am not afraid to be in front of other people. I do not

mind speaking or reading or being asked to put on a performance. You know--some

people do not like to speak in public. That does not bother me.

It makes you aware of everything else in your life. Like being the older one in the

class, or being the only African American in the class, or just watching the different

cultures in the class, even in terms of---not so much Black or White, but age. You

know, the younger student versus the older students---The man versus the women.

Eisner (2005) and Goldberg (2006) maintain that arts-based activities are likely to help

learners make the type of connections Gigi describes. They suggest that learners will likely

transcend previous limitations because they are inspired to be creative and to use their

imagination.

Courses that include artistic activities are also enjoyable because Gigi appreciates the effort demonstrated by the educator. Gigi reflects on the difference:

I just enjoy a class where there is more imagination put into it. Not the norm---it is a little different.

Possibly the effort she notes can be attributed to a connection between her and the teacher. As Ladson-Billings (1994) proposes, when teachers see themselves as part of the community and are willing to "give back" , their relations with learners tends to become more fluid, equitable and extend beyond the classroom.

The Problem with Group Assignments

If arts-based courses or any other course contains group work it is not enjoyable for Gigi. Generally, traditional ways of assigning group work forces dedicated learners to relinquish control of their grades to the lack luster efforts of their less motivated counterparts. As an African American learner this is particularly crucial because grades take on unique importance. Yes, grades reflect skill level, but they also communicate an individual's ability to surmount the impact of occasional racial biases, the low expectations of others, and other inequities that occur within some classrooms. Gigi provides the details of her experience:

I do not like working in groups. I cannot stand it. I really don't enjoy working in groups. You always have someone who is not going to pull their weight. If I am going to be graded on it, I want to be responsible for my own grade. I do not want the responsibility of my grade to be left on somebody else in my group.

If I had to take another sociology class now, I would probably ask first if there was group work. I wouldn't want to take it because I really do not like it. I would take it if it was required.

That's right--I think I could have learned probably more—but I guess that was the

whole basis for the class—to be able to learn to work in a group—and verbalize—

even when I would bring my concerns to Professor Theater---she would say, your too

nice—speak up.

Charles

"It was not Just Boring Lecture…!"

Charles was referred for the study by Professor Theater, and he has completed several

of her sociology courses. He is an African American male who is earning an associate

degree in Business Administration. He is 23 years old and he should complete his degree

requirements shortly. His favorite courses are Business Ethics and a sociology class. These

courses were taught using different teaching methods: the Business Ethics course involved

review of case law and was interactive; while the sociology course included number of arts-

based activities. Our interview was held in a university conference room.

The Value of Interactive Courses

Courses that are interactive are not boring, according to Charles. They are interesting

because the learners were permitted to share their viewpoints using "real world" scenarios.

Charles recognizes the value of good teaching practices when he states:

The professor made it enjoyable. He would let you argue about cases, business

ethics cases---things that had to do with business or ethics or the laws that surround

business. There was something fun about that. It was not boring. Yes, he would ask

us our opinions, it was not just boring lecture for I do not know how many minutes

(50 minutes).

The methods selected by educators can motivate or discourage learners. One should not underestimate the role of interactive teaching methods. Jones, as reported by Perry, Steele and Hilliard (2003), a former employee of the National Academy of Sciences, demonstrates the power of good teaching practices by improving the mathematical capabilities of African American students who have been designated as poor performers by their school administrators, using Socratic teaching methods. Thus, when learners are engaged they seem to perform at higher levels.

Participating in arts-based activities within the sociology course made this course more enjoyable for Charles. He referred to Professor Theater as "cool" because her class was another interactive class. Charles' reflections seemed to indicate that he gained a deeper understanding of his "world" by participating in activities that linked to his everyday experiences:

> I think about three times or four times we went out of the class visiting a speaker. Listening to speakers talk. It was fun---with stuff that related to sociology---that's what I remember.

According to Dirkx (2001), the adult learning environment is a good context to explore the imaginative and extra-rational in the form of activities, such as arts-based activities, because it provides opportunities to develop a deeper understanding of the world and our relationship with it.

The Connection Between the Classroom and Life

According to Charles, an idea course addresses everyday experiences and relates to "real world" occurrences. The connection between classroom activities and his life experiences is a prominent concern for him:

It was the same thing as the ethics course; we were put in real world situations

and everyday things---something we can relate it to.

Charles also suggests that interactive courses increases the learner interest in the

subject matter and enhances his or her capabilities. He specifies the importance of

interaction:

Overall, they [interactive courses] really help you learn better. It is not boring. That is

the one thing I do not like about school, sometimes it seems it is the same old thing.

When I have an interest in something, I do better. I found that even when I am

reading---when there is something that is interesting, I can concentrate better, but if it

is not in my interest, I tend to lose focus. I zone out.

Charles discussed several courses that contained arts-based activities, although these courses

apparently meant something to him it appears he was influenced more by there interactive

nature. It seems the level of engagement within a course is more likely to determine whether

he learns or not.

<div align="center">Paula</div>

<div align="center">"It Helped Me Remember Things!"</div>

Paula is a 22-year-old, African American female. She is a junior at a

university in the eastern region of the United States and is attempting to earn a baccalaureate

degree. At the time of our interview, she was in the process of changing her major, which

has forced her to transfer to the main campus. Paula selected a sociology course, some of her

psychology courses, a speech course, a Pop Culture course, and an acting course as among

her favorites. All of these courses included artistic activities and were highly interactive.

She was referred by Professor Theater. Our interview was held in the school cafeteria before it opened.

Reflections on Interaction

Courses that contain open discussions within the classroom increase Paula's retention. This viewpoint held by Paula seems to be expressed in most of the student narratives. Paula describes the impact of interaction in classrooms:

> It helped me remember things. The more I talk about it, the more I commit it to memory. If I read it, see it, write it that is nice, but I need to discuss it to internalize it. I am not very much of a hands-on person, but I am a verbal person.

> Cynthia Dillard (2006) argues that there is a cultural dimension to dialogue, and that it is a particularly important way of knowing in the African American community. This is partly the idea of call and response (a method of dialoguing rooted in the experience of some African American churches) that is related to as a way of knowing only within the context of community does individuals appear and, through dialogue, continues to become. There is a compelling connection between Paula's views concerning interaction as a form of communication and those pointed out by Dillard. Paula went on to point out that students of color prefer to learn through dialogue. She shares her reasons:

> …but there is one thing that was most consistent in most of classes---the students of color (particularly the African American and the Latino students) had the most in common with me. We shared with each other that we need the verbal aspect and need to talk and discuss. We need to work in groups and for the class to be more "hands-on." For example, in my Pop Culture class when you and I talked about the percentage of the students that were engaged and I said 30%, the majority of them

were the African Americans and the Latinos. We talked a lot. It is a connection-

--I have seen this happen in my earlier school years. I went to a predominantly Black

elementary and junior high school. And then in high school I went to a predominantly

Caucasian school. And as we know, here [at this university] it is a predominantly

Caucasian school. So, I have had the opportunity to be in both environments. And in

the environments where the African Americans and Latinos were the minority we

seemed to have the same interests. It is also like a pattern in every class. We are the

ones that talk the most, not just whispering to each other. But speaking directly to the

professor and to the class, to engage conversation. I cannot think of another thing

that is common between us. People from all walks of life, from Europe, from

Florida, from D.C., people from poverty, people who are wealthy, and all of us of

color, we had that in common.

Dialogue is so important to Paula that she is known to initiate it with professors or

classmates when the professor dominates the discussion. Her classmates have supported her

resourcefulness and commented that they enjoyed the class as a result:

I was bored "out of my mind." Sometimes despite the environment, despite the vibe

of the classroom, I would just say what I had to say. I could not see any other way for

me to get what I needed. There were some professors who said to me, "You know,

Paula, sometimes while I am in the middle of lecturing you raise your hand. You talk

about stuff and I have not finished what I was going to say. I have not finished the

slide." I just let them know I am sorry I if offended you, but that is what I need to

learn. If I do not talk within the first 20 minutes of the class you lost me. Not with

me only, but having conversation with our classroom. I do not have to personally

raise my hand, but if other people do not have conversation or dialogue within that
first 20 minutes, you know, that "dead silence" except for the professor, you will
lose me. When I read the chapter before class I already know how I feel about it, but
once I get to class I want to hear how other people interpreted it, their perceptions of
it. If I do not get that dialogue from other class mates or even from my professor,
then I am "done." Except for those times I would say, "bump what this lady thinks
and how she wants us to be quiet, I am going to say what I have to say." Then
everyone would join in the conversation---then we would have fun---we would say, "I
loved class today." ---that was so much fun…

Obviously, Paula appreciates classes that have a high degree of interaction. She
notes that these courses are more interesting. Paula describes how she makes meaning
during these experiences:

I am also this way because it made it [the class] more interesting. I can go to a class
that is boring "as all get out," but if the professor is very excited about it or if she
made the students become excited about certain aspects---that is one thing I like about
Professor Theater's classes---they were Sociology courses---Sociology is not the most
interesting topic, but she would do things---in our group projects she would assign
certain aspects of a topic to be researched and it was something we enjoyed.

Paula continues to affirm the value of a college course that contains dialogue between
the professor and the learners:

In the idea course I would be able to have dialogue with my professor and my
classmates. If for no other reason than just to hear how other people felt about the
subject matter. So I could speak and tell how I feel and compare it to my personal life

to make it sink in. And the class would allow us to give speeches. Talking to the

other students, almost teaching the other students, telling what they learned. The

professor could break the students up, where each student has to present a topic. And

finally, there would be writing assignments. I love to write, and I do not mind writing

essays, narratives and doing the research.

 Paula discussed the significance of a course she took on Pop Culture, and

noted that it was also very interesting and intriguing because of the varied classroom

activities. From a pedagogical stand point, it appears Paula's favorable assessment

of this course is related to the use of multiple teaching methods, which included

the use of modern technology, cognitive activities, analyzing different forms of pop culture,

 etc. Paula describes the learning environment:

> We did look at a lot of movies and a lot of PowerPoint presentations. It
>
> was not just words on the PowerPoint, it was in the pictures. Having the different
>
> parts of history related to pop culture in it---Vaudeville, Nickelodeon, and those
>
> things we [her generation] do not know about. And the technology we have now,
>
> some of the current stuff--- he did do some lecture, but they were very engaging. He
>
> was welcoming, open to comments and questions. He would play the movie and
>
> depending how long it was he would stop it between the clips and we would discuss
>
> it. We would come in and depending on the topic we would watch film clip or
>
> look at an old Sears catalog from the 1800's or something.

The topic of pop culture is inherently more creative and if taught in a equally creative

manner the topic will be interesting to some, likewise other subject matter can have the same

appeal, but if the classroom experience relies solely on lecture some learners will find it

tedious, as in Paula's case. Paula chose to stop attending class because it failed to engage her:

> I had one class, it was a psychology course. I do love psychology, but when we arrived every day "rest assured" the teacher lectured. She lectured exactly on what was on the PowerPoints. She emailed those slides to us on ANGEL [internal electronic communication system] the night before. So, really if we just printed the e-mails out and read them, there was no need for us to go to class. So, a lot of times (I will be honest with you) I just skipped class. Unless we had to turn in a paper or for a pop quiz or you had to do something, there was literally no need for me to be present. Likewise there was no need for me to buy the book. I did not purchase the book because everything she taught was typed out on an email and placed on ANGEL. I was grateful for that. It helped to prepare us for what she was going to talk about, but I expected her to talk about something different in class. I skipped that class all of the time. It was boring. Rarely, did the whole class show up.

Gardner (2004) warns that students will disconnect in the manner Paula describes when they are not fully engaged and they will not remain motivated to stay in these settings.

The traditional methods used within this psychology course did not challenge Paula intellectually, but she also indicated that the professor was an "easy grader":

> She was a very liberal grader, so I did not have a hard time. Her test were all essays---I like to write, so I got decent grades on all of the tests. I was familiar with the information.

On the other hand, Paula's sociology course professor varied the classroom activities and provided additional insights. Paula notes why she preferred this course:

> She never lectured or sent out PowerPoints. We did have a book, and we
>
> reviewed the book. After we reviewed it, when we went to class she would talk
>
> about things that related to the topic. But, it was something different. It was always
>
> something different.

Some educators indicate that Paula probably appreciated this course because it moved

beyond traditional cognitive practices and the associated intelligence levels to the inclusion

of other forms of intelligence (Gardner, 1983, 1993, 1999, 2004; Goldberg, 2006).

> Paula enjoyed her drama course because it included arts-based and interactive

activities and contained some physical activities;

> We got up and we rolled around on the floors and the stage. I really liked that one
>
> because it forced you to "break out of your shell." It was not one of those [a class]
>
> you could sit in the corner, be quiet, take notes, and leave at the end of class. We had
>
> to act silly in front of one another. We had to do goofy things. We made weird
>
> noises. I felt comfortable on the stage, especially when everyone was not expecting
>
> you to be. We discussed the readings and "put on" plays---things of that nature. We
>
> went to see plays. That was when I got most excited. We would go see a play and
>
> then write a response to it.

It appears this course cultivated six of the seven forms of intelligence (linguistic, musical,

spatial, bodily/kinesthetic, interpersonal, and intrapersonal), prescribed by Gardner (2004).

Paula's reference to the level of interaction and physicality highlights the independent nature

of the intelligences; they can at times affect or enhance another form of intelligence.

> Paula expressed a personal desire to have a doctorate before she is 30 years

old. She is interested in surpassing her parents' achievements. Her desire for advance degrees asserts the high value placed on education by her and her family members:

> Before I am 30 I want to be a Doctor. I guess it's because it is greater than what my parents did. That is what they taught me to do. My mother got her master's degree at an early age and her bachelor's degree, before the age my grandparents did. So, my mom had her master's degree by her mid-30's, by the time I am 30 I want to have a doctorate.

I can personally attest to the same value because my family members have similar opinions. As previously indicated, for as long as I can remember going to college was an expectation for me and my siblings. This expectation has also been instilled in the younger generation of my family. Obtaining a college degree is an aspiration they regularly voice as part of their dreams for the future.

Classroom Administrative Issues

Paula also spoke to other issues related to the classroom: administrative issues, attendance issues, group work and grading. She also made recommendations for other African American students.

Paula found the sociology course more demanding because the professor adhered to the university's attendance policies:

> In Professor Theater's class if you missed it, first of all you would miss a lot of information. So, it was very important that you did go. She had a policy. I love Professor Theater, but one thing I did not like was she allotted us a certain amount of time we could miss class. So, after you missed three she would deduct a certain amount from your grade. I think that is a university policy.

Although Paula enjoyed many things about taking this course, she found Professor Theater's adherence to the university's attendance policy harsh because it negatively impacted student grades. She goes on to indicate why students should not be forced to attend:

>…we feel if we do not go it would be to our detriment. [If]… I did not get the material that would be my punishment. It should not impact my grade, if I am able to score high on the test.

The method of grading group assignments was different in several of courses that included artistic expression and the difference was problematic:

>The only thing projects have a positive and a negative. I do not mind interacting with people. I do not like it when my grade depends on other people's work. Yeah, if they do not have a work ethic I am at a loss. But, he [the Pop Culture professor] did not grade that way. We each got individual grades. We would work together, but then we would write separate things. That way it worked out better.

>The only difference between her [Professor Theater] assignments and my Pop Culture assignments was we all got the same grade. So, we all had to get together and email one another and then put all of work together as one paper and turn it in. We all received the same grade, which was difficult because all of the members (as we all know) do not hold up the same "amount of slack." And some members do not have the same capabilities as other members.

The grading methods used by the professor of the sociology course presented some additional concerns for Paula:

>Our whole semester was out of 100 points, so when we turned in one paper it was worth 5 or 10 points, for a 5-10 page paper, which made it very hard for you to have

room for error as opposed to a paper being worth 100 points by itself, which

would give you some leeway to miss some points.

Paula also noted that she would make particular recommendations worth noting for

newly admitted African American college students:

I would tell them not to be afraid to ask questions and to raise their hand. Do not be

afraid to email the professor and let them know what kind of learner you are. I would

also tell them to try to take courses that are atypical of what is normally taken. Some

courses I took were very different. I took those courses to help me become well-

rounded and to get to know who I am and to see the things I like to do. I guess, I

would tell them to be themselves and not to be afraid to (not to disrespect their

professor) disagree with their professor and ask for what they need.

As the previous comments indicate, Paula is a student who is keenly aware of learning

preferences. When I asked her to explain how she developed this awareness she stated:

…it is probably because of my mother--- [laughter] ---my mother and father taught

me to ask for what you need and that is what I do with them if I need something. My

mom quotes the Bible and says "you have not because you ask not." So, if you do not

ask for it [identify your learning preferences] you are not going to get it. I like to put

it out there. It does depend [on the size of the course]; if it is a small class the

professors [already] knows who you are. A lot of the professors knew me on the first

day…

Tom

"…African Americans Are More Hands-On!"

Tom is a 42-year-old African American male. He is pursuing a graduate degree in

education within the arts-integrated program, located at a urban university, in the eastern part of the United States. Tom was a graduate student in Professor Stage's and Professor Music's arts-integrated cohort master's degree program. His cohort is in the final stages of their program.

As noted in the last chapter, each student in this arts-integrated cohort selected a *Passion Group* (research group) to present their final projects for this research course. The *Passion Groups* were facilitated by community artists/artisans. These artists/artisans helped the students learn more about the selected art form and they reviewed presentation methods. The cohort's professors arranged for representation from different genres, such as painters, potters, textiles artists, etc. Tom's *Passion Group* is *Mind, Body and Soul.* This group was composed of people doing physical performances, people focused on spirituality and an art group.

