New Genres in the Art Classroom: Shifting Ideas and Identities

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New Genres in the Art Classroom: Shifting Ideas and Identities

Alyssa Grant Ridge

A thesis submitted to the faculty of
Brigham Young University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

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Department of Art
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ABSTRACT

New Genres in the Art Classroom: Shifting Ideas and Identities

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Master of Arts

Secondary art education programs primarily offer courses in traditional mediums like drawing, painting, sculpture, and ceramics. In addition to valuing these traditional art forms, art education research supports integrating new technologies and media in the classroom. However, the possibilities of creating an exclusively contemporary, new genres curriculum have yet to be explored. This study examines the affordances and limitations of a high school-level new genre curriculum and describes how students reacted to these new genres and how their perceptions of art, student-peer relationships, and artist identities changed over time. By introducing students to new genres, the author found students expanded their definitions of art, became excited about art, and created personally relevant and meaningful artwork. The results of this case study may be valuable to art educators desiring to integrate more contemporary art into their curriculum.

Keywords: new genre, contemporary art, secondary, curriculum, case study
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Chapter 1: Introduction

I always thought I was a painter. To this day, when people, especially non-artists, ask what my favorite medium is, I generally say, “painting.” Painting seems to be an art medium everyone is familiar with. Following my response of, “painting,” come the slew of seemingly irrelevant questions like, “What style do you like to paint in?” or “What is your favorite period in art history?” In my conversations with several non-artists, it appears most of my acquaintances have a limited view of what painting and art can be.

In the last semester of my undergraduate studies, I took a class specializing in new genres. For the intents and purposes of this thesis, new genres refers to art forms primarily developed post-1960 that may include installation, sound, video, performance, participatory, digital, and Internet art (see Chapter 2). To be perfectly honest, up until the eve of my graduation, I resisted taking any new genre classes because part of me believed exploring the new to be somehow less valuable than mastering the traditional. However, this class of time-based media, including video, sound, and performance art, opened up a world of possibilities for art making to me. I felt stretched as an artist as I explored these new mediums for the first time. This stretching felt both frustrating and exhilarating. As a result of this class, I also found that I could engage with and interpret contemporary art better than before.

Currently, as a teacher, I am often disappointed to hear apologetic mumblings from students who believe drawing skills a prerequisite for taking an art class. The old excuse of, “I can’t even draw stick figures” has become very old to my ears. I am curious whether traditional skills of rendering likeness are really critical to art making, or are ideas, problem solving, and collaboration of greater importance?
Gap in the Research

In spite of a diverse discussion on technology, creativity, and contemporary art within the field of art education, classroom practices remain firmly entrenched in traditional media and school art styles (Anderson & Milbrandt, 1998; Darts, 2006; Gude, 2013). Secondary art education programs primarily offer courses in traditional mediums like drawing, painting, sculpture, and ceramics. Rarely, however, do high school art programs explore the possibilities of contemporary new genres.

I believe these new genres may connect powerfully with adolescent students who already engage with a technology-saturated culture. Today’s youth learn, communicate, and entertain themselves through digital media. I wish to expose students to artists who use technology and non-traditional approaches to express their ideas. Of course, art educators may utilize technology to present images and expose their students to some contemporary art. However, it is rare to find an entire course dedicated to new genres at the secondary level.

I am also interested in how students formulate their identities as artists. I wonder whether students, who previously did not consider themselves artists due to a lack of drawing/painting skills, could eventually find greater confidence in their art making abilities and identify themselves as artists through a new genres class.

A Brief Outline of This Study

Chapter Two explains the development of new genres and defines the terms contemporary art and new genres as discussed within this research study. Chapter Two also reviews the significance of a contemporary art curriculum supported by current scholars within the field of art education.
Chapter Three describes case study methodology and the research methods used within this study. These research methods included observations, interviews, surveys, sketchbook responses, photo documentation, and student artwork. Chapter Three also provides contextualization of the research study by describing the researcher, site, and participants involved.

Chapters Four presents the data and findings of the case study by specifically addressing the research question: *What are the affordances and limitations of a contemporary new genres curriculum?* This question is answered by examining students’ experiences with process-based art, video, installation, and performance art. Chapter Four is further subdivided by the following questions: (a) How does a new genre class change the learning environment? How do interactions among peers and the teacher change as a result of a new genres curriculum? (b) How do students’ definitions of art and artists expand as a result of a new genre curriculum? How will this case influence students’ attitudes toward art, especially contemporary art? (c) Can a contemporary new genre curriculum increase students’ confidence in art making? Do students self-identify as creative, artistic, and/or artists more so as a result of this class? These questions cite several examples to further illustrate the possibilities and restrictions of the curriculum.

Chapter Five summarizes the major affordances and limitations of this case study and expresses a hope for other art educators to find useful generalizations from the analysis of the curriculum.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

This study examines the affordances and limitations of an exclusively new genre, high school contemporary art curriculum. In order to define new genres and their relevance to current conversations within art education, I must first provide context for how new genres developed in the 20th century. The following overview of art history movements will primarily reference *Gardner’s Art Through the Ages: Volume II* (2005) by Fred Kleiner and Christin Mamiya. Both Kleiner and Mamiya are celebrated art historians and educators. After laying a foundation of history and terminology, this chapter also cites several artists and scholarly examples of new genres in contemporary art and classrooms.

**Birth of New Genres and Contemporary Art**

According to Mark Tribe and Reena Jana (2006), experts within contemporary art, the radical Dadaists began experimenting with new technologies and media at the turn of the 20th century (p. 7). The Dada movement comprised of European and American artists disenchanted with bourgeoisie government-interests. In the wake of World War I, they expressed their frustrations through newly developed techniques such as collage, assemblage, and found sculpture (i.e. the readymade), as well as experimented with musical performances and poetry readings. For example, Marcel Duchamp’s *Fountain* (1917) declared non-art objects as art in a most provocative way. Dadaist not only protested war, but also protested traditional conventions of art (Kleiner & Mamiya, 2005. pp. 980-982).

Prior to the outbreak of the next world war, several modern artists and former German Bauhaus instructors established themselves within American universities. The modern and formal design aesthetics of these artists influenced the development of abstract art within the United States (Foster, Krauss, Bois, & Buchloh, 2004, p. 343). After WWII, the art world shifted
its capital to the United States where art critic Clement Greenberg (1909-94) promoted his ideals of formal abstraction in painting. During the 1940s-50s, Abstract Expressionism and Color Field painting reigned supreme (see Kleiner & Mamiya). In the early 1960s, however, artists rebelled against the reigning tyranny of expressive abstraction in two ways: (a) through the use of everyday, recognizable images of Pop Art, (b) through the distilling of emotion and form in Minimalism. Pop Art built upon Duchampian notions that anything, even the most banal images and objects, could be art. While Minimalism effectually removed the artist’s emotions and conceptual intentions by reducing sculptures to objects without distinguishing subjects or narratives (see Kleiner & Mamiya).

Some institutions cite the break from modernism as the beginning of contemporary art. Art21, a non-profit organization dedicated to documenting contemporary artists, defines contemporary art as, “Works of art made by living artists. Contemporary art can also refer to artworks that address ideas or concerns that are timely or characteristic of society after the 1950s. Unlike Modern art, contemporary art is usually not defined by a succession of periods, schools, or styles” (“Contemporary Art,” n.d.).

