

Collaborative imaginative drawing and participatory art in a primary school

Dibujos imaginativos de colaboración y arte participativo en una escuela primaria

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Abstract:

This paper begins with a work of collaborative imaginative drawing made by five 9 and 10 year olds in Wales, UK. A detail from the drawing is expanded and explored to reveal deeply embedded visual meaning making. In contrast to this collaborative art, an underlying conceptual framework for art curricula in British schools still foregrounds *individuals* making unique art objects. In recent years, a number of British art educators have questioned this *fine-art* approach and contrast it with developments in contemporary art, for example, participatory and relational art. The relational encounters, which children experienced as they drew together, are powerful aesthetic experiences which should be acknowledged along with the art objects they make.

The collaborative drawing workshop introduced above was a complex social situation. In his book *Frame Analysis* (1974), the sociologist Erving Goffman develops an approach to illuminating what is going on in the detail of social encounters. Goffman looks very closely at micro-meanings embedded in social interaction. To enable Goffman's approach to be applied to understanding more about the visual encounters of the workshop, an adaption of auto-driven image-elicitation used by visual ethnographers is developed specifically with participant children in mind. An assemblage, inspired by Goffman's approach, is then applied to facilitate an interpretation of this data. As images and ideas tumbled into existence, the relations between the ideas had deep aesthetic significance for the participants. Children exhibit the flow and flux of idea making which chimes with radical empiricist notions such as pure experience.

Key Words:

Children, drawing, participation, Goffman

Extended Abstract in Spanish:

Este artículo establece marcadores para un proyecto de investigación en vías de desarrollo en el campo de la educación artística en la enseñanza primaria. Para comenzar, presento un trabajo de dibujo imaginativo de colaboración hecho por cinco niños de 9 y 10 años de edad en una escuela primaria de Gales, Reino Unido. Se amplía un detalle del dibujo. Se presenta un texto al final del papel, que es una síntesis interpretativa de la conversación de los niños tanto cuando hicieron la imagen como cuando reflejaron su experiencia después de hacer el dibujo. El taller de dibujo imaginativo de colaboración, que condujo al trabajo, abarcó valores pedagógicos de reflexividad, improvisación, colaboración e imaginación. Siga este enlace para visitar una [fotohistoria](#) en alta resolución que muestra por internet, con texto e imágenes, una narrativa simple del taller que organicé yo mismo en el papel de profesor.

El taller se ideó para enfocar racionalidades en conflicto en la creación de arte. La primera es una tradición de Bellas Artes que tiene sus orígenes en Europa en el siglo dieciocho. La

segunda racionalidad se ejemplifica en el arte participativo y relacional defendido respectivamente por Claire Bishop (2012) y Nicolas Bourriaud (2002).

En la tradición de Bellas Artes, las obras de arte son objetos discretos, valiosos por sí mismos de un modo estético. Estas ideas sobre el arte provienen de la Ilustración y encarnan conceptos tales como la belleza y la elegancia, expresados por artistas que crean objetos de arte distintos e individuales a través de una práctica refinada y hábil que, por su parte, requieren la apreciación del gusto. Estos objetos tienen valor económico debido a su unicidad y finas cualidades. Esta fineza, ya sea apreciada o poseída, es un emblema de separación frente a sensaciones ordinarias y a las clases bajas. Se trata de un sistema en el cual el artista y aquellos que aprecian el arte ponen énfasis en la creatividad individual.

En contraste, el comentario crítico reciente sobre el arte visual contemporáneo ha establecido que muchos artistas expresan ideas mediante forma artística que *no* se localiza en objetos físicos discretos (pinturas, esculturas etc.), sino en relaciones y encuentros entre artistas, gente, lugar y tiempo – estas relaciones son obras de arte y es en formas relacionales que la experiencia estética se localiza. Vale la pena citar que Bishop (2012) describe muchos proyectos artísticos contemporáneos en los cuales el artista, como un único creador dominante de objetos estéticos, desaparece de la vista.

En el taller de trabajo, los niños llevan a cabo una obra de arte. Esto expone rasgos de valor estético localizado en la tradición de las Bellas Artes. Sin embargo, la pedagogía que catalizó los dibujos imaginativos de colaboración pone de relieve valores localizados en la participación. La autoría de niños individuales se desvanece y el sentido incrustado en el dibujo se expresa tanto en el proceso de fabricación, a medida que los niños hablan y dibujan conjuntamente, como en las imágenes del objeto terminado. Parece que esta pedagogía para la enseñanza del arte está en desacuerdo con un marco conceptual subyacente para planes de estudios de arte en escuelas británicas, que todavía sitúa en un primer plano a *individuos* creando objetos artísticos *únicos*.

Como un primer paso hacia la puesta en claro de las tensiones en la educación artística en la escuela primaria entre, por una parte, el valor estético en objetos de arte hechos por individuos y, por otra parte, practica participativa del arte (una característica inevitable del arte en los colegios), el estudio se centra en los métodos que se emplean para contestar a la pregunta siguiente: ¿Qué es lo que sucede cuando los niños colaboran para hacer un dibujo imaginativo? Tomando una indicación de la Etnometodología, acudo al trabajo del sociólogo, Erving Goffman quien formuló preguntas similares para suscitar una atención rigurosa a la complejidad multiestratificada de la atribución de significado en las micro-maters de interacción social. Aunque el último texto seminal de Goffman, *Análisis del Marco* (1994), se escribiera hace cuarenta años, su planteamiento empírico esencialmente radical fue la inspiración para esta investigación.

En la introducción de *Análisis del Marco*, Goffman comienza a desplegar ante nosotros su territorio: “este libro trata de la organización de la experiencia”, se refiere a “la estructura de la experiencia que los individuos tienen en cualquier momento de sus vidas sociales” (Goffman, 1974, p. 13). Esto no es una descripción de la estructura de la experiencia como si mirásemos la experiencia desde arriba e intentando ver patrones y reglas – eso es lo que la experiencia es – sino una mirada para ver cómo trabaja la experiencia – esta imagen se forma dentro de la experiencia e incluye los elementos básicos que estructuran nuestra experiencia para nosotros mismos.