Each student was also asked to purchase a chair and to design it to reflect the evolution of their learning. The final products will be presented at the end of their graduate studies.

During my observation of the cohort's Saturday session I personally invited many of the African American students to participate in this study. I managed to have private conversations about my research with these students during their breaks. Tom and two other students volunteered to participate in the study. Tom and Faith (who will be discussed later) actually participated, the other volunteer did not respond to my follow up emails. Tom's interview was conducted on the telephone.

Reflections on Arts-based and Interactive Courses

Tom was first exposed to arts-based teaching practices during his high school years. He attended a high school in New Orleans that was based in the community. Instead of attending class in a "brick and mortar" building, he attended daily meetings with executives from local industries at their workplaces, such as photography and art studios, government agencies, and/or banks.

He has completed several higher education courses that included artistic ways of knowing with a multicultural emphasis. While he is currently a graduate student, he discussed two of his favorite undergraduate courses: an African American history course and a linguistics course. The African American history course specifically included multiple teaching methods and arts-based activities. This course was enjoyable because it connected with his cultural experience and it included some informative activities:

My favorite college course in undergraduate school was an African American history course. The reason that was one of my favorite courses is because I learned a lot about the history of my people. The professor was very engaging. She showed her passion for teaching African American history.

The professor in this course relied on activities that enriched Tom's knowledge about his culture and she presented additional information about his home town:

The teacher used the book (if I'm not mistaken) called *From Slavery to Freedom*, by John Hope Franklin. That book was very informative. She also used research projects. She also brought in the culture of the city I was living in. Actually, she started with the lecture, and then we went on many field trips after class. The professor also gave us a list to use as a scavenger hunt. We went to different landmarks around the city, and we collected data from the landmarks. When we went

back to class we talked about the landmarks. For me, I learned more by going to the

landmarks. I really got something out of it and going back and talking about them. If

I happened to miss something; another classmate may have picked it up. We learned

about different people and what they did, what they were famous for---found their

gravesites to record the year they were born and recorded what was on their

headstone/tombstones. That was something we kept and presented for the whole

class. We sat in a circle and we talked about it. She gave me a desire to research

deeper about my past.

Tom's interest in African American art grew stronger after completing this African

American history course. He acknowledges that the exposure to African American art helped

him make connections with his ancestors. Tom explains the impact:

Now, as a result of that class I have a lot of African American art pieces in my home.

It is spiritual art because it demonstrates we are here because we are standing on the

shoulders of our ancestors.

These aesthetic encounters Tom participated in support the views held by some educators

that indicate that diversity in classroom experiences releases passion and at the same time

values culture/experiences (Banks, 2006; Dillard, 2006).

A shared view with his African American history professor reinforced Tom's

belief that African American learners are more hands-on. Tom and his professor seem to

believe that African Americans perform better in learning environments that address multiple

ways of knowing. The underlying assumption of their viewpoint appears to suggest that

there is no singular way to tap into the learning preferences of some African Americans. Tom

describes the nature of his belief:

…the professor at S------ University indicated that African-Americans are more

hands-on. Lecture---we are not interested in a lecture. When we are involved in

hands-on, we really get more out of what is being taught. Not many African

Americans are auditory learners. We are visual and hands-on learners. It is part of our

cultural experience.

According to Tom, students from his African American history course bonded and

created lasting friendships. Courses that contain different kinds of learning activities tend to

facilitate closer relationships between participants. Tom describes the connection:

In that class she made such an impact-- it was a class of 18. I still keep in touch with

those individuals. Yes, and we are still friends until this day. We talk about how that

class impacted us and how she impacted us! Because it was more hands-on. It was

not in a traditional setting with lecture.

Claudia Cornett (1999) holds that this occurs because arts-based activities introduces learners

to shapes, patterns, sounds, rhythms, figures of speech, contours, and lines, which helps

learners comprehend meaning in their experience and leads to a "connectedness" between

those involved.

Tom also spoke about his undergraduate linguistic course, as among his favorites, in

that it provided some enriching experiences that increased his awareness of his personal

learning preference. It is interesting to note that several of these courses were taught by

White professors who rely on multiple teaching practices, including some group

presentations, learners conducting field research, etc. It is not that surprising that some of the

courses had a multicultural emphasis given their purpose and goals, but the methods used to

instruct the courses relied on multiple ways of knowing. Often members of the academy rely

solely on cognitive methods such as lecture when they teach, whether they teach for a

Predominately White Institute (PWI) or a Historically Black University (HBU). Generally,

these educators do not see how the arts and rational forms of thinking rely on similar

prototypes to classify, represent, compare and appraise the qualities of the world (Eisner,

2005). However, it appears the professors at the HBU Tom attended were interested in

sustaining ways of knowing and learning that their African American learners preferred:

> The class was offered at a Historically Black University. What he did was he
>
> introduced different languages and we had to do research. We learned a lot about
>
> different languages and different cultures. He placed a list of cultures on the board,
>
> and we had to select a culture. I selected the Kiawah's. The Kiawah live off the coast
>
> of South Carolina, on the Kiawah islands. That culture has really lost what they
>
> brought over from Africa.
>
> [There were] no more than three people in a group and we had what he called
>
> field experiences. We would meet once a week at the library. And on the following
>
> week, we would present [research findings].
>
> This was a White professor. He was very passionate about this as well. It was very
>
> engaging. It was in a small setting and a very interesting class.

Tom's recall of this linguistic course and the courses that included interactive

experiences is vivid:

> Oh my God, it was-- let me process this--- I finished undergrad school in '86.
>
> Okay, it was a summer class. It had to be either the summer of '84 or '85. Yet, I still
>
> have this keen memory of it.
>
> I had another undergraduate class that was a children's literature class, at S-----

University [this course included lecture and artistic expression]. This professor was very, very engaging. She used the book to get more out of children's literature. She encouraged us to bring children's books in and to create stories from those books. That was our presentation in class.

I can remember another class, it was Algebra I. We had a White professor, let's say a European professor. He would walk into class, say good evening, and go straight to the board and put algebra problems on the board. And believe it or not, I got a lot out of that. He would randomly call on us to come to the board to work on problems. I was doing it--hands-on.

Courses that are based solely on lecture have been poor learning experiences and created negative memories for Tom:

I had a biology class that was strictly lecture. In that class we just sat in the lab and our professor lectured us. Basically, that was it. I did not get much out of that class. …we had to sit there and listen to him and take our test.

What was so ironic when I took Algebra II it was different. In the first class with that European male I did well and I got an "A." I was comfortable with the final. But in Algebra II, I had a different European American male who did the opposite; he relied on the book. He lectured from the book. In Algebra II I got a "D" and many of students dropped out. I talked with other African Americans and students representing other races; they said they were not getting anything out of the class either. Both of these classes were required, Algebra I & II.

Lecture was the common method used by professors during Tom's undergraduate experience and he gained little from these courses:

Eighty percent of them stuck to lecture. Some of my methods courses---because in

Education you had to take methods courses, many of my professors had their

doctorate and they would stick to lecture. Well, we did not get a lot out of that, but it

was required.

Views on Teaching Styles and Learning Preferences

Tom suggests that an educator's teaching style should match the learner's preferred

learning style. Tom explains the significance:

If the Department of Education started pairing teachers that are visual learners with

students that are visual learners or pairing teachers who prefer kinesthetic with

kinesthetic learners or teachers who prefer auditory with auditory learners.

Personally, I feel test scores will go up because that way a teacher is teaching to what

he or she feels comfortable with and not outside of his or her comfort zone.

And as Ford (1996) speculates, when there is a mismatch between learning style and teaching

style, poor achievement may result.

Tom also indicates that classroom activities should be engaging for learners and they

should be monitored for their effectiveness:

Keep the children engaged and make sure the children are excited about the

learning that is going on. For the kids that are not excited about the learning, change

it to accommodate that child---meet that child's needs. You have to change.

Educators should change every day. So many times I find that teachers have a

 particular style of teaching and they do it for so many years---I call them dinosaurs.

They do not believe in change.

Tom's dedication to educating himself and facilitating the education of others

becomes evident when he states the reason why he returned to school to get a master's

degree:

> I applied to M---- because I am an advocate for kids. I always look for a different
>
> way of teaching in the classroom.

One has to wonder what would happen in classrooms if more educators possessed his

convictions.

<div align="center">Faith</div>

<div align="center">"I Was Not Sure About It… I Am Learning That This Works For Me!"</div>

Faith is an African American female who is 34 years old. She is graduate student and

also a member of the arts-integrated master's program and is a member of Tom's cohort. As

previously mentioned, each student had to select a *Passion Group* (a research group). The

Passion Groups were facilitated by community artists/artisans. These artist/artisans helped

the students learn more about the selected art form and they reviewed presentation methods.

Like Tom, Faith's *Passion Group* was also was *Mind, Body and Soul.* This group was

composed of people doing physical performances, people focused on spirituality, and an art

group.

Faith accepted my invitation to participate in this research during the observation of a

Saturday session. Our interview was conducted on the telephone.

Reflections on Arts-based and Interactive Courses

Faith has been an avid reader for quite a few years. She selected an undergraduate

children's literature course and the research course from the arts-integrated graduate program

as her favorites. In speaking about her favorite undergraduate course she noted:

> I really have to say, it was an undergraduate literature class. It gave me an

opportunity--- I was a reader as a kid, but the literature has changed so much. I really

got interested in some picture books because they were diverse, and I was amazed

how good the artwork was---the story themes where a lot more mature and

incorporated other things. I really enjoyed that.

The professor made the children's literature course enjoyable because of her teaching

style and use of dramatic readings. The methods used by Faith's professor seemed to create a

cultural connection. Faith explains the connection:

It was more discussion---the professor actually read to us a lot. She read to us using

more of a dramatic-type reading style, rather than just repeating the words. We would

discuss different connections, trace the characters looking at the themes, review

the characters and see how they related to our lives. Things like that.

Hooks (2003) indicates that a cultural connection, like the one described by Faith, occurs

when knowledge is created through images, symbols, art, music, ritual, gesture, and

celebrations.

Faith's children literature course also provided opportunities for the learners to co-

teach, which resulted in a deeper understanding of how to present the topic. The activities

within this course enhanced Faith's ability to teach this subject because of her immersion in

the subject matter:

We had to come up with a theme, find different literature to support the theme, and

develop activities to go along with it. We had to come up with a curriculum unit. We

had to do a lesson plan with an implementation guide-- things like that--- for the

stories we had to use a theme in a way that would get the kids excited about it. Then

we had to go through it and have activities that followed-up each story. We had to use

a craft or a writing exercise or some type of experience using reflection [for

classroom presentations].

Allen (1995) argues that artistic expression, like the type Faith participated in, creates a

connection between the affective and cognitive thought processes in a way that ultimately

renders the learner with a deeper understanding.

Faith applied to the arts-integrated graduate program because of its reputation and she

became impressed with a former student's final work products:

I knew I wanted to get my master's and I was familiar with the program because two

of my co-workers actually took these courses several years ago. I thought it was

pretty neat the stuff she was creating. I got a chance to review her work that she was

preparing for class because we were working as cooperative teachers.

Faith applied, but initially she was not sure if the program was right for her. She is

currently more comfortable with it, despite being little skeptical. Faith's initial reluctance

may have resulted from a repeated exposure to lecture, to the point where she commonly

associated collegiate studies with this practice. However, Faith discovered that limiting the

expression of knowledge in this manner places her at a disadvantage:

I was not really sure about it; I know you can get a master's degree in art. I like it---I

will be honest the first week---we did two weeks during the summer---the first day I

was kind of---I guess my way of thinking I thought graduate school meant papers. We

do have those things. We did a lot of reflecting that was uncomfortable at first. I was

in that mode because it had been years since I was in school. Looking back now, (we

have been in class for almost a year) I can see the connection to everything.

A Transitioning Belief

Participating in the arts-integrated program has convinced Faith of the benefits of art-based learning activities and there are several things about the program she appreciates. Like most of the graduate students in this arts-based master's program Faith is a K-12 teacher; primarily she appreciates the direct correlation between what she is learning and how it has improved her own teaching practices, which subsequently impacts her students:

> The things I enjoy---like I said---it relates directly back to my teaching. We just finished our action research. I like the fact we were allowed to pick our own projects. We delved into them however we wanted to. I think our professors have some unconventional teaching styles. I like that because they are very approachable. …in my mind I think of research as a paper. The research we did we applied it. It was more interesting, but it has been difficult for me. It was not what I expected. I came up with my question, but I said to myself this project is taking me in a different direction. I am not sure if I am doing it the right way. I talked to my professor/adviser about it. She said, "That is exactly what is supposed to happen. Sometimes it happens that way, it is a discovery." I guess now I am okay with things. I learned something and the kids did learn something. So, I guess it was a success, but it was not the original question that I came up with.

She now believes that alternative methods are needed in the classroom to maintain her interest. Faith elaborates on her discovery:

> I am learning that this works for me. I could listen for a certain amount of time then my brain goes on vacation. That part I do like. It is also like that for the kids I work with---their attention span will only go so far. Having the different activities during a long day, like our Saturday classes, it does really help. It is really a big change for

me. I think part of me is very concrete. This is really different for me. It is connecting

with a different side of me. I think my learning style prefers the arts mixed in with the

theory.

The kids [Faith's students] are into it more. Their behavior problems have gone

down. I think it is very effective. I know society is moving away from using the arts,

but I think it is a worthwhile thing for adults and children. It aids different methods of

learning.

Elliot Eisner (2005) and Howard Gardner (1982) affirm her realization, in their opinion

artistic expression broadens cultural perspectives by allowing and honoring diverse ways of

knowing and learning.

Moving Beyond Comfort and Doing Research

Faith indicates that classrooms that include artistic activities move learners beyond

their comfort zones and ultimately increases their knowledge base. Faith indicates how

moving beyond her comfort zone impacts her practice:

The one thing they said to us the first week of class was that "You are learning when

you are feeling a little uncomfortable"---when you moving outside of your

boundaries. I am seeing injustices where I did not see them before. I am noticing

little things about the culture of my school. Just little things I never noticed before.

Most of the time we would have complained about these things to each other, but

because of the research we are conducting at M--- I did present my concerns to our

school administrator, in the past I probably would not have done something like this.

Michell Cassou and Stewart Cubley (1995) characterize the change similarly by stating, "To create is to move into the unknown. To move into the mystery of yourself, to have feeling, to awaken buried perceptions, to be alive and free without worrying about the result" (p. 6).

The arts are also included within Faith's cohort final research projects. The cohort was asked to present their research findings by using artistic forms of expression. As previously mentioned, their research efforts were guided by the expertise of artists/artisans. Faith describes her awareness:

> How the action research comes in---we did our paper and next month we will be working with artisans to come up with ways to artistically display our research. I am going to do a story, but it is "still up in the air." I as going to create an original story because I love writing a little bit….

Ephrat Huss and Julie Cwikel (2005) also acknowledge an intellectual and a spiritual component (that is typically derived from the use of the arts) to doing research. They argue that both elements are needed because they tend to make the researcher and the research participant more equal and the contents of the research more culturally exact and explicit.

Reflections on Personal Talents

Faith does not consider herself an artist, even though she writes short stories as an hobby:

> I have a pencil, I have a brain. I am not really sure about it. I really do not consider myself much of an artist. I consider myself creative, but just not artistic.

Like Faith, for a long time I considered my passion for pottery just a hobby and my talent insignificant. But as I mentioned earlier, working with clay meant more than I originally realized. Working with clay provided an outlet for my thoughts, which enabled me to

improve my performance in learning experiences. Additionally, it provided an alternative way for me to express my thoughts. Eventually, I became more confident in my artistic talent and I entered several competitions and received accolades from other artists. Faith may be unconsciously relying on her hobby in a similar manner.

<div align="center">Julia</div>

<div align="center">"It Is A Transformation…Its Transforming What We Are Doing With The Kids!"</div>

Julia is a 44-year-old African American female. She is in the arts-integrated graduate cohort discussed above, with graduate students Tom and Faith, and Professors Stage and Music from the last chapter. Julia also participated in a *Passion Group* facilitated by community artists/artisans who helped the students learn more about the selected art form and they reviewed presentation methods. Julia's *Passion Group* was environmental and recycling. This group was composed of people interested in working with textiles or other materials to improve the environment.

Julia was referred by Professor Music and she graciously agreed to participate in a telephone interview. Julia's favorite course was an undergraduate sewing course and the art-integrated graduate research course.

Reflections on an Interactive Course

Julia has been sewing clothes since her adolescent years. Taking a college-level tailoring course challenged her in a unique way. She describes her feelings about meeting the challenges set forth in this course, and why it was her favorite:

> I would probably say my sewing class. I believe it was a tailoring class. It was
>
> challenging. You ended up with a coat. We actually tailored a coat. Well, I don't
>
> think I wore that coat more then two times. I distinctly remember it being a little

loud. That was back in the college days when you were not thinking straight

sometimes. I remember it distinctly, it was pink and green plaid and the lining was

pink. I just remember being embarrassed, although the coat turned out very nice. The

colors were just….

The tailoring course generated a lot of excitement for Julia and her classmates. She

credits their successful completion of the course final project to their collective level of

gratification. Julia offers a description of how the group was inspired:

So, it was really exciting because I think everyone in the class was interested in what

we were learning. Everyone wanted to be successful and have finished product. And

that's the way the course ended, and we had a good instructor.

Perhaps the excitement experienced by these learners corresponds with a view held by some

educators, who suggest that engaging learning activities are likely to help learners make new

connections and transcend previous limitations because the learners are inspired to be

creative and to use their imagination (Dirkx, 2001; hooks, 1995).