Departing even further from the traditional mediums of paint and sculpture that encompassed Modernism and Minimalism, artists in the mid-late 1960s expanded notions of art through processes and ideas. For example, process art emphasized the materials and process of art making in and of itself (Guggenheim, n.d.). Experimentation with materials led to the development of installation art, a modified sensibility of sculpture in which the perception of a space is transformed (“Installation,” n.d.). Conceptual art elevated the concept or idea of the work above material and aesthetic concerns (see Kleiner & Mamiya). During the 1960s, new technology also changed the art world. For example, in 1965 Nam June Paik is credited with
inventing video art with Sony’s Portapak, the first battery powered, self-contained audio/video recorder (Kleiner & Mamiya, 2005, p. 1082).

The 1960-70s also saw social and political turmoil in the wake of the Civil Rights Movement, the Vietnam War, and the Feminist Movement (see Kleiner & Mamiya). Earth art developed from an increased concern for the American environment and took works outside of the traditional museum or gallery setting (Kleiner & Mamiya, 2005, p. 1057). Performance art acknowledged the presence of the artist and the artist’s body in creating art, which also supported the development of body art wherein the artist’s body was used as an art making tool and medium (Kleiner & Mamiya, 2005, p. 1046).

By the 1980s, artists refined some of these newly developed genres to speak powerfully about social and political issues of the time. Artists began to revitalize representational traditions, but also became AIDS activists, champions for gender equality, critics of culture and of the very institutions that fed them (see Kleiner & Mamiya). Later, the 1980-90s witnessed a rise in aggressive art seeking to push ethical boundaries in artwork purposefully designed to shock and offend viewers. Some of this sensationalist art originated with the Young British Artists. These young art school graduates and contemporaries pushed the boundaries of traditional art mediums by utilizing alternative materials like trash, bodily waste, blood, animals, and formaldehyde (“Young British Artists,” n.d.). Now, at the turn of the century, artists enjoy greater liberty to express their ideas than ever before. The art world is wildly diverse and open-ended allowing artists the freedom to work with traditional media such as drawing, painting, and sculpture both realistically and abstractly, as well as, embrace new media and technologies of the present.

This brief summary of art developments within of the 20th century by no means claims to be comprehensive or all-inclusive due to the sheer number of artists and art movements with
overlapping time frames. The history presented here acknowledges a traditional Western art history perspective privileging fine artists recognized by major universities, galleries, and museums. However, this account marks an important turning point in the 1960s where a decided break from painting and sculpture birthed “new” art forms.

New genre and contemporary art encompass several art mediums and continues to expand as innovations in the art world push materials and processes. Across the country, university art programs include media like installation, sound, video, performance, digital, and Internet art in their description of new genres classes. The University of California Los Angeles (UCLA) Department of Art explains their definition of new genres as follows, “New Genres is a practice that begins with ideas and then moves to the appropriate form or media for that particular idea, sometimes inventing entirely new sites of cultural production, new methodologies, technologies, or genres in the process” (UCLA). For the intents and purposes of this thesis, new genres refers to art forms primarily developed post-1960 that may include installation, sound, video, performance, participatory, new genre public art, digital, and Internet art. It is also important to differentiate new genres from new media. Art education literature suggests new media primarily refers to digital technologies and the Internet, which may exclude more tangible or performance art forms (Liao, 2008, p. 87).

**Current Discourse of New Genres and Contemporary Art in Art Education**

The scope of issues and questions vary widely across the discipline of art education. Some of the issues discussed in art education today include art for social justice, visual culture, art literacy, technology, integrating art with other subjects, creativity, and assessment. Recently, the National Art Education Association (NAEA) adopted new national art education standards
for future generations to build from. Within these standards and several issue groups in art education, there is a concern of what should be taught in a contemporary classroom.

Olivia Gude has written several articles regarding contemporary curriculum design. In “Postmodern Principles: in Search of a 21st Century Art Education” (2004), Gude dismisses Arthur Wesley Dow’s elements and principles as shadowy echoes of Modernism irrelevant to today’s contemporary art education. Instead, Gude boldly calls for art educators to revamp their curriculum to ask deeper questions framed by alternative principles. Some of the ideals that motivate Gude’s inner-city Chicago youth art program, called the Spiral Workshop, include theme-inspired lessons connected to the lives of the students and their communities, diverse approaches to art making, and investigating ideas rather than solely replicating technique exercises (Gude, 2004, p. 8). From this workshop, she has developed guiding principles for a contemporary curriculum, which are by no means definitive. These principles include appropriation, juxtaposition, recontextualization, hybridity, layering, interaction of text and image, gazing, and representin’ (Gude, 2004, pp. 9-11). Inspired by Gude’s example, I have developed guiding principles supported by current literature for my own contemporary new genres curriculum.

Relevant and Meaningful

Speaking of her inner-city Chicago youth community art curriculum, Gude (2004) shares her vision, “I wanted the Spiral Workshop curriculum to give students a sense of participating in the unfolding of contemporary culture…reflect on cultural issues related to self and society…” (p. 8). Gude and her team successfully motivate youth to come to these extracurricular workshops because they help students feel connected to their artwork by talking about issues relevant to their daily lives (Gude, 2004, p. 8).
Craig Roland’s research focuses on how new technologies, especially social media, can support and enhance art education. Roland believes youth can connect with contemporary art in meaningful ways in and outside of class through new technologies because they are immersed in a digital world. Roland (2010) explains,

…all media technologies [“including ‘older’ more conventional media”] have a place in school art programs. It’s just that newer forms of technology such as computers, digital cameras, scanners, social networks, and other participatory media deserve special attention in that they permit students to engage in innovative forms of communication, expression, and learning using contemporary media rooted in their everyday lives. (p. 23)

His argument may, therefore, support the importance of video, sound, digital, and Internet art in a contemporary curriculum.

**Interdisciplinary**

Rachel Wolff (2008), a writer and editor who has extensively covered the New York City art world, explains how contemporary artists overlap fine art and technology by utilizing Web 2.0 and media players to create digital and performance work. Similarly, Melanie Buffington (2010) explored ways in which podcasts could be made and used for educational purposes. Here she summarizes the importance of integrating technology with art education,

If we are to teach our students about contemporary art, it is beneficial to acknowledge and use the tools of 21st-century artists…using this technological medium as a means to understand a contemporary artwork may well be a way to let the medium be the message. Working within the medium of students’ lives and engaging them with accessible language increases the likelihood of helping them make connections between their own experiences and works of art. (p. 16)
Beyond technology, contemporary artists also make interdisciplinary connections within their work. To name a few, Eduardo Kac’s *Genesis* (1999) mixes biology and art to confront viewers with a moral dilemma of effectually playing God with a strain of bacteria. Spencer Finch’s installation, *366 (Emily Dickinson's Miraculous Year)* (2012), connects colors described in Emily Dickinson’s poems. Lastly, Janet Cardiff recontextualizes music as art in her sound piece *40 Part Motet* (2001) in which the artist used 59 voices to create a hauntingly beautiful installation. By showing students examples of how art connects with other disciplines, students may feel empowered to use their other talents and knowledge in their art.

**Means for Social Justice**

Naturally, there are many reasons for creating and appreciating art. However, art is an especially powerful way to grant a voice to individuals and communities, and those who feel marginalized to raise questions and concerns. New genre public art often works outside of institutions in order to engage the public with social issues. Suzanne Lacy is an artist, educator, and writer whose works have helped define new genre public art as a means for cultural critique and social activism. New genre public art differs from public artworks like sculptures and installations, because it is less concerned with the object-product, but rather the process and change incited because of the art. New genre public art can combine traditional and new media to bring attention to social issues related to identity and power (Lacy, 1995, p. 81). For example, Judith Baca, an artist and activist, brought rival gang members in East Los Angeles together to work on a mural project, *Mi Abuelita* (“My Grandmother”) (1970). Though the project faced its challenges from threatening gang members, the police, and the city, in the end it was a mural beloved by the community because it represented a shared matriarchal image of love and acceptance (Lacy, 1995, p. 20).
Lacy (1995) summarizes some of the benefits of new genre public art: “Such instruction encourages students to conceptualize new art forms, engage the community in projects that are socially constructive, and recognize art making as an intellectual scholarly endeavor” (p. 80). New genre public art requires students to define personal values, think critically about complex issues, and problem solve for the greater good of the community. These higher-level thinking and social skills apply beyond the art classroom as necessary life skills.