Para explicar esta experiencia, Goffman presta una atención casi dolorosamente enfocada a la microestructura de los significados. Pero esta observación se enfoca más allá del primer plano de significados que la gente forma en situaciones sociales respecto a las definiciones implícitas de las situaciones que dan forma a los significados generados dentro de ellos. Es esta dimensión velada la que define situaciones que son los 'marcos' en el *Análisis del Marco*. Sin embargo, es vital reconocer que los marcos de Goffman no confinan ni retienen del mismo modo en que el marco de un cuadro podría cercar una imagen. Abren y revelan conceptos de los que se podría decir que forman el fondo, contexto, o escenario de los significados. Los marcos son un andamio que hace posible historias creíbles sobre lo que está pasando.

Aparte del término *marco*, Goffman formula, entre otros términos, las metáforas: *puesta en clave, estratificación o laminación, fabricación y anclaje*, para explicar cuán vulnerables son los marcos ante cualquier cambio dado en las capas de una situación. El estudio sugiere que la reflexión sobre los conceptos de Goffman de claves y estratos o laminaciones como habilitadores y posibilitadores de marcos ilustrará cómo un enfoque goffmanesco podría contribuir al entendimiento de “qué es lo que está pasando” en una actividad de arte en una clase de escuela primaria. El uso por parte de Goffman de la clave de *hacer-creer* y en particular el concepto de *guiones dramáticos* se emplea para inspirar textos interpretativos que iluminan la generación de significado en el proceso de creación de dibujos de colaboración y en la imaginación de los propios dibujos.

La revelación o descubrimiento de cómo se crean de modo espontáneo complejas laminaciones de significado a medida que los niños colaboran en llevar a cabo dibujos imaginativos puede apuntar a valores implícitos en el arte participativo más que en las Bellas Artes.

Antes de volver atrás al “qué es lo que está pasando” respecto al arte que los niños llevan a cabo en este taller de trabajo, este estudio observa detalladamente los métodos empleados para la recogida de datos al mismo tiempo que los niños colaboraban en la realización del dibujo imaginativo. Una herramienta de vital importancia fue la fotografía y también se tratan aquellos aspectos en torno al uso técnico de la cámara y edición de imágenes. La elicitación autoconducida de imágenes se introduce como un método que ayuda a poner de relieve cómo los niños participantes enmarcan su entendimiento acerca de qué era lo que estaba ocurriendo en el taller.

Se presentan dos ejemplos que muestran cómo pueden convertirse en ensamblajes las imágenes, las transcripciones de lo que los niños decían y los textos interpretativos inspirados por Goffman. Se sugiere que el ensamblaje es una metáfora valiosa de cómo existe el significado dentro de las relaciones entre elementos discretos autónomos que se crean por esta metodología de investigación. El estudio introduce brevemente el uso del término *ensamblaje* por Gilles Deleuze.

El estudio concluye mencionando que a medida que los niños hacen dibujos imaginativos de colaboración, se deslizan suave y uniformemente de un lado a otro dentro de diferentes reinos de fantasía y realidad en lo que dibujan y en aquello que dicen a la vez que llevan a cabo los dibujos. Se trata de algo muy distinto a lo que experimentan como aprendizaje en la escuela. Los niños exhiben la fluctuación y el flujo de la creación espontánea e improvisada de ideas. Sugiero que esto armoniza con el empirismo radical tanto de una tradición americana ejemplificada por William James como con una escuela filosófica francesa más reciente ejemplificada por Gilles Deleuze.

Finalmente, como investigador en la educación artística para niños de enseñanza primaria, marco en este estudio tres campos para un futuro trabajo:

Cómo mirar detenidamente y con rigor “aquello que está pasando” cuando los niños colaboran para hacer juntos arte imaginativo en la escuela, lo cual refleja tanto cómo se forman las ideas imaginativas como de qué modo encuentran forma en el arte que los niños producen.

Cómo contribuir a un debate acerca de la relevancia de niños individuales que hacen en la escuela objetos de arte discretos. Esto es, objetos que expresan sentimientos personales y percepciones en la tradición de Bellas Artes. Este debate se debería establecer a la luz de la producción artística reciente en la práctica artística participativa y relacional. Esta práctica del arte ha forjado también una relación entre arte y pedagogía (Bishop 2012) y sitúa necesariamente la práctica del arte en el contexto social y político de colegios y aulas.

A la luz de ese estudio empírico y debate conceptual, intento explorar una base conceptual para la enseñanza de la educación artística en la educación primaria que se nutre de las respectivas tradiciones del empirismo radical que encontramos en el pragmatismo americano de William James y John Dewey y en la filosofía francesa más reciente ejemplificada por Jacques Deleuze. La tradición filosófica francesa reciente ha sido traída a la atención de educadores del arte por Dennis Atkinson.

En este contexto, marca este estudio el primer paso hacia un proyecto de investigación en curso que explicitará la importancia del arte participativo y relacional en las bases fundamentales existentes para la enseñanza del arte en escuelas primarias de Gran Bretaña. Ello, por la vía de un empirismo riguroso concentrado en aquello que sucede cuando los niños, en colaboración, llevan a cabo arte imaginativo en la escuela primaria.

Key Words in Spanish:

Niños, dibujar, participación, Goffman

Introduction

This paper sets markers for a developing research project in the field of primary school art education. To begin, I present a work of collaborative imaginative drawing made by five 9 and 10 year olds in a primary school in Wales, UK (Fig. 1). A detail from the drawing is expanded (Fig. 2). A text, presented towards the close of this paper, is an interpretive synthesis of children's talk both as they made the image and as they reflected on what was happening after making the drawing. The collaborative imaginative drawing workshop, which led up to the work, embraced pedagogical values of improvisation, collaboration and imagination. A link is given with Fig. 2 to a hi-resolution photo-story displayed on-line which shows, with text and images, a simple narrative about what children experienced in the workshop which was organised by myself acting as a teacher.