The course instructor facilitated a lot of exercises that gave the students opportunities

to demonstrate their capabilities. The impact of the hands-on nature of this course is

described by Julia:

Well, there was a lot of demonstration---showing us different techniques, such as

putting a collar on. She showed us how to set the sleeves in and how to put the

shoulder pads in. So it was hands-on, and demonstration, with a little lecturing.

 Mostly, it was hands-on. The demonstration was presented at the beginning of the

class, and that's what we would do. She was right there in the classroom, and we

would go right into working on that aspect. [The instructor] moved from student to

 student--kind of spot checking our work, making sure people were on track, and

seeing if we really understood what we were doing. She was also there to help if we

got stuck.

The teacher motivated the learners to persevere through difficult challenges and this

was significant for Julia. Julia explains how she learned to preserve through difficulties:

…it taught perseverance for handling a difficult project, performing a new task. It

taught you to just keep at it. One of the things about sewing, you can correct your

mistakes. It is not totally ruined if you just stick with it. You can figure out a way to

take the stitches out and redo it. You end up with something tangible at the end of the

course.

As Eisner (2002) asserts, the arts affords learners with an opportunity to develop their

persistence and pursue individual visions.

Perseverance and Transformation

Julia currently teaches junior high sewing and cooking classes; most of her new

students enjoy the sewing part of the learning experience and she emphasizes perseverance,

and implies that it has led to her own transformation. Like Julia, these learners demonstrated

their level of motivation by completing assignments:

I would say some are [enjoying the class]. I guess it's like anything--- some

absolutely love it and some don't. Students that come in brand-new---as soon as they

touch the sewing machine they become very curious and interested. They are just a

joy to work with. They were so proud when they finished their projects. During my

third quarter almost every student in the class finished a project.

Julia attempts to teach the same lesson on perseverance she received. She regularly seeks opportunities to provide learners with this lesson and places a high value on student effort:

> The process is very important, and they should understand the process, but I want them to finish it. Even if it does not look perfect, I want them to finish it. It is okay. Because I think if you do not stick with it and do the work, you are not going to be successful. You are not going to be able to finish. Since you're taking other courses at the same time, you need to pace yourself and work on these things steadily. Otherwise, you will come to the end of the course and become disappointed in yourself if you do not finish. You need to plan your time out wisely. It is not like some things, where if you stay up all night you can get something done.

Julia believes that educators should not assume that they know what a learner is capable of doing, particularly when the learner has been labeled with a learning disability. Like some educators who discuss this topic (Allen, 1995; Eisner, 2002; Hetland & Winner, 2004), Julia believes these learners tend to excel when they are introduced to artistic methods:

> …the student who was ADHD would be all over the place. He was really wonderful. He was not great in the kitchen, but he was wonderful at the sewing machine. This child absolutely loved working with the sewing machine. There was stuff he could manipulate and put together. And I thought I should not assume a thing about him. He was a superstar, and he really surprised me.

Julia's comments resonate with me, particularly when I hear stories like that of Willard Wigan. Mr. Wigan, an untrained Black artist and admittedly mediocre student through out

his elementary and high school years, is now highly acclaimed and sought after. His micro art sculptures are the envy of many trained artist and art lovers. He creates sculptures that are so small that they can fit through the eye of a sewing needle and a high- powered microscope is needed to view his artistic renderings. His collection of sculptures was recently insured for 11 million dollars. One can only imagine what Mr. Wigan's life would have been like if he had not capitalized on his inherited talent.

Julia finds that the arts engages learners and provides reluctant communicators with a means to express their thoughts. Julia provides an example from her experience:

It is a great way to let kids express themselves---and one thing that M----has stressed to us is that we are all creative. I use art in my classroom when I am working on a white board and want to explain something to the kids. I use a lot of pictures, and I always make light of it and tell the kids I am not an artist---a lot of times they will say, "You know what, your pictures are good." As much as I can, I will let them draw pictures to express their ideas. This is great for the ESL kids because sometimes they can draw a picture of something that they may not know the English word for. This is just as good while they are learning the language. I also allow them to express themselves through projects.

This belief was also acknowledged during Wesley's 2006 qualitative research on a community-based art program. Her participants were invited to share their opinions on how the arts impacted their learning. The study's participants indicated that the arts allowed them to communicate across language difference and provided unconscious ways of knowing and empathy.

Working with the arts has been a transformative learning experience for Julia and has

altered her teaching practices. Julia shares her revelation:

> I get it---in the beginning it was so foreign to me. It is a transformation. It is not only
>
> helping us to transform what we are doing with the kids, I think all of us are being
>
> transformed personally.

Dirkx (2001) argues that the type of transformation Julia describes occurs when adults make

an emotional, imaginative connection with self and their broader social world.

Robert

"The Teacher Made it Fun for Me!"

Robert is a 48-year-old African American male who is earning a master's degree in

business administration from a Christian university in the eastern region of United States.

Robert is enrolled in an accelerated program that uses a cohort model. His cohort is in the

early stages of their program. All of the cohort members are employed full time and are

either managers or supervisors.

Robert was referred by Professor Storyteller and he is one of my former students, as I

had done some adjunct teaching at this same university. I interviewed Robert in his office at

his place of employment. He selected an undergraduate environmental science course, a

probability and statistics course, a multicultural communication course, and a graduate level

marketing course as his favorites.

The Importance of Practicality and Interaction

Robert holds an executive level position within his organization and he appears to

resonate more with learning experiences that have a practical focus and are interactive.

Although he recognizes the value of theoretical knowledge, he prefers to participate in

classroom activities that include practical solutions to "real world" problems/issues. He

spoke specifically about the environmental science classes:

> Well, with the Environmental Science---first of all, I have always had an interest in
> what is going on around me, nature and all of that sort of thing. In the science courses
> there is always book work and there is always practical application. Like, for
> instance, one of the things we did in Environmental Science is we went on a field trip.
> We planted trees to help banks from eroding. So, you actually get out and do things to
> help the environment---that sort of thing---you go on a field trip and you see
> something that is very interesting.

The interactive nature of the environmental course made it very enjoyable because it

presented opportunities for the learners to actively participate in the learning experience.

Goldberg (2006) indicates that this type of interaction in classrooms can generate the type of

surprises and excitement expressed by Robert:

> It was very interactive. He wanted us to---for our projects it was not just a paper. We
> actually brought in things, which was nice because I liked this and the other things. I
> could bring in some examples and people did all kinds of innovative things.

Students who typically did not speak during class became active participants as

Robert's course progressed. He suggests that the learning activities enabled these students to

reveal more of themselves during the process. These learners openly discussed their views

about environmental issues and offered their opinions about the subject matter. Robert

reflects on the changes made by his classmates:

> It also brought out the creativeness in the students. There were some people who did
> not say much in class, but when they did you received a glimpse into their soul.

While Robert wasn't specific about what he meant, he went on to say "this learning experience was a catalyst for the development of close friendships":

> You got to know them better. What they thought about things. What they felt. So, I felt the class by the time we were done was pretty cohesive. Because we worked on things together. It brought us together. When I see how we worked and how we interacted on the projects, it actually brought a diverse group of people together, which I thought was a nice thing. Some of them send me emails and ask how I have been and we have lunches.

Tisdell (2001) advocates that learners are transformed in the manner Robert describes when their "heart knowledge" is engaged. Heart knowledge is about engaging the learner's heart and soul, as well as their minds.

Robert also participated in a probability and statistics course that was also interactive. The professor regularly opened the course with lecture, but she also provided an equal amount of time for the students to exhibit their understanding of the concepts. He describes the impact of this experience:

> It as a lot of demo---the instructor would get up---first of all, it was accelerated and there was a lot of reading. So, we had to do a lot of reading. We had to read over chapters before class and we would cover two chapters a class. The instructor walked you through the problems from the chalkboard. She would work at the board and we would take notes for 1 1/2 hours, then we would do problems. So, she would show you and then you would have to do problems. She would walk around the room and if I needed help, she would help. She was so good at this. She would look at your work and say, "Oh you did not do this part." We had these scientific calculators you could

[use to] plug stuff into them to get the answers, but she wanted you to do the work longhand and to see how the answers were derived.

Culturally Responsive to a Multicultural "Real World"

Robert also prefers classroom activities that allow the learners to share their cultural experiences while co-teaching a course because it allows them to contribute their expertise and reveal their experiences. Robert describes the bonds created during his multicultural experience:

We had a class called Multicultural Communications. What the instructor did---we had a diverse group. We had 15 countries represented between the 15 students and everyone had to pick a country. We were asked to discuss that country's economy, discuss their food, etc. So, we got an appreciation for other cultures. She did very little lecture; she did some. She asked us to read certain chapters and she would take the first 20 minutes of the class to review key points, then we would discuss our country covering issues, culture, and barriers. In my class I was the only African American in the group. There was one Hispanic girl and a girl from Bosnia who actually fled the country when the turmoil broke out. And we are all very close. It just goes to show you that if you break down barriers that people can get along.

Some educators also advocate this purposeful inclusion of all the cultures represented within the classroom. They critique learning experiences that primarily reflect the needs and/or interests of the dominant culture because of their hindrance to other groups (Banks, 2006; Ladson-Billings, 2006).

The marketing professor made the class "live" because his personal stories

related to workplace issues. Robert indicates how the "real life" stories shared by his professor influenced his management capabilities:

He was---I would say he was a storyteller also. He provided "real life" examples. For instance, for me to know what is in a book that is [hands stacked 5 inches apart] this thick does not help me, Robert, know how to do a Deputy's job. What I need---okay, I know there is some basic theory and principles I need to know about, but tell me how I can manage this stuff in the "real world." He brought a lot of that to the table.

Dillard (2006) also agrees that the classroom should be places where deep listening to stories from diverse and multiple contexts and peoples of the world, because these stories can influence and help develop the competence of educators and learners.

Robert continues to affirm his support of practical experiences. The idea classroom for him contains large amount of practical application based on some theory:

A minimum amount of the book, more practice and presenting.

The dynamic between White learners and Black learners who are unfamiliar with each other's culture sometimes hinders learning, according to Robert. Dillard (2006) warns that the classroom is an intimate, connected place that often requires educators and learners to be vulnerable and a place where they should remember their collective humanity. Robert articulates his views:

There are some folks who enter college who are not around too many African Americans and they have kind of a problem. And we have had that problem in my program. I remember during our second class. Here I am a Deputy Commissioner of the ----- ------, when I made a comment about something one of my classmates looked at me and said, "That is stupid." She is half of my age. I said to her, "I have been

making decisions about life or death long before you were born." I do not think I could say anything like that to someone. I know the other student you plan to interview is going to tell you that when we entered that program some people looked down on us. So, sometimes people enter into a class with attitudes. Maybe we need to do something for African American students prepping them for this. You know people are going to be people and they may not realize they are doing it. We need to tell the African American students that this will happen and persuade them not to get off their path.

Recommendation for Educational Facilities

Robert believed that in general educational facilities need to do a better job connecting with learners that are from underrepresented groups:

I have been thinking about your study. This relates to your study. In my class there was me, M---- H----, and a young lady name S----there were three of us, the only Blacks in the class. S---after taking the statistics class said she could not do it and dropped out. Before she dropped out I told her we are going to get together as a group to do homework, but as far as I know she did not go back. I know that E-------has career counselors, people who tutor, and even my instructor was willing to help. But maybe the institution needs to look at their outreach to the minority community. …One of the things I am in charge of here is recruitment. And getting qualified minorities and women on this job is tough. There is a disconnect between the establishment and those communities. I think what happens is the establishment side (which some of us are a part of, now) forgets that there are communities out there that have been historically discriminated against and because of that, we need to go a little

further. And an institution has to make sure that those students are aware that they are

valued and wanted there and that there are resources when they have problems.

Thomas

"That Was The Best Experience I Had!"

Thomas is a 32-year-old African American male who is earning a master's degree in

business administration. Thomas is enrolled in an accelerated program at a Christian

university in the eastern part of the United States. He is in the same cohort as Robert and is

in the early stages of graduate work.

Professor Storyteller referred Thomas, and he is a former student of mine. I

interviewed Thomas in a conference room at his place of employment. He selected a

Western Civilization undergraduate course and a graduate-level Economics course as his

favorites.

The Importance of Interaction and Engagement

Intriguing debates engaged Thomas and helped him maintain his focus during

class. Once again dialoguing is mentioned by a student. It appears to be an important factor

for a few of the learners that participated in this study. Perhaps this repeated viewpoint makes

a strong case for what Dillard (2006) alludes to when she writes, that only within the context

of community does the individual appear and, through dialogue, continue to become. Thomas

explains his appreciation for dialogue:

> That was the best experience I had. It was because we talked about things that
>
> allowed me to look at our country also. So, I was able to bring those thoughts
>
> together. I did not tend to wander [his mind did not wander] in that class.
>
> Surprisingly, his class was great.

Thomas' course involved a lot of lecture with an equal amount of student participation in the classroom discussions:

> It was in a straight lecture format, but we also got into a lot of heated debates. He facilitated conversations that would last for weeks. So we would bring in our thoughts. It increased my understanding of history. It made for quite interesting conversations---very interesting conversations. It was a great experience. It all took [the class] 1 hour and 30 minutes. Some days we just went back and forth. For that class we actually had to go home and research stuff to prepare for the battle the next day---all individual effort. It brought a whole other spin on going to college.

Thomas also considers this professor's teaching style to be beneficial and it created a positive learning experience:

> His charisma, the language he used and how he presented---his language worked well---things of that nature.

Another positive factor within this learning environment was the respect exhibited by the students. Fredrick Douglas (1968/1845) expressed it similarly in his slave narrative. Douglas wrote about his opportunities to speak against slavery and the turmoil it put him in. He stated, "I spoke but a few moments, when I felt a degree of freedom, and said what I desired with considerable ease. From that time until now, I have been engaged in pleading the cause of my brethren… (p.119). Thomas goes on to clarify the level of respect within his learning environment:

> Every one was also respected while revealing their facts---whether some one was right or wrong---that kind of thing. We stood up when we spoke---I would stand up--- it was just like the movie *The Great Debaters*--- he would talk to us that way.

Thomas intimates a longstanding need by many learners to have their opinions/views respected; this is of particular concern for African Americans for a number of positive and negative reasons. Some African Americans may state that they deserve respect because of the amount of hard work they perform, or others may indicate they warrant it because of historical injustices.   While others may indicate that achieving respect is difficult because of the low expectations of educators, poor self esteem of learners, or the unwillingness of learners to overcome racial basis. Whatever the reason, Thomas' comments clarifies what happens when one has a high level of self respect and earns the respect of others.

There were 100 students in Thomas' course, and most of these students showed signs of their enthusiasm. Thomas notes the level of commitment:

For the most part [the students were engaged], [they demonstrated this] by the comments they were making and the issues presented on the topics---[they were] passionate---not in a disrespectful way or emotional way. But, presented in a way that showed their understanding of history. Putting things in their words revealing their understanding---you could tell they were very interested in the subject.

The level of intrinsic satisfaction demonstrated by Thomas and his classmates suggests that learners can be motivated by things other than the external rewards (e.g. grades, test scores, etc.) frequently offered within learning environments (Eisner, 2002). And according to Eisner, intrinsic satisfaction matters.

The students were so engaged during Thomas' course that he feels their critical thinking skills were also displayed. Thomas describes the level of intellectual development:

So, during that class they were spirited---and others were able to correlate things to what we do now. They were able to transcend that knowledge they gained and make

it work. So, for those people we saw their creativeness.

Meryl Goldberg (1997) holds that when students are engaged in this manner it is easier for

them to translate what they know, thereby revealing their thinking capabilities.

For the most part, Thomas remained an active participant throughout the course.

Perhaps his participation level can be linked to learning activities that facilitated an

intellectual and emotional growth. Thomas notes "I consistently attended and was consistent

with my participation."

Thomas believes the level of engagement among the learners transformed them and at

the same time facilitated lasting friendships with some of his classmates. Thomas spells out

the nature of his friendships:

> I met some of my best friends in that class because of our common bond or common
>
> love for history. We did not like each other in the beginning because we were more
>
> interested in being right, but we learned to respect each other's understanding of the
>
> information and this understanding created a friendly relationship.

This sense of relationship might be what Cranton (2006) is talking about

when she affirms that when authentic relations develop between involved parties, the

learning experience is transformative. Although, this course was presented 14 years ago it

remains a vivid memory for Thomas, and he explains "I took it in 1994--- it is still there---I

remember it like it was yesterday."

Thomas continued to reflect on the course, and noted that it was an extremely

noteworthy class for him, with a high level of his own involvement, there were some that

chose not to participate. Thomas assumed that his less involved peers were merely meeting

imposed requirements:

I think the downside [to the amount of debating that occurred] was that there was at least half of the class who did not have appreciation for that. They did not make any comments at all--- [if they were] just as engaged as the rest of us, to an extent---you would be able to tell every now and then.

One of the enjoyable aspects of the Western Civilization course was the review of historical events, Thomas also appreciated this type of focus in his graduate-level Economics course. Initially, this Economics course sparked some enthusiasm:

Economics was my favorite class thus far [in the graduate program] ---here is why--- because again it was a history program. It is not [strictly] about history, I am not a buff---I like learning about it. He would "go at it" and bring in his movies about Ford (the motor company) and all of that. Talk about those things and how he used the basic premise of economics. ----supply and demand---he was able to tie all of those things in. When he tied the historical part with the other parts of the master's program, it was fun.

The questioning techniques of a few classmates inhibited his learning. Thomas eventually became disillusioned by his classmates control of the discussion. Thomas elaborates on the loop-sided nature of the discussion:

So, he engaged my focus---then---then---when we got started on matters other then this it was less enjoyable. It became more of a---it became more---the class would take a turn for a new focus---maybe---there would be questions posed. Such as, "How did you get this equation? Where did you get the "p" from?" It focused more on the equations and how they were placed into a format, instead of learning the concepts---how the equations were built. So, that took me out---that took away my

enthusiasm. He decided he had to do what he could to answer these questions, no

matter if it meant taking up the class.