David Darts, an artist and educator, also models a concern for social justice in his high school classroom where he co-developed a curriculum based on social and cultural issues in which students investigated concerns and taught one another through contemporary art. Darts (2006) describes the significance of using contemporary art as a facilitator for social justice by instilling within students principles of caring and responsibility, which enable students to change themselves, their communities, and the world around them (p. 7). Not only did he find this curriculum to be engaging and transformative for students, he feels strongly that this approach to art education legitimizes art as necessary for life rather than an extraneous elective credit.

Collaborative and Community Building

Collaboration is working with others to create something (“Collaboration,” n.d.). Several new genre art forms utilize collaboration as a fundamental process of the work. Sheridan Horn (2008) gives an example of how installations at Trinity Catholic School in Leamington Spa, England brought old and young students, teachers, and professional artists together in collaboration to discuss moral and social issues related to science. Not only was this project interdisciplinary, it taught participants how to work together towards a collective theme with different methods and subject matter. In the end, “the exhibition [gave] the pupils a sense of status and pride” (p. 156) because a community based on common interests and equality fed the
Beyond working together on a single project, educator Maria D. Leake shares her experiences of witnessing community building through contemporary art (Leake, 2014). Leake researched the perspectives of museum educators, artists, and curators and found contemporary art especially useful in developing engaging, social learning communities. In her words, contemporary art is valuable in helping participants “connect important social issues and life experiences through art” (p. 24). Of course, historical artworks may continue to provoke conversation about social issues, but perhaps the value of contemporary art is that it addresses the social concerns of today. Leake also feels that “teaching and learning through contemporary art has the potential to unite members of a community by “capitalizing on human-to-human interactions to expand ways of knowing and understanding” (p. 24). The nature of experiencing and/or creating contemporary art, especially through a new genre like performance, requires the trust and interaction of other participants.

I have provided evidence of the relevance and potential benefits of a new genres curriculum. However, there are some legitimate obstacles and concerns with an exclusively contemporary curriculum. Pat Villeneuve and Mary Erickson (2008) address a limitation of contemporary art. They explain,

The trouble with contemporary art is many people in the United States are not equipped to deal with it…we find that young and old alike seem more comfortable with art that is representational and attractive. Both groups can be stymied by conceptual, performance, or installation art or the unconventional materials sometimes used by contemporary artists. Difficult content, including perceived challenges to notions of sexuality, patriotism, and religion, can present further obstacles to understanding. (p. 92)
The U.S. public may be uneducated about art in general. However, naïve consumers of contemporary art may find it especially difficult to understand the nuances of non-representational, non-traditional art. Furthermore, the belief that art should look “beautiful” is often challenged by contemporary work more concerned with a concept or process. These obvious problems argue more for a need to educate the public audience about contemporary art than to shun away from it. Art is like a language that is learned and then interpreted for meaning. So, why not begin now, by integrating contemporary art and examples of new genres within art curriculums? Teaching today’s generation about contemporary art sows a more art literate future.

Yet, some educators may fear that the beautiful, timeless masterpieces memorialized within our cultural history are somehow diminished by a preoccupation with the new, experimental media. After all, the artists and artworks of here and now are not time tested. Michael Jarvis, an artist and teacher educator, may feel the same. He claims, “Despite our obsession with, and increasing reliance on, computer and film-based technologies, it is interesting that traditional methods of making art remain a valid means of expression” (Jarvis, 2004, p. 316). Jarvis reveals his deep love of painting, a traditional medium he believes to be as magical as alchemy. In comparing painting to alchemy, Jarvis explains the value of turning raw physical materials into treasures of “gold” hinting at the genuine value of creating something tangible and physical. With new genres such as video, sound, and performance, some may mourn the loss of creating a physical object. Beyond creating an object, Jarvis believes painting gives students permission to imagine and play. Lastly, Jarvis defends painting’s relevance in contemporary art and education simply because it is one of the foundational mediums to which students are exposed.
To be clear, in presenting a new genres curriculum, the intention of the research project is not to discredit the value of traditional art media. Rather, the research allows readers to determine the potential benefits of a contemporary new genres curriculum. Still, some art educators may reply, that they themselves do not understand contemporary art, especially new genres. How can a teacher share artwork he or she has very little experience with? In regards to newer digital media, art educators and researchers Joanna Black and Kathy Browning (2011) answer, “Teachers do not have to know everything about the software; they need only be willing to take a creative approach to technology and learn from their students. If the perspective of the visual arts teacher is "pro-tech" (meaning that they put the technology first), then students may complete mechanical assignments that do not creatively express the self” (p. 21). In their case, students actually gained confidence and motivation by playing or experimenting with digital media. These assumptions suggests that when educators worry too much about transferring knowledge and skills to their students, they may unintentionally stifle creativity and decrease students’ intrinsic motivation to learn.

Now, if art educators are unafraid of contemporary art, what about other stakeholders of education? What will parents and administration say about this new genre art? For better or worse, teachers will always need to justify their curriculum to someone else. Part of the trepidation of breaking tradition is that it feels uncomfortable. It is easier to do what has been done before because it is entrenched tradition. Arthur Efland (1976), a celebrated art educator and researcher, began to raise concerns about the shortcomings of accepted school art styles years ago. School art is characteristically formulaic and manufactures nice-looking products. In order to achieve these polished products, school art is focused much more on mastering technical skill while demonstrating the use of the elements and principles of design. Furthermore, school
arts should be fun, therapeutic, and brighten the school hallways and demand no critical or conceptual thinking. One of the obvious problems with the school art style beloved by parents and some administrators is that it stifles creativity by undervaluing processes, failures, and tangents. Though school arts may appear creative, very often, this “creativity” is controlled by the teacher to minimize risk (Efland, 1976, p. 40). The result of creating art for art’s sake is not an atrocity, but creating art for life’s sake could be so much more meaningful to students. As Tom Anderson and Melody Milbrandt (1998) propose, “teaching art for life’s sake may position art at school as necessary, not just nice” (pp. 14-15).

Anne Thulson (2013) is an elementary art educator who has bravely resisted the urge to mimic school art styles and the traditions of art for art’s sake. Thulson believes even young children are capable of navigating real-world concerns, which is why she attempts to balance her classes with teaching skills and design principles alongside critical/conceptual thinking. This paradigm shift has caused her to focus more on the process of learning and creating art rather than stress about the final products students will take home to parents. When planning her lessons, Thulson may ask, “‘How is my students’ thinking connected to their making?’ and ‘How does their informed making interact with their concerns and the world around them?’” (p. 17). She says, “I often didn’t have an end product in mind…Project by project, I came to trust the artists we studied and I came to trust my students” (p. 20).

I have addressed some concerns of the public, teachers, and education stakeholders, but most importantly, we must consider the effect of contemporary art on students. Introducing new genre to the classroom poses real risks. Will students be able to handle topics maturely? Will students mimic dangerous performances? Robert Sweeny (2008) compares and contrasts MTV’s reality television show *Jackass* to performance art. In doing so, he cites the unfortunate example
of a 13-year old student who set himself on fire after watching a stunt performed on the show (p. 137).