The workshop was devised to bring into focus conflicting rationales in making art. The first is a tradition of *fine art* which has its origins in Europe in the eighteenth century. The second rationale is exemplified by participatory and relational art championed respectively by Claire Bishop (2012) and Nicolas Bourriaud (2002).

In the fine art tradition artworks are mostly discrete objects, valuable for their own sake in an aesthetic way. These ideas about art originate in the Enlightenment and embody concepts such as the beautiful and the elegant, which are expressed by artists who make art objects through refined and skilful practice which, in turn, require taste to be appreciated. These discrete art objects have financial value due to their uniqueness and fine qualities. This fineness, whether appreciated or owned, is a badge of separation from ordinary sensations and the lower classes (Bourdieu, 1984). This, as Clowney (2011) suggests, is a system in which the artist and those who appreciate art place an "emphasis on individual creativity and art for art's sake" (p. 318).

In contrast, recent critical commentary about contemporary visual art has established that many artists express ideas using artistic form which is *not* located in discrete physical objects (paintings, sculptures etc) but in relations and encounters between artists, people, place and time – these relations are artworks and it is in relational forms that aesthetic experience is located (Irvin & O'Donoghue, 2012). This has been called relational art (Bourriaud, 2002) and participatory art (Bishop, 2012). It is worth noting that Bishop (2012) describes many contemporary artistic projects in which the artist, as a single dominant creator of aesthetic objects, disappears from view.

An artwork is made by children in the workshop. This exhibits features of aesthetic value located in discrete art objects in the fine art tradition. However, the pedagogy which catalysed collaborative imaginative drawing foregrounds values located in participation. The authorship of individual children as artists fades and the meaning embedded in the drawing is expressed by children as much in the process of making, as they talk and draw together, as in the imagery of the finished object. This pedagogy for teaching art seems to be at odds with an underlying conceptual framework for art curricula in British schools, which still foreground *individuals* making *unique* art objects.

The paper which follows focuses on the methods used to answer the following question: What is it that is going on when children collaborated to make an imaginative drawing? The sociologist, Erving Goffman, asked similar questions to prompt a rigorous attention on the multi-layered complexity of meaning making in the micro-matters of social interaction. Although Goffman's last seminal text, *Frame Analysis* (1994), was written forty years ago,

his essentially radically empiricist and ethnomethodological approach was the inspiration for this research.

This is the first step towards an ongoing research project which will draw out the significance of participatory and relational art for existing rationales for teaching art in primary schools art education in Great Britain. This is via a rigorous empiricism focused on what happens when collaborate children make imaginative art in primary school.

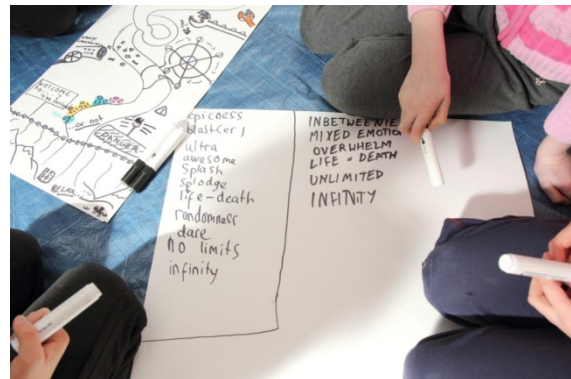


Figure 1: Made by five children from Whitchurch Primary School, Cardiff, Wales (2013).

Welcome to Infinity. Market pen and ink on Medium Density Fibre board (1700mm x 400mm). For a complete hi-resolution photo-story of the workshop which led up to children making this image visit [Ficker](#).



Figure 2: Detail from panel made by five children from Whitchurch Primary School, Cardiff, Wales (2013). *Welcome to Infinity*. Market pen and ink on Medium Density Fibre board (600mm x 400mm).



Figures 3-8: Children working on collaborative imaginative drawings. For a complete hi-resolution photo-story of this workshop visit [Ficker](#).

Background

Ford (2003) suggests that in practice the reason for teaching art, craft and design in British primary schools falls into one of three categories: “occupational (it keeps children busy), illustrative (the learning taking place is essentially located in another discipline) or decorative (providing something for the school walls)” (p. 264). Although Ford was writing over ten years ago, my experience as a primary school teacher, teacher trainer and art educator who regularly works in schools, would suggest that not only have these reasons for teaching art not changed, but that they are even more prevalent. Even if, as Ford (2003) goes on to write, “The vast majority of teachers want to improve their practice and be more creative in their teaching”, they are inhibited by has been described as conceptual confusion about the purpose and value of art education (Holt, 1989). There may be passivity and indifference because, in their hearts, primary teachers and head teachers don’t think art matters in the face of stipulated basic skills in literacy and numeracy.

But the arts do matter to government, and the in the UK, both the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and the Department of Education (DfE) in joint a policy summary published on-line say that: “Innovative, challenging and exciting arts and culture improve people’s lives and benefit our economy... that involving young people in the arts increases their academic performance, encourages creativity, and supports talent early on” (DCMS & DfE, 2013). In these terms, art is vital to society. In the English school curriculum the value of art is also promoted by the latest purpose of study statement in the 2014 English National Curriculum which states that art is one of “the highest forms of human creativity’ and contributes “to the culture, creativity and wealth of our nation” (DfE, 2013 p. 176). Research has shown that primary school teachers and head teachers would also like children to experience art in school (Downing, Johnson, & Kaur, 2003). So ironically, art in primary school seems to both matter a great deal and, at the same time, be marginalised as occupational, illustrative or decorative. Perhaps this is because in practice the subject is not well understood. British based researchers, who have either surveyed opinions or undertaken forms of discourse analysis, support this view. They argue that the subject is not well understood neither from the perspective of the nature of art and design nor from the perspective of how pedagogy specific to learning in and through art is valuable to children in primary school (Holt, 1989; Prentice, 2002; Downing, Johnson, & Kaur, 2003; Watts, 2005; Hallam, Lee, & das Gupta, 2007; Hall, & Thomson, 2007). This is reflected in inconsistent standards of teaching and achievement for art and design in primary schools (Ofsted 2011).