Brookfield and Preskill (1999) specify that educators need to ensure that a certain degree of

"mutuality" exists within classroom discussions; otherwise learners will experience the

disillusionment Thomas encountered. Mutuality occurs when all participants benefit from

discussion.

This distraction hindered Thomas' learning, and it forced him and a few classmates to

form a study group:

We "hit a brick wall." I would go into a shutdown mode. Some of us saw what was

happening and we prepared. There were certain people who would study better with

other people. We focused from the standpoint of getting the work done and the drain

from what we were trying to do.

The Importance of Appreciation for Variety

Thomas suggests that success in a college setting requires the learner to have an

appreciation for variety:

My overall assessment of the collegiate experience would be [it offers] variety, if you

want it you have to go get it. By variety I mean in people, the variety in learning

styles, variety in learning. You have to step outside of your comfort zone--- you have

to go beyond yourself. I am used to being quiet and sitting there masculine saying,

 "Yeah, I got it" when on the surface it looks like I have it---in order for me to get the

full picture of what is going on I need to be engaged.

Thomas believes more African American students would go to college if they

understood the benefits achieved from a college education:

So, I would say to a high school person if I were talking him into school---I would say here is the chance to practice. Here is a chance to set your own pace in your own tone and standard. You will grow if you go to college you will get to know who you are, just go. And stick with it. Do not give up. The reality is, you never know [unless you go]. There are things that go on in that environment that prepare you to be successful in life.

In Thomas' opinion, a college degree leads to better job opportunities and it highlights the job seeker's qualifications:

Here is why I am thinking opportunity, because it opens some doors that help you to walk in--- once you get in, you need to perform. So, I am thinking---like the selection process you need a college degree, not that it makes you better, but it separates you from the rest.

<center>Lorraine</center>

<center>"That Class Gave Me Meaning!"</center>

Lorraine is a 49-year-old African American female. She recently earned an undergraduate degree from a Catholic mid-western university and has started her graduate work at the same university. She was referred by Professor Authentic. Professor Authentic and Lorraine work for the same university. Lorraine's interview was conducted on the telephone. She selected several courses from her undergraduate experience that were based on the African Diaspora. One of these courses included arts-based activities, while the other followed an interactive model.

Developing Pride in One's Culture

Lorraine participated in several courses that evoked a sense of pride in her culture. She speaks of the significant role these culturally relevant experiences played in her life. Lorraine describes her personal pride:

> Here at D---- we do not have many African American courses. I particularly liked one African American class that was taught by Dr. E-----, which was the *History of Africa*. In all of my years I never saw anyone put it that way---It made me proud to know that there was documentation that said that Africa was the beginning of civilization. He talked about the skeleton remains of the female. I cannot remember the name they gave her, but he actually showed us pictures of the remains that were located in Central Africa. That was the turning point for me. That class gave me meaning. I have a real passion about learning after what I missed in the public school system and also for my grandson, who was 12 at the time (I am sorry, he was 14). He was going through the same thing---the system had not changed.

The empirical research conducted by Baldwin in 1987 affirms that the view held by Lorraine is supported by other African American learners. He denotes in his findings that when learning environments exclude the nurturing ideas and values held by African American students they eventually become disengaged. Therefore, African American learners like any other learner prefer to participate in programs that honor their cultural heritage and respects their value system.

Lorraine's interest in her new learning is further indicated by the fact that she shares the knowledge she gained about their African heritage with family members. She has become more involved in the education of her grandchildren, demonstrating that multicultural learning activities can play a significant role in cultural and personal identity:

Now, whenever I am talking to him (or whatever the case may be) I will point out

that, "You do know that Africa is the *Mother of Civilization."* I do that and I can

"back up" the words---and I can "back that up." Now, I am teaching my

grandson because that is something no one had taught me. I guess the older you get

the more sentimental you get about life and family, and all of those things become

really important, where 20 years ago it may not have been important to me, but now it

is very, very important.

This learning experience also helped Lorraine through a difficult period at work.

It enhanced her self-worth and assisted her with other difficulties, as she discovered during

her course:

It was just a difficult time. I was going through a time of---I was going through a

terrible time at work. It was a White thing/Black thing. I really had problems with

that and this is why it [the class] became really important to me---the identity thing. I

had my self-worth. So, it was this thing here a work and something else was going on

with my grandson at school. He was not learning things he should've of learned and

all of this made it [the class] so important. It occurred at a critical point, in all

honesty.

At that time, there were changes made about how I felt---my views. I always walked

around very proud, but I felt this is something I should be sharing with my

 granddaughter and grandson.

Ladson- Billings (1994, 2006) and others who discuss the benefits of multicultural

classrooms suggest that learners who participate in these experiences benefit in several ways.

Not only they exposed to activities that acknowledge their heritage, but they are also exposed

to situations/events that help them enhance their problem solving capabilities.

The students within this course participated in a number of self-directed activities,

and engaged in some heated dialogues.   They conducted a lot of research in groups and

made daily presentations, which developed into some frank debates. As a result, Lorraine and

the other students learned a good deal about the African continent from each other:

> We did a virtual tour online. There was research we had to do. We were given
>
> assignments for presentations and we were "grouped up." One group had to explore
>
> West Africa. I think I was in the West Africa---Mali. We discussed NGO's, some
>
> people reported on financial aspects---economics. We talked about the tribes. Each of
>
> us were encouraged to view the country and to learn what we could about the country
>
> and bring back something that we could share with everyone. That was something he
>
> [the professor]did---he took us through it all. He is from Africa and he was very, very
>
> knowledgeable about Africa and was very passionate about Africa. He discussed each
>
> country and the problems they were having---the problems that were going on.
>
> Problems he brought up and would ask: "Is it because of colonialism? Is it because of
>
> dictatorship?" Those types of things were the topics for discussion among our
>
> group. There were some very heated discussions.

Lorraine learned a lot from the debates, but she did not like the heated controversy

that resulted from these discussions. Apparently, the heated discussions were executed in a

hospitable manner; otherwise the group's camaraderie (described below) would have ceased.

Lorraine describes how the seriousness of the topic was balanced with a lighter tone:

> So, he [the professor] would debate with us. I hated debates but, he debated during

each class. Someone would argue about colonialism and someone would say it was

because greed, and all of that. He would walk around, talk and question our views,

assumptions and our values. He would make us think about what we were saying. We

had to have our facts before we presented anything.

A strong camaraderie developed among the participants in this course because of their

mutual respect for each other. Like several of this study's participants, Lorraine participated

in transformative learning experience which enabled closeness with classmates:

Actually, we had a couple of Europeans in the class. We were very respectful. And

that was the first thing he said: "We are going to be respectful to everyone." We had

to be very respectful of each other. We were learning from each other. That became

the favorite thing [about]the debating, the camaraderie. We did have a strong

camaraderie among each other.

Reclaiming Her Name/Education

Lorraine's sense of identity was also enhanced by another course based on the

African Diaspora. This course was taught by Professor Authentic and it sparked Lorraine's

interest in her family's genealogy, and ultimately led to her reclaiming her name. She

describes how this process unfolded:

I took the African perspective class first. It brought me to a level of identity that I

have today. I had been "dibbing and dappling" doing my family research, a

genealogy. Professor Authentic's class occurred when I was at the juncture of de-

educating and re-educating myself. And also sharing the things I learned in the

African-centered class. I spelled L----- [her name] differently (until I was in fourth

grade) when I lived "down south." When I lived with my grandparents----when I

moved here to C---- my aunt registered me in the public school system and one of the

administrators---the White administrator told my aunt, "you know her name is spelled

wrong." and so my aunt not knowing anything better, changed it on my birth

certificate---change the L-----to L------ [a different spelling using different

consonants]. I was happy no else had this name. I was walking around very proud of

that name. Until I got into that class and began my family research. When I got into

that class he [an African visitor] explained to me the significance of my name. When

I began to start digging into my family history, I found that L------was a great, great

aunt's name who returned to the *Nation of Chickasaw*---The *Chickasaw Nation* back

in 19---sorry---in 18—1870, or something like that---it was when they began the

Census. When I found that out, I said, "I am going to change my name back." That is

why the first class with Professor Authentic-----impacted upon me, because it was a

psychological impact---to let me know that---my God, they took my name. They took

 my name and pronounced it wrong. I got to get it back that is what I was saying. So,

that was a really huge thing, learning and knowing I was thoroughly mis-educated. I

mean, I was changed.

Lorraine attributes her eventual de-education and re-education process to the course

activities that were facilitated by Professor Authentic. Apparently, Professor Authentic's

classroom was an environment based on trust and it favorably affected Lorraine's self

awareness and self knowledge:

I never read the *Mis-education of the Negro*---but then I began to read about things.

I know I was mis-educated, as an African American. I was very pleased that I got

turned around in her class, the psychology course. It took me to a point I should be at.

I de-educated myself and I became re-educated. I began to share that was the most important thing I got out of the class, in addition to personal development and writing skills.

Connecting to her Spiritual Development

Not only did the authentic manner of this professor impact Lorraine intellectually, it also influenced her spiritual development. As Dillard (2006) suggests, freely sharing good and bad thoughts within the classroom invites the type of spirituality commented on by Lorraine:

When I took the class with Professor Authentic---- she was authentic, she made sure we learned. Not only did we learn better, we were able to identify [with the subject matter], and we challenged our own assumptions. My spirituality developed and increased. My knowledge increased. I developed a sense of pride in who I was, and it helped me find out who my great, great aunt was.

The professor's use of culturally relevant material and arts-based activities allowed Lorraine to connect with positive familial occurrences. She wrote in a journal and mediated as part of the classroom experience. Lorraine describes the influence this course had on her self-worth:

When she would give us our assignments or in our journals for the day, it always started with an African proverb, which was in relationship to what we were studying that particular day. We would handle questions about self and self-worth. Carter G. Woodson, she brought him to life. W.E.B. DuBois, she brought him to life. She was spiritual. She talked to us. Every time we would come into class, she would go into meditation---she put us in meditation. She would say we are going to a special

place. My special place was with my grandparents, where there was no confusion.

And she would put on her African music. We would sit there before each class and

we would hear her voice soothing us into this place of no confusion. This special

place we went to, there was no confusion, no heartache, no interruption, but joy and

love and peace. When she was talking about these things the class would go and in 9

to 10 minutes we were done. After this we were ready to learn, to vent, and to ask

questions. Our psyche was prepared to open up and be objective about world views.

Dillard (2006) notes that the activities Lorraine participated in carry a deep meaning because
they attend to the whole academic life of students.

Lorraine continues to practice centering techniques when she needs to clear her mind

and generate positive energy towards an upcoming event/situation:

I did it for a long time, I centered afterwards. I do not center often, but when there is

something big coming up or, something like today, I channeled for a few minutes to

put myself in the "place." I did it before I talked to you.

The downside of this course was the large amount of required reading and journaling

that related to self actualization:

There was a lot of journaling about self-actualization. I do remember the

psychology book we had to buy---we did a lot of reading in her class.

One student dropped this course because she failed to see how the "centering"

activity related to classroom activities and the activity seemed counter to her religious

beliefs. Lorraine describes Professor Authentic's reaction:

Early on in the first session a student dropped out because she just believed in prayer.

She did not go for that centering "junk." I think that was her view. When I first saw it,

I was like okay, but I am here to learn. That is how I looked at it. The next class when she came she [the professor]said, "Some, may view me centering as a problem, but this is how I start my class. It does not take anything away from your religion. This is an opportunity to learn and to become empowered and this puts you in a place." She also said, "If any one does not want to be here you are welcome to leave, but this is how I start my class. This class will be different from any other class you will ever have. We should prepare for differences and prepare to be objective and open up and learn from what I have to give." She was pretty blunt when she said, "Sorry if you are not here to help." So, everybody stayed.

Reflections on Culturally Responsive Curriculum

In Lorraine's opinion, some educators are hesitant to make their courses culturally relevant because they believe it will hinder learning. She goes on to state, that many African American students need to more positive images within classrooms. Lorraine makes her point when she says:

I think I look forward to being presented with non traditional or unorthodox instructing. I think this is why most of the schools, public schools particularly here in C------, are not "crazy about" African-centered instruction because they are thinking you are trying to take away from the curriculum. You are not taking away from the curriculum; you are adding to it, with putting up Black faces with Whites or talking about it. So, I do think the traditional way needs a little tweeting for our Black students because they are bombarded with negative views of their people when they come to class. I think that they need to use something different where our children can empower themselves. Our children will be able to build their self-esteem. It is a

problem of self-esteem. We can become better. So, I think it is a good idea.

Lorraine plans to use her talent and education within her community:

It is my plan to utilize those skills in the community, teaching African American

pedagogy, especially in the inner-city. To watch our children not know who they are

is really kind of heartbreaking, it is kind of sickening. It is heartbreaking. My heart

goes out to you if you do not know the essence of who you are or who you could

become. It has become my passion.

Tyrone Howard (2000) acknowledges that one of the complaints lodged by students

of color within higher education settings is the persistent monocultural nature of curriculum.

He indicates that this compliant has existed for at least 30 years, yet in many cases it has

been ignored. Like Lorraine, he calls for classroom experiences that recognize their culture

and heritage.

Chapter Summary

When I reflect on the interviews I had with these students, the biblical phrase, "For

unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required; and to whom men have

committed much, of him they will ask the more" (Luke12:48) presses to the forefront of my

thoughts. As students within the higher education setting I believe, like those I interviewed,

that our first priority is to appreciate this opportunity to learn and this opportunity is

connected to our commitment to help other African Americans inside and outside of the

classroom. Somehow this stated belief resonated throughout each discussion. Yes, we

communicated about our impressions of the classroom experiences, but it always seemed to

be attached to our allegiance to help another. I watched the face of the Deputy

Commissioner turn more concerned when he reflected on why and how educational

institutions should assist the studies of African Americans and other minorities. I saw this look appear again when Tom considered how to increase the retention of his students. It appeared once again in the voices of Julia, Thomas, Lorraine, and the others as they each shared how our success within the classroom is interwoven with the achievement of others.

The student narratives presented in this chapter also shows that these learners know what they believe and how they prefer to learn in higher education settings. Generally, these learners highlighted the importance of participating in classrooms that included activities that encourage some level of engagement. They seemed to find activities that are structured to include the arts, or those that provide opportunities for dialogue, and/or include hands on experiences as the most engaging. Apparently, these types of activities help them get at their feelings and sort through facts. The following chapter will set forth the common themes that are woven through their narratives.

CHAPTER 6

RESEARCH FINDINGS IN LIGHT OF THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The purpose of this narrative inquiry, which is informed by autoethnography, was to explore the perspectives of African American students in higher education who have taken classes that incorporate artistic ways of knowing about what engages their learning, in light of the faculty's purposes for incorporating such ways of knowing into their classrooms. To this end, 14 African American participants, five professors and nine of their students participated in this research.

In the previous two chapters, the faculty and student narratives were presented as stand alone pieces, in order to preserve the integrity of each story. The purpose of narrative inquiry is primarily to present the story intact rather than to do a thematic analysis across interviews (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Nevertheless, it is important to draw some conclusions across the data and relate it to the literature that informed the study, as well as to discuss some implications for practice. Toward that end, in this chapter I discuss some "themes" that emerged across the data in order to provide a deeper analysis and to draw some conclusions in light of the literature. However, because the detailed data is provided in the narratives, only short quotes will be provided in this chapter to provide support for the themes that emerged from the study to support my analysis. I also discuss these "themes" in relation to the literature that informs the study.

The context and the theoretical framework of a study always need to be kept in mind when considering the results of the study. The primary purpose of the study was to examine African American students' perspectives who have taken courses that make use of artistic ways of knowing, but this only makes sense in light of the context, which is related to the

theoretical framework of the study and the philosophies/purposes of professors who teach such classes, and draw on these ways of knowing in their classrooms. Thus I begin here by revisiting the theoretical framework of the study, and discuss the professors' insights and/or philosophies of teaching in light of the theoretical framework. Next, I discuss the themes from the student narratives as related to the literature. The third section discusses implications for adult education theory and practice, and questions for further research. A data display of the main findings of the study appears on the next page.

<div align="center">Theoretical Framework and Professors' Purposes</div>

As discussed in chapter 3, the primary lens through which this manuscript is prepared is Dillard's (2006) Endarkened Feminist Epistemology. Although gender is not a primary unit of analysis, most of the theoretical underpinnings of Dillard's Endarkened Feminist Epistemology are rooted in feminist and Black feminist thought, which is foundational to this study. This epistemology articulates connections with historical Black feminist thought as discussed by both sociologist Patricia Hill Collins (1991), and educator and cultural critic bell hooks (1994, 2003), though Dillard expands on their work and foregrounds the importance of spirituality, culture and holistic ways of knowing in the epistemological process. As an educator hooks offers viewpoints on how to promote a "teaching community" (2003, p. iv), on which Dillard builds some of the principles of her Endarkened Feminist Epistemology. A teaching community occurs in classrooms where teacher and student partnerships result in liberating, mind-changing experiences, by drawing on multiple and holistic ways of knowing that are connected to the community of the classroom as well as the larger community. According to hooks, this partnership is formulated by an engaging spirit during academic study that facilitates emotional and intellectual growth.