It is true that much of new genre art, especially performance, is not readily school appropriate because of controversial imagery and themes. Sweeny (2008) suggests teachers have the power to curate and guide student responses within the classroom by presenting a number of relevant and critical artworks that are non-threatening (see p. 144). In my own classroom, I have presented artists with provocative work by curating specific, seminal pieces to be shown in class while warning students of finding potentially abject images elsewhere on the Internet. Naturally, a teacher must know his or her students and community to gauge receptivity to challenging work. However, it may be suggested that at times students are not given enough trust or benefit of the doubt when asked to consider difficult topics. New genres, specifically performance art, present inherent risks, yet these genres may also allow for students to express themselves in new and sometimes liberating ways.

These fears of breaking tradition, lacking experience, justifying curriculum to stakeholders, and navigating controversial issues are wholly valid and some I have wrestled with myself as I developed this new genres curriculum. However, I have developed a deep appreciation for new genre work because, in my experience, it can convey feelings and ideas in ways traditional media cannot. I have also seen my students light up with excitement as they participate in this class. At the heart of why I believe it is important to share contemporary new genres, is a conviction that the art of the living speaks more directly to our youth than the art of the dead. The art of today expresses issues and concerns lived by our students through mediums comfortable to them.
Chapter 3: Methodology

Case study is a methodology used in qualitative and quantitative research. Researchers utilizing a case study approach describe a particular “case” – an individual, group, class, or phenomena in depth and then provide interpretation of the data collected about the case as it relates to the field of study (Tollefson-Hall, 20, p. 204). Case studies are used by several disciplines including anthropology, business, education, economics, government, history, journalism, political science, psychology, sociology, etc. (Merriam, 1988). All case studies, however, seem to ask the question, “What can be learned from the single case?” (Stake, 1994, p. 236). Case study research is not particularly interested in generalizing knowledge, rather, a case study allows researchers to understand a unique system and then begin to develop and/or question theory based on interpretations of that system.

Cases are unique because of the context surrounding them. It is important for the researcher to describe that context or the “bounded system” to the reader (Stake, 1978, p. 7). Factors bounding a case study may include history, physical surrounding, culture, political and economic factors, the participants, etc. Understanding the context of the case helps readers to understand variables and scope of the research.

There are many different types of case studies within various fields of knowledge. Two authorities on case study research Robert E. Stake (1994) and Sharan B. Merriam (1988) each describe three types of case study. Stake first describes an *intrinsic case study* in which a researcher seeks to understand a specific case better simply because it is interesting to him or her. Merriam would call this a *descriptive case study*, a study neither motivated by nor seeking to build theory, simply describing a case in great detail. Intrinsic and descriptive case studies may be of great value to gaps of research in the field where innovation is taking place. By describing
a case in great detail, other researchers may use the data for future comparisons and theory building (Merriam, 1988, p. 27; Stake, 1994, p. 237). Next, an *instrumental case study* or an *interpretive case study* also contains detailed descriptions, however, it is motivated by a desire to examine an issue, challenge assumptions, or refine a theory. All the data collection and interpretation of the case is aimed at understanding an idea or problem within it (see Merriam 1988, p. 28; Stake, 1994, p. 237). Stake’s third type is called *collective case study* examines several cases which allows readers to theorize or generalize about a larger collection of cases (see Stake, 1994, p. 237). Lastly, an *evaluative case study* not only provides description and analysis, it also provides judgment. *Evaluative case studies* contain enough information for the researcher to form judgments about the case in question (see Merriam, 1988, p. 28).

Overall, case study research is extremely flexible in what and how the researcher may study. For example, a case study may range from one individual to a large group, but it could also examine non-human subjects like a process or organization. It also allows for a variety of data to be collected about a case: interviews, documents, surveys, field observations, artifacts, etc. This flexibility is advantageous to researchers who wish to understand a question through multiple viewpoints. However, because of its versatility and the vast amount of data that may be collected, case study reports have been known to be lengthy and overwhelming to the reader. In each case study there may be an infinite amount of collectible data. It is, therefore, important to set limitations on the case to be studied. Furthermore, case study research allows great latitude for interpretation of data, which begs examination of the researcher’s biases and credibility.

Motivations for conducting a case study methodology vary among researchers. From a qualitative standpoint, case studies are valuable because they provide a voice for individual experiences or unique circumstances of interest to the researcher. By contrast, quantitative
research seeks to gather large sample sizes that maintain the anonymity of participants (see Merriam, 2014, p. 5, 14). According to Stake (1994), readers of case studies may readily acknowledge the unique context of the case, but also find relevant similarities or insights into how one experience relates to another, especially in comparing the case to his or her own context (p. 243).

A case study may prove useful not just for the researcher but for student participants as well. A teacher/researcher who takes the time to observe and record details of a case and then reflect upon those observations is bound to be critical of his or her curriculum and instructional methods. Thus, allowing for improvements to be made for the greater good of the case. Students may also feel influential as a teacher-researcher seeks to understand their perspective through surveys and personal interviews.

On the other hand, case study research presents certain critiques and misconceptions. Some social scientists, according to Stake (1994), find less value in research that is non-generalizable (p. 238). However, Stake (1994) views case study research as a foundation for theory building or a step toward generalizability. As mentioned previously, the great benefit of case study research is the ability to tell stories. Another potential weakness of case study research begins with researcher bias. If a researcher begins a study with the intent of looking for a particular issue, the data may be construed to fit a desired interpretation. However, this critique may be said of nearly any research methodology requiring human interpretation. One suggestion for counteracting researcher bias is for the researcher to acknowledge his or her assumptions before beginning the study. In addition, case study research involves the potential for misrepresentation and embarrassment of participants. Researchers must be very careful when interviewing and discussing sensitive topics. In order to protect the integrity of participant’s
performance and opinions, some case study researches use member check – allowing participants
to read the notes and drafts of writings to check for gross inconsistencies (Tollefson-Hall, 20, pp.
207-208). Another way to safeguard against inaccuracy is to use triangulation or a variety of
sources to form interpretations.

In summary, a case study research methodology examines and seeks to understand a
specific case in-depth. Though unique in context and non-generalizable, a case study provides
interesting insights into the stories of specific people and programs. Researchers in the same
field of study learn from the comprehensive observations and careful interpretations of the case,
especially as findings address the current literature and theory of the discipline. A researcher,
especially a teacher, utilizing case study will undoubtedly gain valuable feedback through the
observations, interviews, and documentations of students and their work. Students may also
benefit from a more attuned teacher and curriculum.

Application of Case Study Methodology

This particular research project utilized a case study methodology to better understand a
semester-long, high school art course exploring contemporary new genres called Studio Art. The
case specifically addresses the research question: What are the affordances and limitations of a
secondary new genre contemporary art curriculum? Additional research questions arose in
response to experiences with a pilot study group conducted a year prior to this particular case: (a)
How does a new genre class change the learning environment? How do interactions among peers
and the teacher change as a result of a new genres curriculum? (b) How do students’ definitions
of art and artists expand as a result of a new genre curriculum? How will this case influence
students’ attitudes toward art, especially contemporary art? (c) Can a contemporary new genre
curriculum increase students’ confidence in art making? Do students self-identify as creative,
artistic, and/or artists more so as a result of this class? The answer to such questions will provide insight into the theoretical implications of an exclusive contemporary new genres curriculum.