Where does this confusion and uncertainty about the value of art in primary school lie? Some writers argue it is in the tension between the subject of art as promoting self-expression – a kind of freedom for children, and art as a set of skills – art teachers need to teach children in instrumental and objective driven ways (Hawkins, 2002; Prentice, 2002; Ford, 2003). Hallam, Lee and das Gupta (2007) point out, that in addition to the self-expression versus skills dilemma, there is also the sometimes conflicting expectation that children learn about art and artists from the past.

On another tack Addison (2010) also shows that art educators emphasise their subject’s distinctiveness in the curriculum as fine art in fostering “individuality, self expression, autonomy and spiritual well-being” (p. 8). Pupils are encouraged to work individually on discrete objects which show technical skill and express personal ideas and feelings about themselves and the world. But, in the face of developments in contemporary thought, there is a growing theoretical critique of this fine art dominated approach. Atkinson (2006) notes that Addison (2003, 2005) argues that in adopting an almost unquestioned fine art philosophy to

teaching art, “the school art curriculum has evolved an insular approach to art practice and understanding art practice” to such an extent that “practice in art education has reached the point where the subject is in danger of becoming an anachronism” (p. 17). Steers (2010) argues, “little progress has been made to halt the subject’s retrenchment into a limited fine-art approach” (p.27). The most recent English National Curriculum (2013) programs of study highlight using sketchbooks; mastery of art and design techniques such as drawing, painting and sculpture; and knowing more about great artists. This is a traditional, fine art conceptualisation of the subject. In primary education, Herne, Cox and Watts (2009) write that although Geoffrey Southworth was writing about art in primary schools over 30 years ago, his description of first principles in primary school art education “presents us with a conception of the subject that will seem very familiar to many readers” (p. 11). Southworth (1982) emphasised that art education is “concerned with individuals and a regard for individuality” (p. 221). He expanded this position in three ways claiming that first, “individuality is intrinsic to the artistic process”; second, visual art “fosters a sense of one’s own identity”; and third, “art is personal... individuality involves personal expression” (p. 223). Again, this is a fine art model of art education foregrounding how individuals express themselves by making art objects.

In stark contrast, participatory contemporary art practice is characterised by forms of art which may happen inside gallery spaces (spaces especially reserved for the presentation of art) or outside in landscapes, communities, streets, living rooms, the internet in fact anywhere where humans go (Bishop, 2012). In this context, “rather than a discrete, portable, autonomous work of art that transcends its context, relational art is entirely beholden to the contingencies of its environment and audience” (Bishop, 2004, p. 54). The words ‘activity’ and ‘relationships’ are also vital components of Bourriaud’s (2002) own definition of art. He argues that thinking about art as only being about producing objects does not sufficiently reflect the social arena (society) which has moved very far and very fast towards many forms of fluid expression through communication media. A better rationale for art must be: ‘perceptive, experimental, critical and participatory’ (Bourriaud, 2002, p.12). So in this paradigm, art is clearly more than just about single self contained objects such as paintings, drawings and sculptures.

Relational and participatory artists often emphasise values. Bishop (2004) notes that Bourriaud (2002) “argues that the criteria we should use to evaluate open-ended, participatory art works are not just aesthetic, but political and even ethical: we must judge the ‘relations’ that are produced by relational art works” (p. 64). How might these ethical judgements, appropriate to relational and participatory art works, intersect with judgements about the appropriateness of teaching children in a way which emphasises technical mastery, great artists and the production of paintings and sculptures?

Although art education theorists such as Atkinson (2012) and Gude (2013) have explored, if from very different standpoints, the impact of contemporary art on art education, there is a lack of research which examines these issues with methodological rigour in terms of what happens when older children make art in primary school. That is children 7 – 11 years of age. I have established that there might be a conflictual relation between the conceptual frames of participatory and relational art making on the one hand and individuality expressed in unique and aesthetic art objects on the other. As a first step towards illuminating this, the following methodology was devised to explore what it is that is going on when children collaborate to make an imaginative drawing.

Evoking Erving Goffman and paying attention to micro-matters of meaning making

It is perhaps surprising that a stocktaking of the discipline of art education in terms of references to Goffman reveals a surprising paucity of explicit influence. In over 50 years (up to today) of papers in: the *International Journal of Art and Design Education* and *Studies in Art Education*, there are only direct 14 references to Goffman in any form. All of these are minor asides. Goffman's ideas have never taken central stage; indeed they have never even appeared as a bit player or extra. There are no references to Goffman in the *International Journal of Education Through Art*. Is this because Goffman is considered a sociologist outside the remit of art education? Perhaps it is because Goffman's time as a fashionable writer on the intricacies of human interaction has passed. Yet, even a cursory reading of an introduction to Goffman, suggests that his view of social interactions and his ideas about the organisation of experience should have gelled with art educators, who are confronted with how it is that children make meaning as they make art in the social context of the school class room. This is especially so as Goffman aligns himself firmly with a radical empiricism, which he traces back to William James (1842–1910) and which finds a home in art education via the writings of John Dewey (1859–1952). This paper proposes that it is possible to come to an understanding of the collaborative imaginative drawing activity by evoking Goffman's (1974) central question about the organisation of experience: what is it that is going on here? This echoes his radical empiricist approach, which builds on careful observation and recording of what happens when children make art together. Inspired by Goffman, I wanted to focus on the micro-meanings at the heart of social interaction as children talked and drew together.