CHAPTER 6

DATA SUMMARY

I.   Professors Themes

    A. Engaging Their Students and Themselves

    B. Drawing on Multiple Ways of Knowing and Learning

    C. Connecting with Culture

        1. Within and across culture

        2. Creativity and imagination

II.   Student Themes

    A. Attending to Cultural Identity Concerns

        1. Personal and cultural identity

        2. Cultural-spiritual identity

    B. Connecting through Interaction and Engagement

    C. Creating a Classroom Community

    D. Dealing with Organizational and Administrative Concerns

        1. Attendance and grading policies

        2. Management of classroom dynamics

This notion is contrary to the belief that educators should be neutral and unemotional in classrooms. Instead, hooks offers a view that encourages learners and educators to trust in their emotional and cognitive capacity to meet difficult challenges with a spirit of resilience and competence.

Similarly, Dillard (2006) embraces a paradigm that arises "from a worldview that is personal and cultural; a unique combination of what it means to be alive, as an African American women scholar…" (p.36). As such, she suggests a viewpoint that is deeply attuned to the academic and emotional interest/concerns of students of color and other social identities. As is apparent in the narratives in chapter 4, most of the African American professors in this study embrace a world view similarly attuned, though it was apparent in the narratives of some slightly more than others (Professors Stage, Music, and Authentic in particular). Dillard argues that attention to these personal and cultural elements that are part of human experience is often missing from collegiate classrooms and these are precisely the experiences that unite and engage participants. Learning gleaned from these experiences directly invites investigation of people, places and phenomena. The professors' narratives presented in chapter 4 suggest agreement to a certain degree.

The modern focus on the intellect or the rational in most higher education settings causes the type of learning devoid of attention to personal and cultural experience that Dillard (2006) speaks of to deteriorate. Some educators in adult and higher education (Hanley, 2007; hooks, 1994, 2007; Guy, 1999b; Tolliver & Tisdell, 2006) suggest that the disconnect that occurs due to a rational focus within classrooms separates learners from their essential selves because the primary focus on the cognitive seems to hinder the transfer of knowledge and understanding within cultures. Cognitive practices devoid of attention to

culture do not acknowledge the ecology of a learner, which is dependent on multiple ways of knowing and learning that are also a part of the human experience. Again, similar beliefs about teaching are apparent from the professors' narratives in chapter 4.

The human experience includes the images around us and these images are used to form culture. Cultures contain dress codes, architecture, and ceremonial rituals to help its members classify, compare and appraise the qualities of the world (Cajete, 1991). Arts-based learning experiences can potentially acknowledge these cultural forms and simultaneously provide the schemata through which learners can experience and represent the world (Eisner, 2005). However, those authors who foreground the importance of arts-based ways of knowing and the use of aesthetics within classrooms (Eisner, 2005; Greene, 1995; Lawrence, 2005) have not fully explored their potential for culturally relevant or responsive education. They do recognize that an aesthetic activity embodies culture and sometimes enhances it, but they do not discuss how to present these activities with a multicultural emphasis, though Clover (2006) and Wesley (2006) discusses this from a community adult education perspective. Therefore, educators in higher education who choose to emphasize the use of the arts need to examine subject matter from a multicultural position. Multicultural arts-based activities encourage students to creatively translate their emerging understanding of particular subject through the arts. Unlike many who have written about arts-based approaches in education, the professors in this study directly discuss its connection to culture, and the value of using arts-based activities with a multicultural emphasis. What follows is a review of the three themes that emerged from their narratives; namely, focusing on engagement of themselves and their students, drawing on multiple ways of knowing and

learning, and connecting to culture. This section will then close with some of my own

personal reflections on the professors' themes.

Engaging Their Students and Themselves

Arts-based activities are known to stimulate the learner's imagination or reflection on

experiences in a way that engages both teachers and learners (Goldberg, 2006). These

activities often open classrooms to surprises and excitement in the manner Professor Music

noticed in his classrooms (Gardner, 1990; Eisner, 2002). Gardner, in his 1990 Project Zero

study for The J. Paul Getty Trust identified that the arts involves emotions and they induce

feelings of mystery or magic or they include religious or spiritual dimensions. The artists in

Wuthnow's (2003) study of artists and their spirituality discussed this as well. The

professors in this study suggested that these emotions seem to guide themselves and their

learners to make certain distinctions, to build up expectations and tensions that help them

resolve problems or concerns. Professor Music noted that he is interested in engaging the

learners' imagination and critical thinking skills because it results in their ability to care

about the inner aspects of the learning experience, this also relates to his experience:

> It also is an expression of my own---it is the way I connect with the world. I
>
> thought it was effective. I used it when I first started teaching here and I got a very
>
> strong response from the teachers [education students].

> Professor Theater also noted the importance of her engagement and that of the learner

when she stated:

> I did not sit down one day and say, I think I'm going to use drama. It evolved. It's
>
> kind of how I see the world. But, I did come to see that demonstration for me is more
>
> important than students creating something in writing.

By the end of the semester they [her sociology students] have to do a presentation

involving a social problem; if they had all of the money they wanted and if they really

were an organization how would they solve the social problem. And so, for me that is

an aha moment. They come up with great ideas---they do---they come up with great

ideas-- and they're serious about it--- and so, for me that is really an aha moment.

That is a wonderful thing, especially because I believe this generation needs to be

encouraged to think and not follow. And so, when I see them thinking on their feet--it

is an aha moment.

Professor Storyteller engages his learners by telling stories about his previous

management experiences. He tells stories because they provide him with the ability to convey

through words aspects of himself and others, and to relay his personal work-related

experiences (McDrury & Alterio, 2003). To some degree his learners have commented that

they connect with his stories because they are constituted with experiences that are similar to

their personal stories and those of colleagues, friends, and family members. Professor

Storyteller explains how he came to this after one of his earlier teaching experiences when he

wasn't really using stories:

And after my first class, I looked at the students and they were "shell-shocked."

Nothing was sinking in. I feel more comfortable doing that [telling stories] and over

the years getting [favorable] feedback from the students.

Art as a way of knowing also tends to be engaging because learners are given the

opportunity to demonstrate their beliefs (Allen, 1995). Professor Stage and Professor Theater

use acting techniques as a regular part of their curriculum. They believe these techniques

galvanize their learners to the point that they confront their fears, beliefs, and values. These

professors want to make the learners more conscious of their beliefs.   Professor Stage speaks specifically to how she came to this when she says:

> …I realized how important the arts are for organizing your internal emotions,
>
> thoughts, and processes---To help you express what is going on within yourself and
>
> also what is going on in the world. It also helps you to conceptualize things as you
>
> work through the art process that maybe unclear, but as you work through it becomes
>
> clearer and clearer---or---the more questions raised the more answers begin to emerge
>
> when you go back into it and work some more---just that process.

In support of what Professor Stage is implying, Kardash and Wright, as reported by Eisner and Day (2004), found a positive relationship between drama and academic achievement, in their meta-analysis of 16 studies of K-12 learners. The studies suggested dramatic experiences improved reading abilities, oral language development, self esteem, moral reasoning and other skills. These findings appear to support what Professor Stage is communicating.

A number of educators and advocates have argued over the past two decades that the arts offer valid means to improve basic academic skills and engage learners (Hetland & Winner, 2004). Professor Authentic agrees with this point, and suggests that the arts had a significant effect on her personal learning. She notes that music helped her improve her ability to learn and retain information and thought it would also impact her learners in a similar manner:

> I guess looking at myself personally, as a personal test case and knowing how

important music is in my life, I also know how important creativity is, and doing

things with my hands in a form of creative expression---adornments and those kinds

of things, and how they connect in many different ways and help me learn things.

She speaks of her own engagement with art/music as a way she came to know and learn, and makes use of similar ways of knowing when attempting to engage learners in her classrooms (as well as engage herself.). Rauscher, Shaw and Ky's 1993 study supports Professor Authentic's views on how music affects learning. They noticed an increase in spatial reasoning in the college students that participated after they listening briefly to music. Thus, this study lends support to Professor Authentic's thinking about the relationship between music and reasoning.

Drawing on Multiple Ways of Knowing and Learning

The professors in this study attempt to engage their students' passion and authenticity, by drawing on that for themselves and for their students. This is somewhat apparent in some of the quotes above. They believe that through creating or interpreting art learners can go beneath the surface to see aspects of self that may have been hidden from view. The potential for self-awareness is greater and passion may be ignited when the arts are used to connect with the outer world (Greene, 1995). The educators that participated n this study made certain decisions to enhance the learner's self knowledge and to release their passion. For example, Professor Theater uses a number of learning experiences that support creativity, which are meant to elicit more novel thinking and the development of new ideas:

So for me, students can demonstrate that they know something by enacting it in some

form. Then I know they have it, as opposed to, them turning in a paper, and I'm not

even sure they created it themselves.

Lawrence (2005) agrees that when educators include other ways of knowing in their teaching practice they will help learners access hidden knowledge because these practices draws on the affective, somatic and spiritual domains. Passion is then triggered and learners come to know themselves. Professor Stage noticed how the arts engaged her learners and awakened their imagination and intellectual capabilities:

> … I was having them do art-integrated projects and I saw the excitement that was occurring with them, as adults. Yeah, that's when I thought there is some way I could bring that part of me and what I know into the classroom--bringing my experience into the adult classroom.

Lawrence (2005) argues that the arts are also a means for promoting transformative and emancipatory learning because it can equalize differences between learners. Many of the professors in this study agree with this assumption, and their decisions are informed by this assumption. For example, Professor Music states that learners are partners in the learning environment and equally responsible for their learning:

> We are very clear about the ownership of their role as a learner, as it relates to the syllabus. And we're going to do what we are going to do then they need to figure out why something is not working. People are authorized to bring parts of their lives into the classrooms that typically are not there…

As a learning strategy, Professor Storyteller believes that storytelling can also help learners uncover or re-imagine meaning and articulate their subsequent learning. By its very nature storytelling helps learners create images and formulate knowledge about a subject matter (McDrury & Alterio, 2003). According to Professor Storyteller, the passion and engagement inherent in the stories continues long after his courses have ended:

I run into my students at graduation time, the bank, or wherever, and they say, "I

never forgot when you said this or that" or they say, "Remember that time you said

this---I still use that story." I think they get more application when you can show

them how it applies to the real world.

Professor Authentic suggests that passion is released when multiple ways of knowing

are involved in the learning experience. Dillard (2006) agrees that multiple ways of knowing

can generate a learner's passion, but she also adds that the involvement of diverse activities

also infuses spirituality within the classroom. Thus, the learning environment then becomes

conducive for the unification of mind, body and spirit. Professor Authentic notes her

viewpoint on this topic of multiple ways of knowing:

It adds to the learning, and if we think about the multiple ways of knowing and

multiple ways of learning, it certainly will tap into some people's preferred style more

than others. I think it enhances by making the unit of material more accessible to

more people.

Cranton and Carusetta (2004) adds to these viewpoints by suggesting that when

educators are authentic the learning environment transforms. To create transformative

learning environment educators needs to know themselves and be willing to rely on their

critical reflection skills. Professor Authentic demonstrates her self awareness when she

stated:

First of all, I would tell them [newly-hired educators] about using themselves in

the classroom. Because I think that this is so incredible. …Being authentic is so

important for everyone. Sometimes I get people together and do centering, some

people call it meditation, but I call it centering. Whatever you call it, I come from the

use of African symbols and African ideas, because that is what I am familiar with.

Professor Authentic's comments speak to her needs to African and African American culture

within her classrooms.

Connecting with Culture

The professors in this study believe that drawing on arts-based ways of knowing in

classrooms enables students to make connections with the material and other aspects of their

lives, and their own culture as well as that of others. Similarly, Eisner (2002) suggest that

classrooms that include arts-based activities afford learners with an opportunity to develop

persistence to explore their individuality, share what they have learned with others and learn

from others what they did not know. The professors that participated in this study agree with

this notion, but they also believe that the arts can also help learners launch sense making and

understanding by making connections to their own culture, and to the larger cultural

community, and at times to more authentic ways of being.

Within and across culture. A lot of what these African American professors

highlighted was the importance of attending to culture. Participating in higher education

settings is distinctive for African Americans because achievement is often dependent upon

the acquisition of a mind set and ideology that is tied to the White culture. As many

educators and researchers have noted traditionally, the intellectual competence of African

Americans has been questioned in these settings (Perry, Steele, & Hillard, 2003; Johnson-

Bailey, Valentine, Cervero & Bowles, 2007). Johnson's (2005) research shows that 80% of

Black students who attend predominantly white institutions (PWI) are likely to experience a

disconnection between secondary and their post secondary years. In light of this prevailing

statistic the educators that participated in this study have devised ways to affirm African American culture and beliefs. For example, Professor Theater believes there is a historical nature to African American talent and her convictions are expressed in her practice:

> African Americans all have some type of talent that they bring to the table. If we go back historically to the tribes everybody did something; there were the singers, the dancers, the drummers, the painters. Everybody did something, so if in fact we believe those genes have been passed down, than as a cultural thing everyone can do something.

Further, the other professors had different ways of making these cultural connections. Professor Authentic referred to and made use of African proverbs, and used music with African or African American themes. Professor Stage read poems by African American students and other students of color. All of these are examples of how these professors attempted to make cultural connections.

Many (but not all) of the professors in this study also emphasized making connections to the larger cultural community. Professor Authentic appreciates the historical nature of African American culture and she works to support a cultural continuity and connection between home and the college environment. She suggests that it is important for her to assist African American learners with the transition between sometimes alienating college experiences and prior supportive experiences, by connecting her earlier work with children with her current work with college students:

> But, I also understand that looking at how different people learn-I would see the disparate performance of children of color compared to White children. I would also see how children learned in the classroom when they were able to incorporate things

that as a part of their culture. So, it made sense to me that if it worked for children it

would work for adults, it worked for me as an individual.

Since curriculum at most universities tends to embody the values, norms, biases

that are an integral part of the White culture (Howard, 2000); Professor Music interjects

multicultural perspectives into the educational discourse, so that students can connect to their

own culture and understand the culture of others in new ways. He designs and implements

classroom strategies to help his students connect with the material and he helps his learners

increase their knowledge by also including non-white groups and other social identities

within classroom discussions:

> I also started having experiences, where we were doing stuff around identity. That
>
> kind of kept-- people aware of the new experiences and voices of other, and to
>
> respond to it in a critical way.

His multicultural emphasis aligns with the principles of Dillard's (2006) Endarkened

Feminist Epistemology, by attending to the cultures of those present and by initiating critical

reflection.

Each of the educators advocated the use of arts-based activities mainly because they

see these activities as learner-centered; they can potentially mediate culture, and can help

students connect authentically to the larger cultural community. Ladson-Billings (1994) also

affirms the value of learner centered approaches and assumes that educators want to see ***all***

students succeed and that they see themselves as part of the community and are willing to

establish relations with learners that are fluid, equitable and extend beyond the classroom.

Thus she to is wanting them to connect both within and beyond their cultural community.

Creativity and imagination. Recognition of cultural experiences within learning environments often empowers learners, likewise these environments can also empower learners by containing activities that rely on multiple ways of knowing, it is what Tisdell and Tolliver (in press) refers to as engaging the cultural imagination, which gets at the connection between culture and other imaginable ways of knowing. Dirkx (2001) also speaks to the role of imagination in facilitating learning through the soul which emphasizes feelings and images resolves problems/concerns: Professor Stage seems to connect with this viewpoint. She adds that imagination leads to creative ways of relating to the world*:*

> …Creativity towards working with kids and families, developing curriculum, and creatively thinking of themselves as being part of a larger world. I think when you think of yourself as a creative being, there are a lot of repercussions.

Professor Storyteller also attempts to spark his learners' imagination, but does this by engaging in storytelling. He dialogues in this manner because he is interested in cultivating the learners' reasoning abilities and increasing their knowledge of subject matter. Lee (2006) reports that linguistic experiences like those used by Professor Storyteller are undervalued. However, they can be relied upon to scaffold to academic learning. Her micro-ethnographic study documents that linguistic experiences can connect to the learner's routine practices, modes of reasoning, and habits of mind. Professor Storyteller notes the role of this connection:

> The students and I dialogue---I want the students to be involved in their learning as opposed to me just telling them things.

In essence all of these educators were noting the importance of helping students make connections between their own experience and their cultural histories.

But, this is only half of the story. We also need to hear the learners' perspectives on these settings to gain a fuller understanding. Now, we turn to a discussion of their findings.

The Students Learning: Themes and Patterns

This discussion of the learner perspectives is derived from a constant comparative analysis of the student narratives to determine the themes/patterns. Before discussing the identified themes/patterns, it is helpful to remind the reader of the learner's demographics, which are summarized in Table 1 below, as well as the context of the interviews:

Table 1 Summary of Learner Demographics

Learner Pseudonyms	Age	Professor (s) Referral	Academic Level	Favorite Course(s)
Gigi	46	Professor Theater	Undergraduate Student	Western Civilization
Charles	23	Professor Theater	Undergraduate Student	ethics & sociology
Paula	22	Professor Theater	Undergraduate Student	sociology, Pop Culture, drama
Tom	42	Professor Stage and Music	Graduate Student	African American History & linguistics
Faith	34	Professor Stage and Music	Graduate Student	Children's Literature & research
Julia	44	Professor Stage and Music	Graduate Student	sewing & research
Robert	48	Professor Storyteller	Graduate Student	Environmental Science & Marketing
Thomas	32	Professor Storyteller	Graduate Student	Western Civilization & Economics
Lorraine	49	Professor Authentic	Undergraduate Student	African American History & psychology based on African Diaspora

From a contextual perspective, it is important to highlight that each learner participated in a course that was instructed by one of the African American professors discussed earlier who

included arts-based learning activities as part of their instruction. Although, the student participants attended these courses they did not always choose to discuss the course that lead to their participation in this study. In a number of cases, they chose to discuss other courses that did not necessarily included arts-based activities, but the discussed courses did include interactive experiences. Some of the interaction they described resulted from participation in arts-based activities as well as other learning activities that were equally engaging. They seemed to appreciate courses that combined cognitive experiences with a high level of interaction, and engagement with other individuals involved in the learning experience. For example, Charles said it best when he stated:

Overall, they [interactive courses] really help you learn better. It is not boring. That is the one thing I do not like about school, sometimes it seems like it is the same old thing. When I have an interest in something, I do better. I found that even when I am reading---when there is something that is interesting, I can concentrate better, but if it is not in my interest, I tend to lose focus. I zone out.