This particular case may be described as primarily *instrumental* in that it serves the personal interests of the teacher-researcher (Stake, 1994). I not only appreciate contemporary new genres, I also believe the most valuable and applicable research occurs with my own students within my own classroom. By utilizing the case study methodology, I became especially observant of my teaching practices, curriculum, students, and classroom environment.

Beyond observing and describing my case in detail, however, I considered the validity of a new genres curriculum in a postmodern, 21st century classroom. Of course, by creating and considering the implications of an exclusively contemporary new genre curriculum, this study assumes students immersed in new genres will gain a valuable art education. The study further presumes that other educators may find relevant and meaningful ways to incorporate contemporary art based on the examples provided within the study.

**Background**

My personal interest in new genres grew from a semester course that I took during my undergraduate education. In this class, I was pushed to consider art unrestricted by rectangles, frames, and pedestals. At this time I was also working on my senior exhibition in which I found myself extremely intimidated by painting. Through exposure to new art forms and a series of personal artistic investigations, I came to love installation art and felt confident again as an artist. Now, as an art educator, I think back on my experience in finding greater confidence in my art-making abilities independent of drawing or technical skills and wonder whether my high school students might also feel the same.
Site

Research took place within my own classroom at Orem High School in Orem, Utah – a relatively conservative, middle-class, suburban community. Orem serves approximately 1,100 students grades 10-12. Demographically, the school includes 22% ethnic minorities, 32% economically disadvantaged students, and approximately 9% of students require special education (Utah, 2014).

The school was rebuilt in 2010, which provided a spacious and well-designed art classroom. My classroom boasts adequate storage space, north light, and a high-quality projector. However, we are limited to sharing a lab of school computers and primarily relegated to displaying artwork in the library.

Participants

Participants in this case study included myself, the teacher, and 32 high school students (a mixture of 10-12 graders, 13 male, and 19 female). Some of these students had been exposed to examples of contemporary art while approximately two-thirds of the students had never interacted with me before and had very little art experience. As the teacher/researcher, of this particular case, I not only facilitated the curriculum in question, but I engaged with student participants and the learning activities as well. Over the course of five months, participants engaged with process-based art, digital and Internet art, video, installation, and performance art.

Naturally, proper research procedures were followed to obtain permission from the International Review Board, school district, school, and parents to recruit and study my students. Students voluntarily chose to participate at the beginning of the class through written consent. However, I generally did not know which students chose to participate, because I did not look at the permission forms until after the class ended, thus guarding myself against making any
conscious or unconscious distinctions between participants and non-participants. Most importantly, all of the students, regardless of participating in the research study or not, were required to complete the learning activities and assignments as a regular part of the class experience.

Methods of Collecting Data

The methods used to collect data for this study included several common teaching practices like observing, reflecting, interviewing, and taking photographs as well as common learning activities like class discussions, sketchbook/journal entries, assignments, projects, written critiques, etc. However, the most unique and informative data for this case study derived from the pre and post-course surveys, which sought to understand students’ definitions of and attitudes toward art as well as self-perceived confidence in art making.

Observations and Journaling

During the course of the semester, I frequently took notes on students’ engagement with the class discussions, lesson content, and projects. Sometimes these notes were hurriedly written on available scraps of paper. However, the richest notes came from a typed journal, where the positive and negative results of each lesson unit were written in detail.

Student Sketchbook and Journal Entries

Another valuable source of student feedback came from daily sketchbook/journal entries. Each day, students were greeted with a question or artwork related to the current lesson. A lot of prompts asked for personal insights and opinions in hopes of encouraging class discussion. The sketchbooks provided especially valuable feedback from quieter students who did not share their thoughts often in class. Some sketchbooks also gave additional insight into my students’ artwork by revealing personal thoughts and their brainstorming process.
Assignments

Occasionally, I assigned worksheets or note-taking to deepen students’ knowledge of a particular art form. For example, I gave students a list of installation artists to image search on the Internet and find three they liked, find additional installation artists, and write down what ideas they could apply to their own artwork. Though some students complained about “homework” in an art class, I felt these assignments reiterated ideas and visuals learned in class and presented another written documentation of students’ thoughts and ideas.

Artworks and Reflections

Students created four major artworks throughout the semester. The Process Project, which explored a daily ritual or process, was the only project requiring individual completion. The other three projects: Video Art, Installation, and Performance generally required the help of a partner or group of classmates. These latter three projects required students to address a contemporary issue or theme relevant to students’ lives (additional details on these projects follows in Chapter 4). Naturally, through all of these projects, I learned more about my students’ personal interests, concerns, and how students grasped the concepts of these new art forms. Students were also required to self-evaluate and write artist statements following each major project. Valuable feedback came from these written reflections.

Pre-Course and Post-Course Surveys

On the very first day of the class, I asked students, “How do you define art?” To most, it may not seem like a very intimidating question, but to some it is an extremely philosophical debate. Students quickly completed their pre-course survey, which asked other questions regarding students’ self-perceived aptitude for creating art. At the end of the semester, I followed up with the same questions to see how opinions may have changed over the course of the class. I
also surveyed students about specific art forms and projects to better understand their experience within the class. These two surveys required written responses and were conducted within the last 15 minutes of class.

**Interview**

Toward the end of the semester, I invited a few students to offer their opinions about the class and curriculum in an informal interview. I chose these specific students because I thought they represented the different types of students present in my class (see Chapter 5). Some of these interviews were conducted right after class and others during a lull in activity. I attempted to keep the interviews casual and conversational without the formality of a script. However, I did audio record for accuracy and think about some of the questions I wanted to ask my students beforehand. My primary purpose in conducting interviews was to gauge students’ receptivity to the course material and highlight individual voices in vignettes.

**Methods of Analyzing Data**

By using the aforementioned methods, a variety of data was collected to ensure a more complete analysis of the case. The data was then organized and evaluated based on content in order to define emerging patterns and themes. As these patterns and themes repeatedly presented themselves, I could organize the data analysis and recognize significant conclusions about the case.

**Transcribing**

Aside from the observational field notes, much of the collected data came from students’ verbal and written responses. These responses required transcribing for further coding and organizing. For example, the pre and post-course surveys were answered by hand and therefore
required typing student responses into an Excel spreadsheet. Likewise, the audio-recorded interviews also required transcripting in order to accurately recount what was said.

Coding and Categorizing

Transcribed data and other materials were then coded as positive, neutral, or negative responses and also categorized to answer one of the three subdivisions of research questions. These subdivided research questions were color-coded and labeled for organizational ease. This process even applied to sorting photo documentation and student artworks that could clearly address one of the subdivisions.

Conclusion

Overall, I found case study methodology extremely flexible and suitable to my teaching style, because it allowed me to study my classroom without excessive research protocol. Of course, the data collected and presented within this study represents a mere fraction of available information within a five-month span of a class. However, the various sources of data collected about the case: the field observations, artifacts, interviews, and surveys allowed me to triangulate students’ reactions to the curriculum for a more holistic understanding of the course. As a result of utilizing the case study methodology, I gained greater insight into my students understanding of art and themselves as student-artists.
Chapter 4: Data and Analysis

The following chapter describes the results of a case study of a semester-long high school art class entitled Studio Art that exclusively explored contemporary new genres. This chapter seeks to answer the following research question: *What are the affordances and limitations of a secondary new genre contemporary art curriculum?* through illustrations of curriculum design, student responses, and student artworks. Additional research questions developed as a result of experiences within an initial pilot study conducted a year prior to this case. The pilot study class tested the viability of a non-traditional art class exploring only contemporary new genres and how students reacted to the curriculum. From this experience, I became concerned with how the learning environment and peer relationships changed as a result of the class. I also recognized the potential for students to expand their understanding of art and gain greater confidence in their creative abilities by imbuing meaning in their artwork regardless of preconceived notions of artistic talent. Wishing to revisit these questions and concerns led me to additional research questions.