In the introduction of *Frame Analysis* Goffman begins to spread before us his territory: “this book is about the organisation of experience”, he is addressing “the structure of experience individuals have at any moment of their social lives” (Goffman, 1974, p. 13). Jameson (1976), in one of the earliest reviews of *Frame Analysis*, suggests that at the root of Goffman's endeavour, “meanings, in everyday life, are the projection of the structure or form of the experiences in which they are embodied” (p. 119). Goffman calls these everyday moments ‘situations’. In *Frame Analysis*, Goffman illuminates situations by “an indication, a gesture which reveals the world as it really is, as it obviously is. It is just that we have not seen it this way before and all it needed was somebody to direct our gaze, somebody to show us” (Craib, 1978, p. 79). It is not a picture of the structure of experience as though we are looking down onto experience and attempting to see patterns and rules – that is what experience is – but an image looking into how experience works – this image is formed inside experience and includes the nuts and bolts that structure our experience for us.

To account for this experience, Goffman pays “an almost painfully focused attention to the microstructure of meanings...that most people are unaware of most of the time”, and applies “a rigor in exactly describing such behaviour” (Berger, 1985, p. xii). His theoretical strategy is to build from strong observation (Berger, 1985). But this observation is focused beyond the foreground of meanings that people make in social situations towards the implicit definitions of the situations that shape the meanings generated within them. It is this veiled dimension which defines situations which are the ‘frames’ in *Frame Analysis*. However, it is vital to acknowledge that Goffman's frames are not confining or restraining in the way a picture frame might enclose an image. They are opening and revealing concepts which could be said to form the background, context, or setting for meanings (Berger, 1985). Frames are an enabling scaffold for credible stories about what is going on Koenig (2004).

Apart from the term *frame*, Goffman formulates, amongst other terms, the metaphors of *keying*, *lamination*, *fabricating* and *anchoring*, to account for how vulnerable frames are to change in any given *strip* of a situation. Strips are sliced or cut “from the stream of ongoing activity, including here sequences of happenings, real or fictive, as seen from the perspective of those subsequently involved in sustaining an interest in them” (Goffman, 1974, p. 10). Strips will encompass any “raw batch of occurrences” that are drawn attention to, in which it is assumed, “that when individuals attend to in any current situation, they face the question: “What is it that is going on here?”... the question is put and the answer to it is presumed by the way individuals then proceed to get on with affairs at hand” (Goffman, 1974, p. 8).

More detail about the Goffman’s concepts of *keys* and *laminations* will illustrate how a Goffmanesque approach will contribute to understanding what is going on in an art activity in a primary school class. Goffman’s concept of *key* (loosely analogous to the term key in music) formalises the kinds of transcriptions from activities understood as primary frameworks into similarly patterned activities but understood by participants or observers as being something else (Goffman, 1974, p. 44). Goffman offers examples of ways of keying as follows:

1. *Make-believe*: forms of representing which include, *playfulness* (for example a non-serious mimicry); *daydreaming* or fantasy; and *dramatic scripts* (including experiences made available to others through TV, radio, newspapers, books, stories, role-play etc.) Many of these make-believe keys feature in children’s experiences in school including examples of: reporting back, writing stories, writing non-fiction accounts, role-play scenarios in class as well simply playing games in free-time which recreate adult scenarios. Children’s collaborative imaginary drawing are likely to reveal many examples of meaning made using a make-believe key encompassing playfulness, fantasy and dramatic scripts.
2. *Ceremonials*: which are forms of social ritual. Goffman refers to how individuals become characters other than themselves, to represent a social role. In art lessons and workshops in schools, whole rafts of activities are virtually scripted with the teacher or participating artist as choreographer, a professional officiator of what happens in class.
3. *Technical re-doings*: these include *practicing* (for example run-throughs and simulations); *demonstrations*; *documenting*; *experiments* (trying something out). These, in all these various forms, are everyday features of art teaching and learning.
4. *Regroundings*: this is where an activity does not have the prime motive it may at first appear to have. For example, a teacher might offer children an unstructured free-choice of activities, claiming that this is motivational and child centred even though the real motivation is to create some time to mark work. Goffman briefly offers the example of participant observation in qualitative research as a form of regrounding. In relation to this paper both the role of researcher as teacher and observer of what happens *and* of children as both participants in the workshop activity and knowing themselves as participants in a research project, are examples of how meanings expressed as keying through regrounding might emerge.

However, more complex readings are possible which involve a layering of definitions of a situation and Goffman coins the term *laminations* (1974, p. 156) to describe this. He gives many examples of how keys can be fabricated, and fabrications keyed, rekeyed and re-fabricated which become complex structures of meaning within one situation (Goffman, 1974, pp. 156-200). He asks the questions: “How many laminations can a strip of activity sustain? How far can things go? How complex can a frame structure be and still be effective

in setting the terms for experience?” (Goffman, 1974, p. 182). A précis of Goffman’s answer is that it is possible to conjure considerable depth to how situations are understood, but only to the point where there is a value in proceeding (Goffman, 1974). This paper proceeds with this pragmatic approach in mind; it is worth pursuing the layering of definitions with a situation only in that is useful to do so.

Goffman’s radical empiricist conceptual grounding in the writing of William James (1842 – 1910) argues that we can only make sense of what is going on by attending to experiences themselves first. This is encapsulated by James as “the instant field of the present” (1912, p. 23). Any theories or rationalizations are built out of this pure experience from the bottom up and, in an important sense, are secondary. Understanding what it is that is going on as children collaborate to make imaginary drawings in the workshop is approached here from this radical empiricist foundation. This is via a methodology which enables an interpretation informed by Goffman’s belief in the power of illuminating social situations by paying close attention to *pure experience* without systematising. This means that understanding a situation is built from that situation not from superimposing onto experience a pre-existing and separate conceptual frame – Goffman does not claim to be addressing “social organisation and social structure” as a whole (p. 13). A better way to think about Goffman’s text is as a gesture which reveals the world as it obviously is. His text is seductive in a literary way and not intended to be systematic (Carib, 1978). His example of indicating what is going on by presenting short extracts of experience, showing rather than telling, is followed in this research.

As I observed 9 and 10 year olds collaborating to make imaginative drawings, I realised that what was happening was revealed in two ways. Firstly, the complexity of the keyed laminations in the micro-matters of social interaction was evident in what children said as they drew. Secondly, laminations of keyed reality were visible in the drawings. What was at stake first was to look carefully at what it is that is going on.