Therefore, the learners that participated in this study tend to appreciate cognitive practices that were combined with interactive experiences, (e.g. arts-based activities, debating, etc.) and any other kinds of experiences that connect with real life as a way to launch sense making within the learning environment.

The identification of a number of courses other than those that initiated their participation in this study does not necessarily minimize the value of the art-based learning activities, nor does it negate the goals and purposes of the professors who instructed those courses. In fact, their comments suggest a strong appreciation for the use of these activities, but the uses of these activities were tempered by other classroom dynamics. The learners

identified administrative issues that seemed to overshadow their appreciation for these learning activities. As evidence by Gigi comments regarding her strong dislike of group work, or when Paula discusses the limitations of strict adherence to university attendance policies, or even when Thomas mentioned how his professor allowed several classmates to monopolize classroom discussions. Clearly, their comments suggest that learning activities, whether affective or cognitive, in isolation do not determine the quality of the learning experience. Their learning is equally impacted by other factors that are also part of the classroom experience. A strong case for this distinction in their classroom experiences emanates from the discussion of the four primary themes/patterns that follow: the importance of (a) attending to culture/identity concerns, (b) connecting through interaction and engagement; (c) creating a classroom community; and (d) dealing with organizational and administrative concerns.

Attending to Culture/Identity Concerns

The first and the most recurring theme that weaves through all of the student narratives is their appreciation of the arts-based and/or interactive activities that acknowledged their cultural and personal identity. They commented on how learning about other cultures and learning more about their own culture seemed to affirm their existence within the classroom and their identity overall. They provided many illustrations of how participation in these activities facilitated demonstration of cultural pride, highlighted their capabilities and tapped into their creativity.

Implied throughout the thoughts expressed in the student narratives is a balance of the rhythm and universal meaning that connects them to others within the classroom around culture issues (Cajete, 1999). Educators who only focus on cognitive practices and

monocultural experiences do not resonate with these learners. Instead, they prefer a multicultural emphasis because it allowed them to make meaning. In particular, Robert and Tom offered some reflections related to their experiences that occurred at uniquely different universities. Robert clarified how his experience at a Predominantly White Institution (PWI) impacted him:

> We had a class called Multicultural Communications. What the instructor did---
> we had a diverse group. We had 15 countries represented between the 15 students
> and everyone had to pick a country. We were asked to discuss that country's
> economy, discuss their food, etc. And we remain very close. It just goes to show
> you that if you break down barriers that people can get along.

Tom on the other hand, offered an example of how a linguistic course at a Historically Black University (HBU) enhanced his personal identity, and also connected with different aspects of culture:

> The class was offered at a Historically Black University. What he did was he
> introduced different languages and we had to do research. We learned a lot about
> different languages and different cultures. This was a White professor. He was
> very passionate about this as well. It was very engaging. It was in a small setting
> and a very interesting class.

The sentiments expressed in Robert and Tom's commentaries suggest they prefer a classroom full of passion and culturally relevant experiences, and not one that is solely based on cognitive practices. Apparently, some of the participants of this study at one time or another were involved in nurturing learning environments. A number of the classrooms they

spoke of allowed them to learn about other cultures while recognizing their own cultures using either arts-based or interactive activities.

Personal and cultural identity. Lorraine's comments on the other hand, were less about the classroom environment and more about the impact of her course on her personal life. During classes with Professor Authentic and another professor her family relations were directly impacted. She initiated and completed research on her family genealogy and decided to include discussion of historical events related to the African American experience within her verbal communications with family members. She attributes participation in the history course with expanding her knowledge of African and African American history. Lorraine stated:

> I particularly liked one African American class that was taught by Dr. E-----,
>
> which was the *History of Africa*. In all of my years I never saw anyone put it that
>
> way---It made me proud to know that there was documentation that identified
>
> Africa as the beginning of civilization. I guess the older you
>
> get the more sentimental you get about life and family. All of those things
>
> become really important, where 20 years ago it may not have been important to
>
> me, but now it is very, very important.

Her psychology course with Professor Authentic also promoted her cultural and personal identity in a similar fashion. This course prompted her interest in family history and lead to a discovery about the spelling of her name:

> When I took the class with Professor Authentic---- she was authentic, she made sure
>
> we learned. My spirituality developed and increased. My knowledge increased. I
>
> developed a sense of pride in who I was, and it helped me find out who my great,

great aunt was. That is why the first class with Professor Authentic-----impacted me,

it was a psychological impact---to let me know that---my God, they took my name.

They took my name and pronounced it wrong. So, that was a really huge thing,

learning and knowing I was thoroughly mis-educated. I mean, I was changed.

Ladson-Billings (1994), suggests that not only should educational environments recognize

the history of African Americans, as both of Lorraine's courses did, but they should also be

culturally relevant. Combining historical study with culturally relevant experiences enables

students to pursue an education while maintaining their African American culture.

Like Lorraine, Tom also experienced a personal connection within an African

American history course. As result of taking this course, he now makes afro-centric

purchases for his home. Mainly, he buys African American art. He explains:

Now, as a result of that class I have a lot of African American art pieces in my

home. It is spiritual art because it demonstrates we are here because we are

standing on the shoulders of our ancestors.

According to Guy (1999b), cultural relevance often moves the classroom experience and

beyond language, as in Tom's and Lorraine's case, to include other aspects of student and

school culture. He adds this is necessary because when the student's culture is used it helps

to maintain the cultural experiences and it helps to transcend the negative effects of the

dominant culture.

Cultural-spiritual identity. While only one of the participants specifically discussed

the importance of a spiritual connection I highlight it here because it seems to be related to

cultural identity issues as some authors (Dillard, 2006; Tolliver & Tisdell, 2006) discuss.

Gigi discussed a connection to her cultural and personal identity and spirituality through a

Western Civilization course. Learning about other cultures facilitated a comparison of her

spiritual beliefs against those held by others. She stated:

> I was an adult. You know, I was married. At that time I had already been a
>
> widow with two children. It made me investigate and check more into my own
>
> spirituality. Yes, as an African American and as a woman. In general, being here
>
> in the United States---what's normal for us and what's normal for them---why I
>
> believe what I believe. I am more, I am more spiritual.

Dillard (2006) suggests that the spiritual comparison described by Gigi, and a few of

the professors, results in classrooms where there is a connectedness between educator and

learner, in the form of what she refers to as "spiritual consciousness" (p. 41). Spiritual

consciousness involves a relationship with the divine power of all things and his or her

influence on decision making and subsequent actions. A culturally relevant learning

environment often engages spiritual consciousness because it is relied upon to meditate and

clarify classroom activities and struggles.

Clearly, arts-based and interactive learning experiences impacted the student

participants by increasing their cultural awareness and enhancing their personal identity, but

these activities also released excitement and interest within their classrooms.

Connecting through Interaction and Engagement

The second theme that emerged in the student narratives highlights the importance of

connecting to others and to the course material through interaction and engagement. This

resulted in an excitement about learning. This type of enthusiasm can be released in a

learning environment in multiple ways, but the professor's enthusiasm along with arts-based

or interactive undertakings were the primary way it was generated in the classrooms of the

learners who participated in this study, and generated further learning. Gigi described a Western Civilization course and how it generated further learning on her part and how she was motivated to do more than what was assigned:

> It was a personal enjoyment. I can't quite remember the grade I received, but I do not think it was a grade I was not pleased with. It was easier because you were excited and you want to know more. It makes you want to read more, read the books and it was easier---In terms of learning or comprehending.

Thomas' appreciation of his Western Civilization course also resulted in a personal dedication on his part to learn more about the subject matter. The difference between his experience and Gigi's is that he noticed that his classmates were also motivated in an equal manner. His classmates were engaged and he feels their critical thinking skills were also displayed:

> That was the best experience I had. It was because we talked about things that allowed me to look at our country also. So, I was able to bring those thoughts together. I did not tend to wander [his mind did not wander] in that class. Surprisingly, his class was great. So, during that class they [Thomas' classmates] were spirited---and others were able to correlate things to what we do now. They were able to transcend that knowledge they gained and make it work. So, for those people we saw their creativeness.

Like Thomas, Robert witnessed similar results when passion was activated in his classroom experiences. Both found that their classmates became so passionate about learning that the students collectively began to interact and excelled in these environments, which generated further learning. Robert describes his experience:

It was very interactive. He wanted us to [something creative] ---for our projects it

was not just a paper. We actually brought in things, which was nice because I

liked this and the other things. I could bring in some examples and people did all

kinds of innovative things.

For some students, this enthusiasm for learning resulted not only in interaction, but it

also released some inhibitions. Paula elaborates on how the enthusiasm cultivated in a drama

course facilitated this for her:

We got up and we rolled around on the floors and the stage. I really liked that one

because it forced you to "break out of your shell." I felt comfortable on the stage,

especially when everyone was not expecting you to be. We discussed the readings

and "put on" plays---things of that nature. We went to see plays. That was when I

got most excited.

Paula became more trusting as her enthusiasm grew.

Sometime the use of arts-based or interactive ways of knowing in classrooms

gives learners who are also teachers the confidence to draw on these ways of knowing in

their own classes; thus this can give learners themselves more self confidence, and they can

pass this on to their students.   This was the case of Julia, who was a graduate student herself

but also a K-12 teacher. Julia not only noticed that arts-based activities improved a student's

performance in her own K-12 class, but it also ignited his passion. She explained:

…the student who was [diagnosed] ADHD would be all over the place. He was

really wonderful. He was not great in the kitchen, but he was wonderful at the

sewing machine. This child absolutely loved working with the sewing machine.

There was stuff he could manipulate and put together. And I thought I should not

assume a thing about him. He was a superstar, and he really surprised me. Faith, a graduate student and K-12 teacher also reflected on how arts-based learning experiences were more engaging and how these activities connects with her learning preferences:

>I am learning that this [arts-based learning practices] works for me. I could listen for a certain amount of time then my brain goes on vacation. That part I do like. Having the different activities during a long day, like our Saturday classes, it does really help. It is really a big change for me. I think part of me is very concrete. This is really different for me. It is connecting with a different side of me. I think my learning style prefers the arts mixed in with the theory.

It is not being suggested here that using aesthetic/interactive experiences is the only way or even the primary way of releasing learner passion. However, aesthetic/interactive activities do seem to correlate with the diverse and integrated influences that make up a person's humanness.

Separately these learners implied however, that the classroom should not be the place of a one-dimensional focus and that they are more likely to be engaged when other domains are also included within the learning environment. Goldberg (1997) holds that the type of artistic translation and representation alluded to in the previous discussions enabled the learners to develop intellectually and emotionally to the point their passion for learning was released and simultaneously they gained greater understanding of the subject matter. As Goldberg's views suggests, the use of artistic strategies within curriculum can elicit novel thinking and this previously untapped way of thinking ultimately releases learner interest in the subject matter, along with increasing interest in other components of the classroom.

It appears perceptive encounters, such as those described; seem to have the potential of arousing learner interest to the point their passion is also released. Alfred Schutz, as reported by Greene (1978), refers to this as the "wide awakeness." Schutz defines this awakeness as "a plane of consciousness of highest tension originating in an attitude of full attention to life and its requirements" (p.169). The mere act of engaging with the arts seems to generate questions that may open new perspectives on what should be learned. As exemplified by Lorraine comments:

> When I took the class with Professor Authentic---- she was authentic, she made sure we learned. Not only did we learn better, we were able to identify [with the subject matter], and we challenged our own assumptions. My spirituality developed and increased. My knowledge increased.

 Perhaps other things also occur in classrooms where passion is prominent; maybe learner excitement also leads to the concern for the welfare and academic success of others participating in the experience.

Creating a Classroom Community

The third theme/pattern reflected in the student narratives is the idea of creating a community that results in a number of close and lasting relations formulated in a number of their classrooms. Repeatedly, the students indicated how the bonds between their classmates and educators were very close and fulfilling. These learning environments seemed to foster a way of relating that was not typical in all their higher education courses. Tom explained his African American history course impacted relationships between learners and with the educator:

> In that class she made such an impact-- it was a class of 18. I still keep in touch

with those individuals. Yes, and we are still friends until this day. We talk about

how that class impacted us and how she impacted us! Because it was more hands-

on. It was not in a traditional setting with lecture.

Likewise, the activities Thomas participated in within his Western civilization course

lead to close relations with his classmates. He clarifies why this bond was created:

I met some of my best friends in that class because of our common bond or

common love for history. We did not like each other in the beginning because we

were more interested in being right, but we learned to respect each other's

understanding of the information and this understanding created a friendly

relationship.

Julia also reflected on the relations between learners and the educator, but she also

linked these relationships to her improved performance and the favorable performance of her

classmates. She notes:

So, it was really exciting because I think everyone in the class was interested in

what we were learning. Everyone wanted to be successful and have a finished

product. And that's the way the course ended, and we had a good instructor.

The type of camaraderie Julia experienced also occurred within the classrooms of

several other interviewed students; namely, Robert and Lorraine. In Robert's case, he directly

attributes the camaraderie that developed and learner performance to the learning activities

used in his Environmental Science course.   He described it this way:

It also brought out the creativeness in the students. There were some people who did

not say much in class, but when they did you received a glimpse into their soul. This

learning experience was a catalyst for the development of close friendships: You got

to know them better. What they thought about things. What they felt. So, I felt the class by the time we were done was pretty cohesive. Because we worked on things together. It brought us together. When I see how we worked and how we interacted on the projects, it actually brought a diverse group of people together, which I thought was a nice thing. Some of them send me emails and ask how I have been and we have lunches.

Lorraine also links the closeness between her classmates to the learning activities and the respectful nature of those who participated in the course. She expressed the closeness in this way:

Actually, we had a couple of Europeans in the class. We were very respectful. And that was the first thing he said [the professor]: "We are going to be respectful to everyone." We had to be very respectful of each other. We were learning from each other. That became the favorite thing [about] the debating, the camaraderie. We did have a strong camaraderie with each other.

What Lorraine describes here is the creation of what Dillard (2006) refers to as a learning "community" (p.82). Dillard holds that these communities reflect a sense of caring and connecting across differences because they tend to balance the spiritual, emotional, and intellectual development of those present.

Dealing with Organizational and Administrative Concerns

The fourth and final theme woven through the student narratives are concerns with university policies and procedures, and those independently imposed by faculty. Several learners mentioned that some of these policies and procedures had a negative impact on the learning experience. While the learners generally appreciated the learning activities, they

disapproved of traditional methods of requiring course attendance, group assignments, and grading. Most of their concerns about classroom management affected all learners, though there were some that affect African American learners in unique ways, management of classroom dynamics.

    Attendance and grading policies. Many of the students commented on general organizational issues that they had concerns about that affect all learners. Gigi , for example, does not enjoy courses that include arts-based activities or any other course that contains group work, because group work forces her to relinquish control of her grades, to the lack luster efforts of others. She explained it this way:

> I do not like working in groups. I cannot stand it. I really don't enjoy working in groups. You always have someone who is not going to pull their weight. If I am going to be graded on it, I want to be responsible for my own grade. I do not want the responsibility of my grade to be left on somebody else in my group.

Paula also commented on the difficulties associated with group assignments. She reflected on how it impacted her grades:

> The only thing projects have a positive and a negative. I do not mind interacting with people. I do not like it when my grade depends on other people's work. Yeah, if they do not have a work ethic I am at a lost.

Paula also disapproved of strict adherence by professors to university attendance policies. She describes how learners view her university's attendance requirements:

> …we feel if we do not go it would be to our detriment. [If]… I did not get the material that would be my punishment. It should not impact my grade, if I am able to score high on the test.

Grading methods used by professors are also troublesome for Paula. She describes how low numerical values hindered her motivation to perform:

> Our whole semester was out of 100 points, so when we turned in one paper it was worth 5 or 10 points, for a 5-10 page paper, which made it very hard for you to have room for error as opposed to a paper being worth 100 points by itself, which would give you some leeway to miss some points.

While of course professors need to have some way of grading students, and need to be clear on how it is done, based on Julia and Gigi's comments (as well as a few others), they want transparency; they appear to want some say in how this is done; and they want to be graded on their own work, and not that of their peers who may or may not produce.

Management of classroom dynamics. Many of the students also discussed the lack of some professors' ability to manage classroom dynamics. Thomas and Robert spoke about these issues. In Robert's case, his classmates made some inappropriate comments that that he felt may have been race-based were ignored by the professor. He describes the nature of these comments:

> There are some folks who enter college who are not around too many African Americans and they have kind of a problem. And we have had that problem in my program. I remember during our second class. Here I am a Deputy Commissioner of the ----- ------, when I made a comment about something one of my classmates looked at me and said, "That is stupid."

Thomas also found one of his classroom experiences to be flawed because of the professor's poor classroom management skills, though he did not attribute this to race in particular. A

few students were allowed to make endless inquiries about minor details and this caused Thomas to lose interest in the course. He elaborates:

> We "hit a brick wall." I would go into a shutdown mode. Some of us saw what was happening and we prepared.