This chapter is, therefore, subdivided into the following questions (a) How does a new genre class change the learning environment? How do interactions among peers and the teacher change as a result of a new genres curriculum? (b) How do students’ definitions of art and artists expand as a result of a new genre curriculum? How will this case influence students’ attitudes toward art, especially contemporary art? (c) Can a contemporary new genre curriculum increase students’ confidence in art making? Do students self-identify as creative, artistic, and/or artists more so as a result of this class? These questions cite several examples to further illustrate the possibilities and restrictions of the curriculum.
How does a new genre class change the learning environment? How do interactions among peers and the teacher change as a result of a new genres curriculum?

One of the goals of my curriculum was to invite an open atmosphere of discussion, experimentation, and interaction among students. As a teacher, I find a positive and safe classroom environment allows students to open up and share their thoughts, opinions, and questions about art more easily. In the most ideal setting, a class actively participates in the classroom community to create a sense of unity and mutual trust among peers. Of course, as many educators may understand, building a classroom environment of trust takes time and repeated effort. The following section recounts activities intended to build a nurturing learning environment and the experiences of students within the class. I observed how this new genre curriculum altered the learning environment and how interactions among students to students and student to teacher were affected.

**TASK Party**

The first day of class, I greeted students with an Oliver Herring-inspired, TASK party. A TASK party is an open-ended, participatory experience in which students perform “tasks” in a space filled with art materials and props. These tasks vary widely; they may be art or non-art related. Examples of tasks might include: draw a unicorn, design a costume, make a pirate ship,
build a tower, etc. Participants interpret these tasks however they choose and then write new tasks for others to complete. This then creates a cyclical flow of creative exchanges.

As I stood at the door and welcomed students to class, I handed them a task to perform. Most looked at me a little confusedly, but those who had me as a teacher previously simply smiled and jumped in. When I observed the class, I "noticed some students appeared reluctant to participate or felt confused and shy. For example, Irene sat in the back of the room until a few gentle, but compelling encouragements from me persuaded her to participate. Once she began to perform a few TASKS and saw that I was willing to be silly by playing “Duck, Duck, Goose,” she smiled and contributed. By contrast, my former students seemed pretty comfortable making a mess and performing tasks. As usual, most of the tasks were performed quickly without much time or effort. However, Braden spent a long time building a “time machine” using a box and construction paper, and even enlisted the help of a friend to time travel with him. Katy also spent a long time making an elaborate wig of long pink yarn for her friend. These examples show how a TASK party can transform the classroom into creative chaos where anything can happen, where even the silly and simple might be called art.

This TASK party not only served as an introduction to process-based art, it allowed students to interact with one another in unique ways. Some tasks prompted students to introduce themselves to others, to give high fives, to share a secret, to find someone with the same birthday month, etc. To conclude the TASK party, I requested students work with a partner they had not met before, because I wanted to ensure that even the seemingly shy students had the opportunity to meet at least one peer that day. All in all, it appeared the majority of students had fun and left feeling excited for the class.
Video Art

About midway through the semester, students began working with partners and groups to learn about video art. *Video art* records and or manipulates moving video and audio data (“Video,” n.d.). Video art is interested more in exploring the medium itself and less concerned with entertaining the viewer with the traditional methods of filmmaking. First, I began my video art unit by playing a game called “Who Am I?” to pique the students’ interest and get them interacting with each other. I wrote down several actors, actresses, and characters from popular movies on pieces of tape. I then taped a name onto the back of each student. Students then walked around the room asking yes or no questions to their peers in order to deduce who they were. Students were not allowed to ask the same person multiple questions, which required them to talk to many different people. Judging by the number of smiles and the laughter that filled the room, it seemed like students enjoyed themselves. This game and the TASK party mentioned previously were simple ways to encourage students to interact with one another. Szekely (1983) would agree that play not only encourages a creative environment, it helps students to brainstorm.
ideas, understand and consider new material, and become actively involved in the learning process.

Next, we began discussing video art by analyzing popular music videos and discussing the differences between music videos and video art. This was one of the students’ favorite days in the pilot study group as we spent a good portion of the class period watching humorous, strange, and popular music videos. Students willingly volunteered videos to share and were fairly talkative while discussing the video effects, lyrical and visual connections, and potential subversive messages of the pieces. To conclude the class period, I partnered students with peers they normally did not talk to in order to deconstruct a music video together [see Figure 3]. Again, this provided an opportunity for students to get to know one another and share something in common.

![Figure 3. Two students use a personal phone to watch a music video. They then analyzed the video with guided questions from a worksheet.](image)

Most importantly, the end of unit project required a concerted group effort. For this first group project, I felt it was important to carefully create groups so that no one would feel left out and unsupported. At times I have allowed students to choose their own groups, but inevitably students choose people they are already comfortable with and, unfortunately, some students are simply left without a group. I attempted to break up friend groups for the purpose of providing an
opportunity for students to get-to-know new people. Joy wrote positively about the experience in her post-survey by saying, “I got put with people I didn't know, but that was okay because I got more comfortable with them and became friends.” Though working in groups presents inherent challenges, collaboration also presents students wonderful opportunities to learn from each other whether in developing ideas or executing the work. Teresa Roberts (2008), a fellow art educator, also observed successful and innovative collaborations in a primary school in Scotland. When surveying students engaged in collaboration, the majority of children believed working together increased the quality of their work (pp. 22-23).

**Performance Art**

I purposely saved performance art until the end of the year, because performance requires a large degree of trust between students for its complete success. *Performance art* is art in which the medium is the artist's own body and the visually compelling actions performed by the artist (“Performance,” n.d.). To be honest, I worried about trying performance art with this class because it seemed to not have bonded as closely as the pilot study class. I also had a few students who noticeably struggled accepting new genres, and occasionally vocalized their skepticism. Of course opposing opinions provide beautiful opportunities for discussion; however, I really wanted students to try performance whole-heartedly without worrying about negative reactions from their peers. Additionally, in my experience teaching high school, I find many teenagers are shy about standing and performing in front of others, especially when attempting something new. So, we began with very simple exercises to practice using our bodies for art making. These exercises included activities like saying our names in front of the class, breathing, staring, mimicking, and clapping. A lot of students giggled with partner exercises, but a few were very
serious and dedicated to the warm-ups. Of course, some exercises were more extensive than others:

One morning, students walked into the classroom bewildered to find all of the desks and chairs pushed to the back of the room. A large empty space allowed students to spread out comfortably in rows. We began with Taryn, a student proficient in yoga, leading us in some simple breathing exercises. I then prompted students to stand and stretch in place. Then we danced.

First, students walked to the beat of a metronome – slow then fast. Next, we moved to the beat of whatever music played for us. Then we began to skip, leap, and jump together in a circle like a chaotic carousel. The room radiated from the heat of our moving bodies. The students laughed. Everyone moved together – the girls, the boys, the shy, confident, graceful, and awkward students all together using our bodies to express rhythms, sounds, textures, and colors. At the end of 20 minutes we were all tired and warm. I looked around the room to see some students thoroughly relieved we had stopped moving, but most smiled and laughed like that was the strangest day in art class ever.