Methods in context

Looking carefully at specific examples of what happens when children make art in school has not been a feature of existing primary art education research outside of explorations into creative meaning making in the early years – for example, research into multi modal meaning making in early years settings (e.g., Wright, 2014). This is not surprising given the complexities of the social context of the school class, the framework of teaching and learning, as well as the fluid and highly visual way art emerges. There is also the finished art work which results and all that that might mean. It is difficult to encompass such rich complexity. However, with Goffman’s approach to understanding complex social situations as inspiration, this research was based on a case study motivated by features of visual ethnography, ethnomethodology and art practice as research. In the background was my hope that looking carefully in this way might illuminate in a useful way tensions between fine art and participatory art rationales implied by primary school art teaching. The methodology encompassed:

- Pedagogy for collaborative imaginative drawing. Collaborative drawing foregrounds values implicit in both collaborative participation and the aesthetic and visual forms of art objects.
- Pedagogy which encompasses children making art as participant researchers. This foregrounds reflexivity in terms of meta-cognition about what happens as children

make art in school. Children as well as participant adults thought carefully about what it was that was going on.

- The art work children made.
- Methods I use as a researcher to investigate what it is that is going on when children make collaborative imaginative art. These includes: recording what children say as they make art; photography; a specific form of auto-driven image elicitation designed to maximise reflexion on visual meaning by all participants.

The work was undertaken with the collaboration of a primary school in Wales: Whitchurch Primary School, Cardiff. The Welsh project benefited from involvement of a contemporary art gallery in Cardiff, Bay Art Gallery, together with advice from Arts Council Wales. The contemporary gallery provide space and logistical support for children to make large panels and for me as a researcher to record what happened.

Visual methods through photography and auto-driven image-elicitation

Visual material was made or used in the study in following ways:

- I made photographic images to record and then build a picture of the activity; photographs included images of the drawings children were making.
- The photographs were edited to ensure a breadth of content representing all aspects of the workshop, and to reject photographs of an inferior technical quality.
- A selection of these images was chosen by participants, including children, and used to elicit their views about the activity after the event.
- Images were made by participating children in the form of collaborative imaginative drawings.
- Images, including both photographs and reproductions of children's drawings were edited, selected and processed to be used in an academic text.

The photographs used in this paper encompass a range of technical, descriptive and interpretative qualities. Each of these can be called upon as part of a process for expressing answers to the question, "What is it that is going on here?"

There were photographs taken:

- from the physical perspective of the participant children – the camera was amongst the children at their level (Fig. 9);
- with the camera positioned to provide an overview of the activity sometimes above the participants or, as it were, looking over their shoulder and apart from them – this includes a camera positioned above a group of participants in a fixed position and set to take time-lapse images during the activity (Fig. 10);
- to enable the researcher to show his subjective viewpoint on the activity and the participants – this was enhanced by cropping and processing the final image (Fig. 11);
- to keep a record of tools, equipment and the physical context of the activity (Fig. 12);
- to record the artwork made by the children (Fig. 13).

Each of the above is affected by: choice of camera; the nature of the lens; the choice of ISO setting (the in camera processor's relative sensitivity to light); the chosen digital resolution of the image; the angle of the camera; the viewpoint of the camera; compositional decisions

including what is included within the image; which part of the image is in focus or not; the speed of the shutter; the size of the aperture; and how the flash is used. In practice all these factors inter-relate to form reasons why an image looks the way it does in the raw before any processing or printing takes place (Wright, 2004).



Fig. 9



Fig. 10



Fig. 11



Fig. 12



Fig. 13

I generated a number of categories which reflected the range and character of photographs. This was guided by the framework used in the discussion of photographic techniques above. These were:

- photographs of a poor technical quality which masked the content (these were rejected);
- photographs as simple records of equipment and materials used;
- photographs taken from a child's physical point of view;
- photographs which showed an overview of activities from above;
- photographs of activity in the different venues – the classroom and the gallery;
- photographs which included images of the adults taking part;
- photographs of art work made by children;
- photographs taken by the researcher as aesthetic, personal images about the workshop event;
- photographs which represented the range of activities from the start to the finish of the workshop.

Fifty photographs, which encompassed these categories, were selected for the auto-driven image-elicitation sessions. Many images fitted several categories. Only basic post-processing techniques were used to enhance the image so that it was easily readable by the participants. Each photograph was the same size and shape. Each was printed on stiff A5 size paper.

A number of auto-driven image-elicitation sessions were organised with children who made drawings after the workshop. The term *auto-driving* refers to a technique "driven" by the informant, who sees their own experience and explains or comments on that experience (Heisley, & Levy, 1991). Respondents collaboratively self-select relevant photographs that show aspects of the situation they found most important and in doing so articulate to each other the reasons and thinking behind their selection. Through this process, auto-driving helps ensure that the technique includes ideas relevant to the child and not simply suggested by the conceptual framework of the adult. In this research, image-elicitation and auto-driving were developed as practical research tools for the classroom to help understand how children are conceptualising the complex experiences that make up the art workshop. A similar technique was developed by Clark (1999), who used auto-driven photo-elicitation to understand children's own perspectives on chronic illness.

I showed the children the photographs. Firstly, could the children select nine photographs from the fifty available, which they thought would show the most useful aspects of the project? Soon the children had whittled down the approved images to less than fifteen or so. The process was repeated until nine images remained. These nine images were organised by children into a diamond form using a diamond ranking technique (Clarke, 2012; Rockett & Percival, 2002). The final nine, in diamond form, were then used to elicit their views about making collaborative imaginative drawings (Fig. 14).