Baldwin and other researchers, who have more recently reconstructed his original study, report that it is not simply differing viewpoints that have marginalized African American learners. They hold that there are additional factors ingrained within these educational facilities that affect learners inside and outside the classroom. In their opinion, the institutional operations of these facilities, in some instances fail to create a nurturing environment for African American learners. These can be related to classroom dynamics, some of which are clearly beyond the teacher's total control, though teachers perhaps can work at being more aware of these, whether these institutions are PWI's or HBU's they are not committing to visions, values, attitudes, and principles that are dedicated to valuing learners in general and African American learners in particular. Baldwin suggests that this negligence actually hinders some African American learners because their spiritual essence becomes misaligned in the ways previously described by Robert, and others to some degree.

Guy (1999a, 1999b) and Peterson (1999) also call for the reassessment of educational norms, processes and goals to determine how they impact marginalized learners. Perhaps this is what Robert meant when he indicated:

> … There is a disconnect between the establishment and those communities. I think what happens is the establishment side (which some of us are a part of, now) forgets that there are communities out there that have been historically discriminated against and because of that, we need to go a little further. And an

institution has to make sure that those students are aware that they are valued

and wanted there and that there are resources when they have problems.

Johnson (2005) explored the disconnection Robert speaks of in her qualitative study of

African American higher education students who attended a northeast PWI. Her study

focused on the perceptions of Black first-year students who enrolled in study skills courses in

terms of their social and academic integration. In particular, Johnson was interested in

learning more about the academic difficulties these students faced when compared against

their previous schooling. She found that the students had a difficult time transitioning into the

PWI because they were challenged to make adjustments as a "guest in someone else's house"

(p.32). These students came from all-inclusive high school environments to institutions

where they did not see any one like themselves represented on the staff or within the

curriculum. As previously stated by Robert, the students did not feel wanted or valued by all

others while attending this institution. Thus, this empirical data affirmed Robert's thoughts.

These personal reflections and the commentary shared within the student narratives

offers some insights into the needs and concerns of African American higher education

learners. The next section will outline the implications of these insights for adult educators.

<div align="center">Where to Now:</div>

<div align="center">Adult Education Theory, Practice and Further Research</div>

So what does all of this suggest for the theory and practice of adult education with

African American learners in higher education settings? And what might it suggest for

further research?   The closing section of this chapter explores these issues in greater depth.

Adult Higher Education Theory and Practice

There are some adult education scholars who have discussed issues for African American professors and students in adult and higher education settings (Humphrey-Brown, 2001; Johnson-Bailey, 2001; Johnson-Bailey & Cervero, 2008; Smith & Colin, 2001).   This study drew on some of their work but also was grounded in the work of African American professors who more specifically discuss issues that pertain to higher education settings. Hooks (1994, 2003) and Dillard (2006) are African American theorists, cultural critics, and educators in higher education. They offer conceptual work that proposes a unique perspective of the African American experience; however for the most part their texts are not data based research. What is highlighted within this manuscript is a data based study that emphasizes the significance of the learning community that Dillard and (mainly) hooks speak of.

Eisner (2005) and Greene (1978, 1995) advocate for arts-based education, they do acknowledge the importance of culture, but not from a multicultural perspective. Similarly, in adult education Lawrence (2005) and Dirkx (2006) advocate for art and/or imagination, but do not discuss it from a multicultural view. Art-based learning activities were valued for some of this study's student participants, but not for all. Clover (2006) does advocate for the use of arts-based ways of knowing that is specifically connected to the culture of participants based on a research study, but hers focused on adult learners in community based settings as opposed to higher education settings. One of the findings of this study of African American learners and arts-based ways of knowing specifically in higher education settings is that arts-based learning activities was valued for some of this study's student participants, but not for all. For some of these students arts-based experiences would be valued (or not) for its variety and its recognition of multiple ways of knowing. These student participants seemed to value classrooms that provided variety in learning experiences that facilitated engagement and

interaction and, connected to their lives and their cultural experiences. Some valued arts-based experiences if it provided those things for them or because it offered variety, while others didn't appear to value arts-based ways of learning per se at all. However, they did value learning experiences that connected with their cultural backgrounds, and implicit in most of their comments among those who discussed it was a recognition that arts-based ways of knowing does connect with culture. Clearly the professors in this study thought so and valued these ways of knowing; the students more directly valued what provided cultural connection and facilitated interaction.

Data based related studies about art and culture, such as Tisdell's (2003) and Wunthow's (2001) connect spirituality and culture, but not arts-based ways of knowing specifically about students in higher education. Participants of Tisdell's inquiry were faculty who emphasized connections between culture and spirituality, some of whom referred to arts-based ways of knowing (especially music) that connected both to culture and spirituality. However, there were no students in her study. Wuthnow's study was specifically about artistic ways of knowing connected to spirituality but not related to higher education. The study presented within this manuscript gets at African American student perspectives as well as faculty perspectives not specifically presented by Tisdell and Wunthow.

Generally, educators who support the use of the arts in higher education settings and education settings in general revealed that literal language and quantification are not the only means through which learners can achieve and maintain knowledge. They have written about the similarities between the work of artists and those representing the hard sciences. In their opinion, artist and scientist possess similar abilities: they perceive what exist, imagine

possibilities and each relies on their knowledge, skills, and abilities to create what they imagine.

Furthermore, Eisner (2005) and others have documented through their data based research that the arts provide learners with the opportunity to engage with subject matter and pursue their personal interest. These educators suggest that learners within these environments typically acquire the ability to use a number of educational tools that help them maintain their skills.

This study affirms these insights, but it also adds information about previously unexplored aspects of this paradigm. It expands current understanding about the value of arts-based activities by suggesting a multicultural dimension. Much of the existing literature discusses how the arts promote cultural awareness within the classroom. However, Greene (1978, 1995) and others do not discuss how to increase diversity within these experiences or how to replace the almost exclusive concentration on Euro-American influences. The object of this study was to interject a multicultural awareness into this discussion. There are three insights that this study offers that can potentially impacts adult education theory and practice related to African American learners in higher education: namely, (a) arts-based activities as a cultural form of engagement; (b) artistic talent not required; (c) an interactive teaching-learning community that tends to classroom dynamics and organizational issues. These aspects are discussed in more detail below.

Arts-based activities as cultural engagement. Many educators assume that achievement within higher education classrooms for African Americans should be similar to the cultural interest and experiences of the dominant, White culture. While this assumption affirms and engages learners that represent this group of people it does not simultaneously

acknowledge or affirm the interest of some African Americans learners, or other learners of color. While many educators in adult and higher education cited in this manuscript (Banks, date; Clover, 2006; Guy, 1999; Johnson-Bailey, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Tisdell, 2003; Wesley, 2006) have discussed the importance of multicultural education and culturally responsive education, few have specifically discussed arts-based activities as a form of cultural engagement in higher education settings. Wesley (2006) does discuss this related to community settings. The aspect of learning that these educators seem to overlook is that achievement needs to be compatible with who you are and needs to connect with cultural experience. African American learners like any other learners need to perceive that classroom activities affirm their history and experiences. When the African American students who participated in this study participated in classrooms that offered limited and/or no consideration of their needs and interests they tended to disengaged from the course and the instructor. One can only wander the long term impact of repeatedly disengaging in this manner. How many of learners would voluntarily remain in an environment that marginalizes when other more affirming outlets are available? Therefore, educators need to find avenues for including the achievements and history of people of color in their curriculum. Drawing on arts-based ways of knowing that connects to one's cultural history can clearly serve as a form of cultural engagement. What the learners in this study seemed to value most was the kinds of experiences that connected to them personally and culturally and that facilitated interaction. In some cases this was related specifically to arts-based activities as a form of cultural engagement that facilitated interaction.

Artistic knowledge desirable.   The professors in this study use arts-based ways of knowing, value it more than the students and use it as a tool for cultural engagement; they

also highlighted the fact that having some knowledge of arts-based way of knowing is clearly

desirable. Specifically, Professor Stage commented, "the complicated thing with using the

arts in higher education is you have to have an art background first. So, if you are a

professor with no arts background, it is really hard to incorporate it into instruction." The

professors also noted that some educators may shy away from the use of art or other

interactive activities in higher education classrooms because they do not believe in their

artistic talent or in their ability to facilitate these activities. However, the inner critic that is

inhibiting these educators results from an understanding that is counter to the true nature of

the arts. As London (1989) states, to create art one draws from within to create a world of

their own and also uncovers an all-but-forgotten original, primal self. The key is to

incorporate arts-based activities and/or other types of interactive activities that the educator is

comfortable with and to also include those that allows them to maintain their authenticity.

Therefore, these educators should not fixate on the term "art" and be confined by past

associations and experiences. Instead, they should become interested in varying learning

activities to the extent that they enhance the learning experience. As mentioned throughout

the previous chapters, the arts can be used in a number ways to transform the learning

experience, and potentially to be used as a form of cultural engagement. As Professor

Authentic stated, "we all are creative!" Educators can alter their beliefs and nature by

opening, then broadening the realms of their perceptions. So while knowledge of the arts is

desirable, these professors agree that one does not need to be a trained artist to incorporate

the use of the arts in the classroom.

A teaching community that attends to organizational issues. According to hooks (2003), a teaching community "…offers practical wisdom about what we do and can continue to do to make the classroom a place that is life-sustaining and mind-expanding, a place of liberating, mutuality where teacher and student together work in partnership" (p. xv). As implied by this quote, achievement within higher education classrooms is dependent upon the overall environment of the classroom. Many educators have discussed this both generally, and more specifically related to African American learners. James Baldwin's (1981) African Self-Consciousness theory also indicates that when the environment is harmonious and it involves ideas and values that nurture the African American experience many of these learners will become more engaged.

In a similar manner, a number of the student participants of this study commented on the importance of a nurturing environment where the professor attends to classroom dynamics. There's clearly a body of literature within the field of adult and higher education that focuses on multicultural issues and classroom dynamics (Johnson-Bailey & Cervero, 2000; Johnson-Bailey, Valentine, Cervero & Bowles, 2007). But there is little in adult and higher education theorizing that includes basic issues about attendance and grading policies that is very important to students. In the opinion of the student participants in this study, educators who strictly adhere to attendance policies, traditional methods of assigning class work, or fail to properly manage classroom dynamics can potentially create environments that force the course purpose and goals to become misaligned with the final outcomes. The learners reflected that their ability to achieve was restricted and impaired by the educators' need to adhere to institutionalized beliefs, policies, and procedures. Therefore, educators should ensure that they are engaging and that their courses are equally engaging. They should

also take some responsibility for facilitating organized, fair learning environments that perpetuate a social and academic climate that does not allow one particular individual or group of individuals to dominant classroom discussions. Thus, their efforts should be invested in the achievement of all learners.

Suggestions for Further Research

What is discussed above gets at some theoretical and practical insights related to arts-based ways of knowing and African American learners. Although, I attempted to conduct a thorough investigation into the perspectives of African American learners who attended courses that used arts-based activities there are still some unanswered questions, and suggestions for further research.

The students who participated were not art students. For the students in this study, what was most important for their learning experiences was that classes be interactive and engaging, and relevant to their lives. Arts-based ways of knowing were valued in so far as it led to these aspects of learning. It would thus be interesting to see how do the perspectives of African American art students differ from those who participated in this study. The participants were not specifically attending art courses and it would be interesting to learn how the perceptions of African American higher education art students differ. One could speculate that African American art students would be more astute in connecting the arts with their learning since this medium is their primary focus.

The students in this particular study valued the kinds of learning experience that engaged them, and that connected to their cultural experiences. While some of them valued arts-based ways of knowing particularly for their variety, a second possible study might be to explore what meaningful things occurred in classrooms that include arts-based activities for

students who find great value in this particular way of knowing. This study participants were asked a number of things and our discussion varied surrounding the use of arts-based learning activities a good deal; however, we did not consider directly what particularly meaningful occurrences (if any) that resulted. Those who strongly value arts-based ways of knowing might be able to get at these perspectives.

A third possibility for further research might also be an action research study that explores how the process unfolds over time and what possibilities can result from learning environments that contain arts-based and cognitive activities as they are negotiated throughout the course. Educators who support the use of arts-based learning activities speak a good deal about the specific benefits of these activities (Eisner, 2005; Greene, 1978, 1995; Lawrence, 2005), but this discussion does not include to an equal degree the possibilities that can occur when arts-based and cognitive experiences are combined within the higher education classrooms, or how this changes and unfolds over time. An action research study documenting this could offer further insights relating to the theory and practice of arts-based education.

<div align="center">Conclusions</div>

This study affirms a number of studies before it that indicate that the historical, and sometimes exclusive focus by higher education settings on rational forms of constructing and disseminating knowledge is clearly not the only way to engage learners. An exclusive focus on rationality as a way of knowing and learning that is primarily associated with the White dominant culture, and as such marginalizes African American students, other students of color, as well as many white students who value affective and other forms of knowing. Other forms of knowing and learning need to be recognized to combat this view of higher

education that is focused nearly exclusively on rationality.   It is important that we consider

the integration and wholeness that result when cognitive experiences are combined with

multicultural artistic activities and interactive activities that connect culture and experience,

particularly if we are interested in reversing current attrition trends and connecting with

African American learners.

EPILOGUE

This has been a journey.   In thinking about the study's purpose, which was to explore the perspectives of African American students in higher education who have taken classes that incorporate artistic ways of knowing about what engages their learning in light of the faculty's purposes for incorporating such ways of knowing into their classrooms, I am struck with a number of insights about the process and the findings of this inquiry. First, in thinking about what I learned about teaching, I am struck with how powerful a combination it is: to honor the learner's needs/interests and at the same time honor the educator's needs/interests. When I reflect on my own past teaching experience as a trainer for business and industry, it becomes evident that this influential combination was difficult to achieve in my former classroom experiences.   Typically, when I worked as an organizational trainer I probably spent too much valuable time thinking about the learner, which may have suppressed my passion for teaching at times. I do however, have to admit to being relentless about becoming a subject matter expert and developing activities that I thought made it possible for me to transfer my knowledge to the learner. After all, my colleagues and superiors assessed these practices favorably on closing training evaluations.

Suppressing needs was the name of the game; suppressing theirs and my own. I designed most of the learning activities to support the latest strategies touted by experts from the field of human resource development, but not in support of learner preferences. This occurrence probably had a minimal impact on many of my trainees, but it had some impact my own needs. Most of the time, I failed to bring my "whole" self into the learning environment. I could blame my employer for this focus on being the subject matter expert and the reliance on the latest methods, but that would not be completely true. The specific

things an educator does inside his or her classroom are rarely completely dictated by an organization. It is difficult for administrators to police the activities of their educators every second of the work day.

No, I share in the guilt. As so eloquently stated by Professor Stage, a participant of this study, "We teach in the way we are taught." It is difficult for me to admit these limitations because for a long time I thought I was successful, even when class sizes were noticeably shrinking. But, I chose to rely on a teaching model that failed to fully address the needs of the learner and the educator.

This re-education process (namely, my doctoral studies) that I have just completed has had a tremendous impact. My expectations and beliefs were confronted at every turn. I had to reconsider the "expert" role I was fulfilling in the classroom, my personal interest in arts-based knowing and learning was enhanced and I had to reassess my understanding of the learner's role.

Although my teaching practices are still evolving, I now realize that higher education classrooms are different from those designed for business and industry. Within higher education partnerships between learners and educators are needed because contacts between these parties typically evolve over a longer period of time. As such, the involved parties usually become more vested in their relationships. Therefore, the potential for an involved party to strengthen another in areas in which they are weak and to be more realistic about the role of the educator and the student is more likely.

This revelation about the differences between the higher education and business and industry environments and some others sparked three significant moments during this research study: during reflection on my role as a learner; while struggling with analysis of the

research data; and when I was considering changes to my teaching practice. As an undergraduate student I enjoyed taking pottery classes and working in the studio; however when I entered the doctoral program I realized that my passion and academic work rarely converged within collegiate classrooms. I am personally indebted to my doctoral professors for steering me towards learning more about arts-based knowing and learning and recognizing my passion. As I already indicated, I worked with clay when I completed undergraduate coursework for the day. Having the opportunity on several occasions to create clay pots for my doctoral studies set those encounters apart from courses exclusively based on lecture. Notes from the journal I maintained during my doctoral studies indicate that I worked harder, learned more, and earned better grades during those occasions. My excitement seeped through the pages of my written reflections. On one occasion I wrote,

> I am so glad this course has given me a reason to once again place my hand in clay. I have my favorite music on and I am actually working this clay for school. I am anxious to see what this ten pound block of clay will look like when I finish.

For this course we were assigned to create an art project that reflected our learning. I made a water pitcher with an accompanying basin. These items were not only created in response to a course assignment, they were created during a major change in my life. Deciding to retire from my full time position coincided with taking this course. The pitcher and basin represented the transformation I was experiencing. In a sense the water flowing from the pitcher demonstrated how I was similarly flowing from one life experience to new experiences/situations. Given that the subject matter of this course was about transformations in classrooms it is not odd that my mind, heart, and soul were engaged in this

matter. As previously characterized by Faith, one of the students in the study, connecting the intellectual process with emotions is a more interesting and a natural way of learning for me.

I became increasingly aware of the intellectual connection with emotions as I talked with the student participants of this study; this revelation caused me to repeatedly reflect on my experiences. Professor Authentic said it best when she stated, "…I think part of the difficulty people have [within classrooms occurs when they] … disengage parts of [themselves] …from something [they] do on the side---when that is who [they] are." I know I can be a creative person, but I did not consider how important creativity is to other learners until I reviewed comments shared during this study. While reflecting on this I realized how much some of the participants (mainly the professors and a few students) and I collectively thrive in learning environments where we can tap into our creative realm of being. Our performance levels seem to improve and retention levels are better in learning environments that combine cognitive and affective practices that connect with our culture and life experience.