Once we collected again, we took a look of Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker’s choreographed performances. In reference to her performances at the Tate Modern, Keersmaeker’s choreography highlights the mechanics of the human body and the relationship between performer and the audience. Keersmaeker believes “through movement, through dancing, you can literally embody the most abstract ideas” (Tate, 2012). I then asked questions about her work. Students shared insights from their experience. Together, we discussed the possibilities of dancing in contemporary performance.

This brief illustration addresses a few of the benefits and concerns of a new genres curriculum. Many teachers including myself are hesitant to navigate uncharted territory. I do not claim to be a dancer. Quite honestly, I looked absolutely ridiculous attempting to touch my toes, leap, and twirl across the classroom with my students. All the while, it should be noted, these exercises were performed in front of my principal during an annual formal evaluation.

One of the limits of attempting a new curriculum is that it takes a lot of work to research, practice, and prepare a lesson inspired by unfamiliar artists and media. Some educators may find a lack of experience and confidence with new genres prevents them from even trying. In my experience, however, I did not mind looking or feeling silly because I had already established the
environment to support experimentation and play. From my observations, the students seemed to respond really well, even if hesitant at first. By using their bodies to move around the classroom, the importance of the artist’s body in performance work cemented itself within their minds.

Aside from “dancing,” we also performed everyday actions like bending, walking, and stretching. These gestures allowed us to examine the poetry of simple movement and ritual.

A couple of performance exercises involved in-depth, out-of-class experiences: First, to further build trust and camaraderie among class members, we completed an exercise of taking turns walking down a hallway and through the lunch room blind folded [see Figures 4 and 5]. Students performed this exercise in conjunction with a discussion on the five senses, which again brought attention to the performer’s body and performer/audience participation. Though this exercise required a degree of discomfort, students guided partners responsibly and laughed as they stumbled around the school together.

![Figure 4. Blindfolded students smile somewhat nervously as they listen carefully to the instructions of their partner to guide them down the hallway.](image1)

![Figure 5. TJ guides Taryn through a maze of lunchroom tables with verbal instructions and a helpful hand.](image2)

Another exercise required the cooperation of the entire class working together. As students walked in and looked at the board for their daily warm-up, they were greeted by an unusual challenge: to build a fort made of desks, tables, chairs, and sheets large enough to shelter the entire class. Students looked at me quizzically and asked for reassurance before beginning to
destroy the classroom. Some of the boys jumped in enthusiastically by tipping the tables on their ends. Several began organizing the logistics of the sheets and how to attach them to leg posts. Some natural leaders took charge of organizing the main hub of the fort, while others appeared hesitant to join in or seemed unsure on how they could help. Students laughed and smiled as they performed this seemingly ridiculous request. After about 30 minutes, the class had built a semi-stable structure that could barely squeeze each class member inside see Figures 6-8. Once inside the fort, I took a moment to explain that the purpose of the exercise was to engage students in a participatory artwork see Figure 7. Participatory art requires the interaction of the audience in order to showcase the creative expressions and experiences of the audience as the art itself Floryan, 2010, para. 2). I then asked questions related to the concepts of “fortifying” and “sheltering.” Students replied with examples of how sometimes people put up fronts or walls to protect their insecurities.

![Figure 6. Students work together to construct a roof for the fort](image1)

![Figure 7. Students huddle together inside our fort a class discussion.](image2)

![Figure 8. The completed fort made out of classroom tables, desks, chairs, and sheets.](image3)
Lastly, I connected our experience of fort building with the artist Thomas Hirschhorn and his work *Flamme éternelle*, 2014, which created a public space within the Palais de Tokyo museum where the artist, art-lovers, and curious visitors could make art together and interact with one another in social and intellectual conversation. Hirschhorn describes this work as “a public space or moments of public space. A space for encounters, dialogue, engagement. A space in which to be, to stay, to spend time and a space in which to think” (Azzarello, 2014, para. 1). Hirschhorn’s description of Flamme éternelle is exactly the kind of atmosphere this fort building activity and the entire new genres curriculum hoped to foster. Overall, the day appeared to be a fun and engaging learning experience where students worked and shared together and were challenged to consider the legitimacy of participatory performance.

Most importantly, students’ final performances demonstrated remarkable examples of vulnerability and respect for one another. Of course, the performances ranged in seriousness and emotional intensity. On the light-hearted end of the spectrum, a group of boys dressed in eccentric athletic wear and challenged the audience (including myself) to a three-on-three game of basketball using a miniature basketball hoop posted on the whiteboard. These boys made us laugh with the absurdity of the game. The more serious and somber performances expressed anxieties about health, relationships, the future, and identity. Interestingly, without providing a theme for the performance project, several students approached ideas about identity, specifically a comparison between inner and outward appearances, and self vs. peer acceptance (see Figures 9-12).
Hayli began her performance by inviting peers to choose a self-prescribed label to wash off of her body.

June invites her classmates to label her body with markers based on the masks she wears to cover or create her identity.

Similarly, Braden invites his peers to draw on his body with markers. This performance may suggest that the artist’s body is a work of art or at least a canvas susceptible to the marks of others.

Hayli began her performance by inviting peers to choose a self-prescribed label to wash off of her body.

After washing off a label, she then labeled the participant in return. This interaction may be interpreted as a metaphorical exchange of how peers mark each other with words and experiences.
These performances allowed students to recognize how they may share similar feelings and anxieties with their peers. Two of the most emotionally impactful performances are recounted here:

Graham was one of my truly gifted students – a sensitive, talented, and intentional artist. Graham always poured himself into his work. I had the privilege of teaching him in a few of my classes, including the pilot study a year prior to this class. I knew Graham fairly well including some of his personal struggles.

Last year, Graham’s final performance piece particularly affected me as a teacher: In his performance, Graham took center stage and sat on a chair. He then had an assistant tie his hands together with rope and blindfold him. Alone and defenseless on stage, Graham proceeded to give a monologue of his personal challenges and failures. In front of the entire class, he admitted to using drugs, self-harm, and struggling with an eating disorder. From my perspective as the teacher, I immediately felt intense panic and concern. This is not what I had envisioned by his project proposal! I wanted to cry out and stop the performance, but I was unsure of what to do. Obviously, Graham needed help. His performance was a desperate plea for help. After he finished, the class reacted with stunned silence while some of his friends showed gestures of support. Immediately following the class, I drew Graham aside to express my deepest concern and desire to lead him to help. As a consequence of this performance, Graham entered an addiction recovery program and received greater support from school administrators and counselors.

The following year, however, Graham was in danger of not graduating. At the beginning of the semester he attended my Studio Art class but was pulled out to work on deficient credits. His one request and plea to his counselors was to allow him to participate in our final performances. He told me privately, that he had been thinking about this piece ever since his last performance. This time, Graham sat on stage facing a female student shrouded in a white cloth [see Figure 13]. Similar to last year, he began to express his sorrowful regret for disappointing what appeared to be a deceased loved one. Graham wept as he tried to convey his remorse. Following the performance, he left the room abruptly. Again, the class reacted in stunned silence. I ran into the hallway to find Graham crying, and I gave him a big hug and attempted to comfort him.

Figure 13. Graham faces the representation of a loved one in his final performance.
Again, the incredible significance of these performances is the fact that Graham felt safe enough to admit his deepest struggles and regrets in front of his peers and his teacher. Undoubtedly some, perhaps many, students felt uncomfortable at such a display of emotion within these performances. Yet, without performance art, I am not sure if Graham would have ever had the means to express himself so freely and so powerfully. Following Graham’s performance, as a class, we discussed the beauty of opening up and feeling vulnerable with each other. Students made comments about how amazing it felt to be able to trust each other and express themselves in this way.