Fig. 14, Photo elicitation diamond – children’s group choices

Building assemblages from data to interpret what it was that was going on

The interpretation of what happened as children drew together is informed by an approach to understanding micro-matters of social interaction inspired by Goffman in *Frame Analysis* (1974). In the first instance, each component of the assemblage – dialogue, image or interpretation – retains its own integrity, whilst contributing to an assembled form within a coherent composition. The data included: voice recording of children’s talk as they collaborated to make the imaginative drawings; photographs made as the workshop unfolded;

voice recording of the image-elicitation sessions as children choose and the reflected on what happened as they made the drawings. Taking a lead from the notion of an assemblage in visual art, these diverse materials and techniques can be combined to maintain their different characteristics despite artistic manipulation (MoMA, 2009). In this way, strips of dialogue and images chosen by children are presented alongside the interpretive text inspired by Goffman's concepts of frame, key and lamination. The make-believe key of dramatic scripts was especially evident. The notion of assemblage is also an important one in the philosophy of Gilles Deleuze (1925 – 1995).

Manuel DeLanda (2011) offers an account of Deleuze's concept of assemblage. In brief: assemblages are composed of heterogeneous elements or objects that enter into relations with one another. Deleuze, just as Goffman, identifies himself as an empiricist (Deleuze, 1987). The essential prerequisite of Deleuzian empiricism is: "the abstract does not explain, but must be itself explained; and the aim is... to find conditions under which something new is produced (*creativity*)" (1987 p. vii). Deleuze writes about understanding in terms of the value of multiplicity, "In a multiplicity what counts are not the terms of the elements, but what there is 'between', the between, a set of relations that are not separable from each other" (1987 p. viii). The downside of this way of talking is the indefiniteness and indeterminacy it suggests for what constitutes relations. This does not make it easy to form explanations. What is to be done? Goffman might say: first pay careful attention to what there is, rather than attempt to explain through applying pre-formed concepts and rationalisations.

Two assemblages are presented to illustrate what might be learned through this approach. I suggest that the following two examples, themselves assemblages of dialogue, image and interpretive text, show how the improvisation, spontaneous, fluidity of children's creation of ideas is simultaneously both visual and spoken. It is the relations between nuggets of ideas, be they words or drawn images, which propels children forward and what is of most value to them.

Speed cameras and infinity

- C1: So you start off and you get on and you're in like this ice cream shaped carriage, random but we like it.
- C2: Splattered ice creams.
- C1: It's all lovely and there's the sun and there's a bird poing. And there's all these lovely mountains and rivers.
- C2: Just relax.
- C1: Ah, relax! And then you burst through the curtain, it's all been special effect, MUWHAHAHA!
- C1: Or not.
- C1: Burst through the curtain, or not, and welcome to infinity!



- C3: What's the point of a speed camera?
- C1: It just scares you.
- C2: I didn't have the idea.
- C1: It just scares you!
- C4: I don't know.
- C1: Because you go across and then...
- C3: What kind of camera [inaudible].
- C2: Just to scare you I suppose.
- C4: Instead of a speed camera it can be like a camera that makes a loud noise.
- C2: Yeah, it is a camera that makes a noise.
- C1: Speed camera.
- C2: That makes a loud noise.
- C1: [inaudible]... and then there's like boom! And you're like oh no! Oh no, my driving licence.
- C1: [voices overlap]...So it is a real speed camera.

The ride starts from a 'lovely' landscape. The sun shines. There are snow capped mountains and rivers. 'Just relax'. But perhaps this setting is not so peaceful? Birds are flying... and pooing. People get into a carriage which is shaped like a splattered ice-cream. Ice creams, which melt too quickly, fall on pavements and splatter like this to cue both simultaneous disappointment and laughter. So with birds pooing, ice cream cones splattering and the sun wearing shades, not all is working as usual in this setting. Fun is to be had – playfulness is at hand. And yes, these ideas can be 'random', not so much under control. But even so, you are invited to believe at the start you can 'relax'.

But then, hold tight, as the status of each possible lamination of reality takes the form of a ride, as you burst from this scene, which is already make-believe, through a curtain, drawn apart as though on a stage, into another fabricated setting – the ride – still within the first fantasy, which is within the frame of an imaginary drawing, which is also on the floor of a gallery for contemporary art, which is anchored in the ongoing world of a Welsh city. All of which could be part of ideas about imagination, art, cities and Wales which would be tough to easily frame here!

The curtain is red, dramatic, and stretched across the entrance. It is all for a 'special effect'! Is this benign, just for fun, or exploitative, to trap you from its seductive peaceful beginning into fear and danger? Eyes are wide open; hair is standing on end; the ice-cream-cone-carriage is plummeting. Now you know you are in danger. You have entered infinity. And what could we say about infinity?

So, what is 'the point of a speed camera?' Surely speed cameras are out to slow you down? That's not fun. Plus, speed cameras come up on you fast. They 'scare you'. Or they scare your parent, who is driving too fast with points on their license, in danger of being banned or attending a speed awareness course, with all the inconvenience or shame involved. Never even mind the idea that the cameras record an image of your car passing in a digital form, which is real evidence that you were really there, at that time, really speeding. So real, in fact, that it is proof in law. But that is an out-of-frame thought running somehow on another track. And the speed camera is not everyone's idea. It is not one girl's idea at all. But if the camera is really to scare you, perhaps it should make a loud noise, which real speed cameras don't do. But if they 'boom' you know your license is lost and you might be really scared. So maybe it is not a fantasy camera, a make-believe camera, which makes a noise on a ride to scare you '... it is a real speed camera', which takes your license away. This is worse than a pretend speed camera and more frightening. But this idea, in the ride, is fun.



Douchebags and playing good

- C1: You douchebag.
C2: Ow! Who are you calling a douchebag? Is that a swear word?
C1: No.
C3: Douchebag?
C1: Good.
C4: We're playing good.
C1: Are we?
C2: What? No, we're not.
C4: I hope we are!