Mostly, I did not anticipate how significant the level of engagement would be to the student participants. I thought they would share my preference for arts-based experiences. These students did not have a particular preference for the type of engaging activity; rather what was more important was that learning activities connect with them culturally and with other aspects of their experience. They offered a point of view I had not considered to this degree. In several instances they mentioned how our appreciation for engaging experiences is inherent within our culture. Some may question the actual root of this interest; but several of the students shared historical information that they believed supported connections between earlier events and how they served as the foundation for our intellectual pursuits,

our "hands-on" nature, our practical orientation, and need for verbal expression. Our heritage influences our lives in so many ways. So when Paula mentioned during our interview that if she does not get a chance to speak within the first 20 minutes of a course that she stops paying attention, it speaks volumes about the level of engagement that we need within classrooms. This becomes especially significant when one considers that most college courses are conducted by professors who rely heavily on lecture that often does not take culture into account. But the students in this study suggested they need to think, be engaged, and have their cultural experiences recognized. Their level of engagement and sense of empowerment seems dependent upon the use of cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills and attitudes.

Faith, a graduate student in an arts integrated graduate program and K-12 teacher, mentioned during our interview that she now views arts-base activities differently than before she started her graduate program. She spoke eloquently about how she grew to appreciate the combination of cognitive and affective experiences, with a cultural influence. Her initial reluctance to these ways of knowing changed to one of support because of a few noted occurrences. First, she became more interested in her coursework. And second, her students also became more studious and had less discipline problems. I can relate to her conversion. Her experience coincides in some ways with my own.

When the learning environment in higher education is based on a pedagogy that engages, these learners indicated that they excelled intellectually, emotionally, politically, and socially. Attention to culture specifically makes the difference in my learning. When I am excited about a learning experience I perform as I know I can. At this point, I am sure the reader has a general feel for my 30 year history (on and off) in higher education settings. It is

probably apparent that most of this time I felt uncomfortable and like an "outsider." But, thankfully there were courses that broke from the norm. They are few, but the impact of those courses was more powerful then words can adequately express. For example, how do you properly describe what it feels like to finally learn after so many years about the history of your people and other Americans without some form of disdain? Typically, my mind during history or sociology courses was full of anxious sensations. My anxiousness resulted from remembrances of lectures that belittled African Americans, which were sometimes followed by the ridicule of my White classmates. I had to attend quite a few college courses to get to a different experience. I was 49 years old when I attended the Race and Ethnicity course taught by Dr. Clemmie Gilpin. For the first time in my post secondary and secondary experience I learned that the American experience is replete with positive and negative events that touch most of its peoples. For instance, included in the course was the recognition that slavery did not completely limit some African Americans from doing commendable things during the 1600's and later. Nor, did the unjust treatment of newly-arrived European immigrants hinder subsequent prosperity of their progeny. Somehow, some of my previous educators and the classroom materials they often relied on did not offer this type of information as part of the learning experience. Instead, their focus was usually one dimensional and at times failed to include other aspects of the American experience that were equally important.

I can not recall learning so much about American culture and people, and having such a high retention level. Was it because the course materials were up-to-date and multicultural? –Or- Was it because of the storytelling style of Dr. Gilpin? –Or- Was it because Dr. Gilpin is African American? –Or- Was it because there were a sizable number of students of color

within this class? –Or- Was it because the learning activities had a multicultural emphasis? I believe all of these things contributed to my appreciation of this learning experience. While there were no arts-based perspectives presented during this course, it was mostly conducted in a lecture format, he did attend to culture a great degree. I believe Lorraine, a student participant, summarized it best when she said, "…I developed a sense of pride in who I was…" While I certainly experienced an affirmation in other classes that included some information about African Americans, this sociology class holds a prominent place in my memory.

Another significant learning experience came from the mutual conversations held with the professors in this study. I experienced many emotional reactions during our discussions. My emotions ranged from awe from hearing their perspectives on how fully engaged learners respond in classrooms to sheer joy from listening to the excitement in their voices. Their enthusiasm is contagious and their dedication flows through my spirit. But, when I reflect on these conversations I also wonder about those more challenging teaching moments. Unfortunately, we did not have an opportunity to explore this aspect of the "classroom", and they didn't talk much about the way students challenge them, which has been a part of my own experience in teaching as an adjunct in higher education.

When I think of my own limited experience teaching within the higher education setting I am able to provide a personal account of the difficulties one can face. I do not want to give the impression that teaching for a PWI, Christian university is all negative, but those experiences along with the positive, have had a profound impact on my teaching practice. Being the only African American, female adjunct faculty member on the branch campus where I have taught, not only presents a visual difference, it presents a cultural difference.

Although I became accustomed to being the only African American in a higher education classroom and adapting to learning environments that did not include my culture in my own educational experience as a student, I am sure it was a unique experience for my White students and students of color to have me as their professor. At first I was appalled by the direct affronts and the inappropriate communications by some of my White Christian students; after all I thought it was a given that the professor should be respected, particularly in an environment that espoused Christian values.

I could have lodged complaints about their actions or done something more injurious like had the troublesome students removed from the course, but I decided it was important for to them to recognize that I was intent on fulfilling my responsibilities. My responsibilities included facilitating a learning environment without fear and with conviction. And as Vernon E. Jordan jr. (2008), former president of the Urban League and advisor to U. S. Presidents, stated during an interview on the Charlie Rose Show, I had an additional responsibility and that was "…to give them something to listen to."

The literature on African American professors does indicate that they are often challenged in some of the ways I was challenged by students (Johnson-Bailey & Cervero, 2008; West, 1993). However, I learned while conducting this study how to deal with student challenges. It is important to be true to who I am, and to stay grounded in some of the premises of an Endarkened Feminist Epistemology; namely, by recognizing that the classroom is a community, supporting "deep" listening within the learning environment, etc. (Dillard, 2006).

The third significant moment of this study occurred while I was analyzing the data. As a novice researcher I experienced difficulty separating my personal interest in arts-based

ways of knowing from the actual research data. I am so invested in the value of arts-based learning that I wanted all of the research findings to also reflect its value. The professors that participated definitely indicated a strong support for arts-based learning and I wanted the learners' sentiments to be equally affirming. My Thesis Adviser had to frequently remind me that the data was reflecting otherwise and that I needed to guard against my personal interest because it could taint my research; many of the students didn't highlight arts-based ways of knowing as important in their learning. As mentioned in chapter 6, the learners enjoyed engaging experiences and they were not particularly wedded to a specific type of learning activity. As far as they are concerned, they need to be engaged and that their cultural experiences must also be included. Thus, I will recall the impact of this experience while conducting future research efforts.

The goodness of the research process spilled into other parts of my life. I am also personally indebted to the individuals that participated. I was introduced to five wonderful professors and nine engaged learners. Without hesitation most of the participants agreed to participate in this study, and our interviews created an indelible bond. I need and appreciate the telephone calls and emails that keep us in touch and provide the latest updates.

Julia, a graduate student in an arts integrated graduate program and K-12 teacher who participated in the study, summarized all of our feelings handily when she said, "…all of us are being transformed personally." As previously mentioned, my transformation is due to the conversations I had with these educators and learners because they raised my conscious. The most important thing I learned is that: just because you enjoy doing something outside of the classroom does not mean you can not use that thing inside the classroom to experience the same level of enjoyment. This change occurred almost as Professor Music predicted when he

indicated that arts-based activities help educators connect cultural identity with "life" experiences.

To this end, my soul mate and I decided we had to do something that would honor our heritage. We designed and produced several short movie clips that are based on two different parts of the African American experience; namely, the Buffalo Soldiers' story and the story of African American educators. Together we worked hard to create products that reflected our sense of responsibility.   My soul mate was the producer and technical wizard and I was the researcher, narrator and script writer. Our roles aligned with our interest. He has the eye for pictures that communicate stories, knows how to search for the best sources of information and music, knows how to bring out the best in me, and can make technology do what it is designed to do. On the other hand, I love reading and learning something new. I also tend to be more of an expressive writer.

Viewers of the Buffalo Soldier digital versatile disc (DVD) encouraged and "prodded" us to have it copyrighted. The long and arduous copyright process has not deterred us from making another recording. We were inspired by the gracious nature of President-elect Barack Obama to create a DVD for my dissertation defense that expressed our gratitude for African American educators. There are far too many historical and contemporary individuals to thank for their dedication and commitment. Although, difficult we selected a few that represented or represents the best of their day; starting with those that were enslaved to those who know current forms of freedom. The desire of Fredrick Douglas, perseverance of Fanny Jackson Coppin, intellectual prowess of W.E.B. DuBois and Alain Leroy Locke, dedication of Sepitma Clark and authenticity of Cornell West, Juanita Johnson Bailey, Bill Cosby and Elizabeth Peterson are all expressed in our DVD (see Appendix D).

Unfortunately, neither of us knows where this passion for creating comes from, nor how it manifested in our lived experiences. Somehow it must all connect with our African roots. Most of the enslaved males and females brought to United States were from West Africa and chances are that is where our family originated. Maybe this explains how we developed an interest in using the written and spoken word in a manner similar to the Yoruba people of West Africa. They are known for crafting insightful proverbs and we aspire to do the same using electronic media. Their proverbs help the readers and listeners conceive and understand the essence of human relationships, events, life's situations and the behavior patterns of people, we seek similar results. Take for example the philosophical question: what makes a person more educated than another? There is a Yoruba proverb that aptly captures their response: The freedom that comes from ignorance enslaves the one who entertains it. My mate and I interpret the meaning to be: gaining knowledge is a lifelong process.

This statement about the role of education brings me full circle. I started these closing thoughts with reflections on how life time pursuits lead me to the doctoral program at Penn State University and how my studies moved me beyond previous limitations. Now, I feel better equipped to effectively maneuver through the next chapter of life.

APPENDIX A

Recruitment Script:

Hello, my name is Michele Mont. I am a doctoral student in the Adult Education Program, at Penn State University. I am conducting research in order to complete the requirements of my doctoral studies. My study is titled The Arts and African American Higher Education Students. I am interested in developing/studying methods to increase the achievement levels of these higher education students. In particular, I am interesting in determining the impact of artistic expression on learners when it is included in higher ed. classrooms. By artistic expression, I am referring to the use of role plays or other dramatic performances, dance, or two and three dimensional art forms. I would like to briefly interview any African American student who is attending this class. I am willing to answer your questions about this study and provide additional details. Everyone who participates in the study will receive a copy of an Informed Consent form which supplies my contact information and details the purpose of my research efforts.

APPENDIX B

INFORMED CONSENT FORM FOR SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH
The Pennsylvania State University

Title of Project: The Arts & African American Higher Ed. Students

Principal Investigator: Michele A. Mont, Doctoral Student, Penn State Harrisburg, School of Behavioral Sciences, W351 Olmsted Bldg., Middletown, PA. 17057, e-mail: mam1096@psu.edu; 717-657-8557.

Adviser: Elizabeth J. Tisdell, Associate Professor in Adult Education, Penn State Harrisburg, School of Behavioral Sciences, W351 Olmsted Bldg., Middletown, PA 17057, e-mail: ejt11@psu.edu; 717-948-6640.

1. Purpose of the Study: The purpose of the study is twofold: 1.find out to what extent adult education faculty and undergraduate/graduate African American students draw on the arts in their teaching and learning; and, 2. to find out what meaning instructors and their students make of the use of the arts in the classroom.

2. Procedures to be followed: In some of your classes the arts have been incorporated. You are being asked permission to use your responses to interview questions about these courses as part of this research project. The interview questions will focus on your college experience and the courses you completed and your comments will be included in this study's findings.

3. Benefits: You might learn more about the role of the arts in adult and higher education. Also, this research might provide a better understanding of how to teach using this modality.

4. Duration/Time: There is no additional time required for your participation in this study. The interview is not part of your course work, will not impact your course grade and it will be conducted outside of your normal course time. The interview will last for approximately 30 minutes.

5. Statement of Confidentiality: Only the Michele Mont, the primary investigator and her adviser, Dr. Elizabeth Tisdell, will have access to the data from this study, and to your true identity. Further, any comments or questions made by you during discussions will not be attributed to you in any way, and such remarks will be attributed to a pseudonym. In addition, all data for the study will be stored in a locked filing cabinet in the home of the primary investigator and will be destroyed at the completion of the study by May of 2010. Your employer will not know of your participation and will not have access to any of the data.

The interview will be audio-recorded and transcribed by Michele Mont. You will have an opportunity to review the transcripts and make modifications to anything that does not accurately reflect your comments or intentions. The recordings and transcripts will be secured by Michele Mont in a locked file cabinet for three (3) years after the completion of this study. The recordings and transcripts will be destroyed when the three years have expired.

6. Right to Ask Questions: You can ask questions about the research. Contact Dr. Elizabeth J. Tisdell at 717-948-6640 with questions or via e-mail at ejt11@psu.edu.

7. Voluntary Participation: Participation is voluntary. You can withdraw from the study at any time by notifying the principal investigator. You can decline to answer specific questions.

You must be 18 years of age or older to consent to participate in this research study. If you consent to participate in this research study and to the terms above, please sign your name and indicate the date below. You will be given a copy for your records.

_____

Participant Signature   Date

I, the undersigned, verify that above informed consent procedure has been followed.

_____

Investigator Signature   Date

APPENDIX C

Student Interview Guide

Instructions: Please briefly answer the following questions.

1. What was your favorite college course? And, why?

2. How was the course presented? Please explain.

3. What was/were the significant part(s) of the learning experience?

4. What was your favorite part of the learning experience? Please explain.

5. What (if any) issues surfaced during the learning experience?

6. What is your overall assessment of using the artistic expression within collegiate classrooms?

7. What lessons were learned about the use of artistic expression within collegiate classrooms?

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APPENDIX D
DVD Title= *African American Educators on Education*

Subtitle = *The Original Desire*

    1.   Frederick Douglas – Narrative of the life of Frederick Douglas: An a
        American Slave, 1845

I lived in Master Hugh's family about seven years. During this time, I succeeded in learning to read and write. In accomplishing this, I was compelled to resort to various stratagems, had no regular teacher. My mistress, who had kindly commenced to instruct me, had, in compliance with the advice and direction of her husband, not only ceased to instruct, but had set her face against my being instructed by any one else.
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Subtitle **=** *Perseverance*

2.   Fanny Jackson Coppin- Retrieved from Wikipedia, Oct. 31, 2008

Speaks of her life with the Calverts:

"My life there was most happy, and I never would have left her, but it was in me to get an education and to teach my people. This idea was deep in my soul. Where it came from I cannot tell. It must have been born in me."

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Subtitle = *Scholarly Achievement*

3.   W.E.B. Du Bois - The Souls of Black Folk, W.E.B. DuBois, 1969

When you have mastered numbers, you will in fact no longer be reading numbers, any more than you read words when reading books You will be reading meanings.

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 4.   Alain Leroy Locke - Trends in Adult Education for Negros, 1940

…adult education, particularly in this field of Negro need, is too orthodox in its techniques and too conservative in its objectives. The general results of even widening effort and increasingly public response are still too superficial for vital and satisfactory results.

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Subtitle = *Dedication*

5. Sepitma Poinsette Clark - Retrieved from Wikipedia, Oct. 31, 2008

I have great belief in the fact that whenever there is chaos, it creates wonderful thinking. I consider chaos a gift.

==

Subtitle = *Authenticity*

6. Cornell West - Race Matters, 1993

As long as hope remains and meaning is preserved, the possibility of overcoming oppression stays alive.

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7. Juanita Johnson Bailey- Sistahs in College, 2001

There is much common ground among all women who return to school after twenty-five. Most are married with children according to national education statistics. Several major research studies have also shown that these women have tended to put others' needs ahead of their own. Now they are back in school and attempting to place this one need, school, center stage. Black women; however, are set apart from other reentry women by the low status they are ascribed in America in terms of who matters and who contributes most. The impact of living under such confines makes their experiences in college different from those other nontraditional students.

==
8. Bill Cosby - Prologue to "Letters to the Next President: What We Can Do About the Real Crisis in Public Education" Teachers College Press, 2004

I'm looking at the junkiest room I've ever seen. It is a classroom in an American public school; it is public education in America today. A child did not make the room junky; generations of litterers — legislators, school board members, superintendents, principals, taxpayers, teachers and presidents did.

Given the mess, it is a wonder that our children are able to do even as well as they do. We must be grateful that there always have been talented and determined teachers who find their way through the maze of rules and special interests and do what they became teachers to do: help their students shine.

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9.   Elizabeth Peterson – Freedom Road, 1996

It is interesting to note that for the former slaves little distinction was made between children and adults in the classroom. All needed to learn. Adult education played as vital a role as child education in the struggle for freedom.

===

Credits

Production:

Just "O" Productions
Charles Oakley, Owner

Narration:

Michele Mont, Penn State Doctoral Student

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VITA

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Michele worked in the human resources field for over twenty years as an adult educator. She designed, developed and presented training programs for all levels of Commonwealth employees; namely, executive, management, and unionized personnel, until retiring in 2006. These professional experiences led to her placement in the 1998 Who's Who in Professional Management.

She enrolled in the Adult Education doctoral program at Penn State University during the fall of 2004. Her collegiate experiences led to several prestigious honors: namely, placement in Phi Lambda Theta (national education honor society); publication in the Adult Education Quarterly; presentations at several pre conferences of the Adult Education Research Conference; and, elected Secretary to the Board of Directors for West Chester University Alumni Association.

Professionally, Michele has been an active member of the American Society for Training and Development (ASTD) and the Harrisburg Area International Personnel Management Association. She has published several articles within ASTD journals. In her spare time she is an adjunct professor for a local university and college; she occasionally tutors for the Central Penna. Literacy Council and is an avid potter.