- C1: And then you get like a blow dryer, loads of blow dryers, so it's like getting a bath!
C3: Guys, this is a snake in this bit.
C4: Oh! Why don't we have a streamer thing where there's a cannon.
C1: Oh yeah, like a confetti canon?
C4: Yeah.
C3: Yeah, that'd be really good!
C1: Confetti cannons!
C3: Like with party poppers and that sort of thing.
C1: Yeah, that's called confetti! Confetti cannon! This is absolutely crazy! Confetti cannon!
C3: Awesome.
C1: Are those sheep?
[inaudible 3:59]
C2: I'm going to have a sheep on...
C4: A slime machine!
C1: Slime!
C3: Yeah.
C1: Oh, we've got to do that.
C3: No, this is going to be the Slime-o-Tron 3000, and what happens is...
C1: [imitation slime noises]
C4: See, this is actually going really well.

In this out-of-frame activity, on a parallel track, not at all in evidence to the supervising adults who are out or earshot, children rib each in good humour other as one calls another 'douchebag', which might be a swearword, but is probably inappropriate. Children know this, as if it is out-of-frame, and posit that really they are playing good or at least they hope they are, even if one has used douchebag on another track to suggest, 'that annoying guy that always talks about how cool he is, how tough he is, and acts like he is better than everyone and doesn't catch the fact that he's making a fool out of himself' (urbandictionary, 2013). Although, all this is not really meant as a real insult, as the directional cue of a smile and tone of voice tell us – because, all of this is enjoyable, even absolutely crazy. So, this is not the time to play bad.

Along the crazy ride anything is possible. Hairdryers, snakes, streamers, confetti canons, sheep, and a Slime-o-Tron 3000 tumble into existence in a few seconds of drawing and talking. Ideas are forming, reforming and solidifying in the drawing, which is 'going really well'.



Conclusion

I am setting out as a researcher into art education for primary school children. This paper marks three domains for future work:

How to look closely and with rigour at what is going on when children collaborate to make imaginative art together in school which reflects both how imaginative ideas emerge and how they find form in the art children produce.

How to contribute to a debate about the relevance of individual children making discrete art objects in school, objects which express personal feelings and perceptions – the fine art tradition; and to set this debate in the light of recent artistic production in participatory and relational art practice. This art practice has also forged a link between art and pedagogy (Bishop, 2012). This necessarily places art practice in the social and political settings schools and class rooms.

In the light of that empirical study and conceptual debate, I intend to explore a conceptual foundation for primary school art teaching which draws upon respective radical empiricist traditions found in American pragmatism of William James and John Dewey and more recent French philosophy exemplified by Jacques Deleuze.

The task of exploring the first of the three domains for research above has been attempted by paying close attention to situations in the collaborative imaginative drawing workshop and what participants said about them. A visual methodology, which incorporated auto-driven image-elicitation methods, enabled the research to situate participants' understanding of what it was that was happening in the workshop in terms of frames which they express, rather than those suggested by the researcher. The use of photographs kept the visual characteristics of the workshop to the forefront for participants, both as they reflected on the images they choose, and in the frame assemblages of images and verbatim transcripts presented in this text. Reproductions of children's drawings were set alongside children's verbal exchanges. These reproductions, together with transcripts of what children were saying at the time, confirmed how what was going manifested the Goffmanesque characteristics of laminations of keyed and re-keyed frames as children assembled meaning as they drew.

As they make collaborative imaginative drawings, children seamlessly slip to and fro within different realms of fantasy and reality in what they draw and what they say as they draw. This is different to what they usually experience in school and children value the opportunity to let ideas run free. They exhibit the flow and flux of spontaneous and improvisational creation of ideas which chimes with the radical empiricist notions such as *pure experience* (James, 1912). As Susan Wright (2007) has commented in relation to young children's graphic-narrative play, "such open-ended... forms of knowing, expressing and communicating unleash and reveal children's deep meaning, multiple perspective-taking and fluidity of thought" (p.24). This paper suggests that collaborative imaginative drawing with 9 and 10 year olds exhibits similar qualities. There are similarities between this form of collaborative drawing workshop for older children and how younger children draw and play. This should be explored further.

In this workshop, these 9 and 10 year olds show, through collaborative drawing, the "moment-to-moment, processual, contingent nature of improvisation and its social and interactional nature" (Sawyer, 2011, p. 29). However, teachers are asked to plan for specific outcomes and show how a lesson fulfils specific learning aims and objectives. If children are

to experience the collaborative improvisational qualities of creative thinking manifested in this workshop, then another planning rationale will need to be applied.

As children worked together the art making showed characteristics of relational art as set out by Bourriaud in his book *Relational Aesthetics* (2002) and participatory art as described by Bishop (2012). The children encountered events which opened them to a relentless flux of improvisational meaning making. This seems to chime with how Dennis Atkinson (2011, 2012, 2013) has conceptualised the nature of the event in art teaching in a series of articles and publications. This points, via Atkinson, to recent French philosophy characterised by the work of Deleuze and also, Badiou. Bourriaud (2002) refers to Gilles Deleuze throughout *Relational Aesthetics*. The relations between ideas, as they tumble into existence as children draw and talk together, have powerful meaning for children and propel them forward in a creative and productive flux. Much more needs to be said about this. But in this project, at least, children preferred to talk about the experience of making art over the actual objects they made. For them the most powerful meanings were made in and through experience which took precedence over the finished object.

Drawing skill did not feature in the pedagogy, nor was it mentioned as a factor by children or adult participants. The relative skill with which the drawn elements were presented seemed by the by. The technical process used to make the drawings was straightforward and available to all children regardless of perceived ability as artists. This allowed spontaneous and improvised ideas to have precedence. Nevertheless, children adroitly collaborated to assemble disparate and diverse ideas into a coherent visual form with commitment and engagement. Children were seen to be working hard and produced significant concrete outcomes in the form of art.

This way of teaching may allow children to take ‘a purchase on their existence’ (Guattari, 1995, p. 133) as they find purchase on themselves as thinkers, learners and creators. Perhaps there here should be a defined space for pedagogy for primary school art which offers children opportunities to experience and reflect on the genesis of ideas in social arenas and the way all kinds of relations between themselves, ideas and the world around them take form. This pedagogy and the practical form it might take in teaching practices need further exploration and development.

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