Misha was another student who showed the incredible power of performance and the level of trust built between class members:

Misha took my class at the encouragement of her older brother, Zach, who had been a part of the pilot study. Initially, Misha did not see herself as much of an artist. Her older brother was the “artsy one” and she simply appreciated art. This appreciation for art, however, allowed Misha to have a fairly broad definition of art and feel comfortable sharing her opinions and trying new art forms.

While studying famous performance artists, Misha felt especially inspired by Yoko Ono’s *Cut Piece*, 1965. So much so, that she proposed to create a performance in which she invited classmates to freely cut her hair. My initial reaction to her proposal was an absolute “no!” I wanted to avoid extreme performances for the safety of all involved. However, I could tell that Misha felt very committed to her idea. Before I would allow her to perform I explained the risks and potential consequences of the project, and required the written permission from her parent(s). To my surprise, the next morning, Misha brought in a note from her mother. Her brother Zach also attended to view the performance.

Misha walked to the front of the room. Laid out a set of scissors, combs, and electric hair clippers and simply wrote on the board, “Cut my hair.” Initially, students gasped and looked at each other like, “She can’t be serious?” As the first student approached Misha’s hair, students broke their silence with audible exclamations of concern. Surprisingly, the first cut removed a long strand of hair. The second cut was a more reserved trim at the back. Slowly, more and more students began to volunteer with varying degrees of confidence. By the end of 7 minutes, the performance reached a lull and her hair was left significantly altered. The performance might have concluded, except Misha expressed her disappointment that no one had been brave enough to use the clippers. This then prompted Braden, Helen, and Denise to continue the
performance. These three students seemed to volunteer because they had some hair
cutting experience and, in some way, appeared protective of Misha [see Figure 15].
The class gasped in discomfort as Braden took the clippers and the buzz echoed loudly
in the room. Next, Misha’s brother began to shave the right side of her head above her
ear [see Figure 16]. After a minute or so, Misha began to cry. Zach immediately stopped
and asked if she was okay, if he should stop. Misha encouraged him to continue. After
another few minutes the performance seemed to conclude. But just as Zach had set down
the clippers and walked off stage, Braden jumped back to where Misha sat and
performed a most remarkable and touching gesture.

Braden had always been recognized by his peers for his bright blonde, stylish hair. He
seemed to frequently receive compliments about it. Yet, he approached Misha bent over
and took his hair in one clump and cut it all off in a loving gesture of sympathy and
camaraderie [see Figure 17]. This left the class stunned for a different reason, one that
seemed to conclude the performance unit with a feeling of closeness and compassion see
Figure 18.
Following Misha’s performance, I asked her if she was alright and why she had started to cry. She said she was “fine,” the clippers were just a little loud in her ear and began to pull her hair. However, I also suspect the act of cutting her hair so dramatically took an unexpected emotional toll. Over the next couple of days, Misha’s mother and I communicated via email about the performance. Though her mother had granted her daughter permission, she still felt opposed to the idea on terms of the performance appearing radical and rebellious. Though I had attempted to learn from Graham’s experience the previous year, Misha’s performance reiterated the importance of screening and approving project proposals. It prompted me to better explain the responsibility and consequences that inherently accompany performance pieces. It also caused me to reflect on how I could better contextualize performance works shown in class. Nevertheless, Misha explained the personal significance of her performance was that “It brought out things and feelings that I feel couldn't be expressed in any other way.”

In terms of student artwork, performance art proved to be the most terrifying and rewarding unit of the curriculum. On one hand, the performances allowed for a measure of incalculable risk; even with project proposals, it is impossible to foresee the way students will perform and react to the performances. Conversely, performance art provides immeasurable rewards in providing opportunities for a class to bond and for individuals to cathartically express personal feelings and struggles. In truth, an abundance of research could have examined the affordances and limitations of performance art alone.

**Post-Survey Responses**

The post-survey administered to students immediately following the performance unit and concluding the class revealed polarizing reactions from students. Some students found performance to be utterly amazing and life changing. One student said she loved performance art
because “it drew out emotions and made us vulnerable in front of our peers.” Another student said, “I liked my performance art project because I shared something important to me with the class.” Conversely, a few students expressed a strong dislike for performance. One went so far as to express concern for my job security. These seemingly opposing reviews were echoed again when asked to order the curriculum projects from favorite to least favorite: performance triumphed as the most popular and simultaneously the second least favorite.

Performance may have received mixed reviews, however, the survey also considered the general comfort-level of each student within the class. The survey asked, “Did you feel comfortable sharing your thoughts and opinions in class?” and “Did you feel comfortable working with others in the class?” Most students indicated they felt safe sharing their comments. Tabitha said, “I think for the most part everyone is very understanding and open minded so it makes it easier to share.” Of course, some students felt more comfortable sharing their thoughts and opinions with their peers by the end of the semester. For example, Claire said she felt secure “especially after performance art. I wish we had more time because I feel much more comfortable with everyone in the class [now].” Very few students indicated any hesitancy in sharing their opinions. Those who did worried about potentially offending their peers by voicing opposing views. Some students indicated they felt shy or inadequate when working with groups. However, most students seemed to express a positive comfort level when working with their peers. Alan, who had frequently expressed skeptical remarks about new genres, said, “I felt like it was a judge free zone and I felt comfortable doing anything I really wanted to around all these people.” Thankfully, as a whole, the class appeared to be an effectively safe environment where students could experiment, work together, and express themselves. Celene concluded her survey
by saying, “This became the most calming room for me. This is the only place I feel like I can be myself. I don't feel judged here. I couldn't be more thankful for that.”

**How do students’ definitions of art and artists expand as a result of a new genre curriculum? How will this case influence students’ attitudes toward art, especially contemporary art?**

Another primary goal of the curriculum aimed to broaden students’ understandings of art and artists by exposing them to non-traditional art forms and unique approaches to art making. At the beginning of the case study, students responded to a survey with various questions gauging their experience with art and notions about art. Many of the students defined art as either “anything” and “everything” or “expressing” one’s self. However, like most young students, these answers lacked why or how art should be defined as “anything,” “everything,” or simply an “expression.” After reading these responses, not only did I hope students might expand and clarify their definitions of art, I expected students to gain vocabulary and experiences to justify their reasoning. The following experiences illustrate how this new genre curriculum provided opportunities for students to come to new understandings about art:

**Process Art**

After students engaged with a TASK party, I introduced process-based art. *Process Art* developed as a creative movement in the U.S. and Europe in the mid-1960s. Process artists emphasized the physical properties of the art materials used within their works and the process of making art rather than any predetermined product. Process Art often displayed themes of change and transience (Guggenheim, n.d.).

In order for students to understand where Process Art came from, I first gave a brief overview of the development of modern art. I felt a timeline was important to help students recognize how many new genres built upon or reacted against principles of modernism. First, to
pique students’ interests in modern art, especially Abstract Expressionism, I presented a collection of images of modern paintings and paintings made by toddlers. By presenting these images, I gained insights into students’ aesthetic sensitivity. Some students immediately vocalized strong opinions of disgust, frustration, and disbelief of how these paintings could be considered art. TJ mumbled under their breath, “This is crap.” or “I could do that.” When asked, how he would define art in his post-survey, TJ said, “I think that art is something that is aesthetic and appealing to look at. And art is something that takes skill and talent. I don't think that everything/anything can be art.” Several others expressed concerns about the degree of talent and time it took to create these works. Ironically some students’ initial definitions of art as “anything,” “everything,” and “expression” obviously excluded Abstract Expressionism. Nonetheless, the naysayers provided an opportunity for an interesting discussion on what and who makes art valuable, “good,” or “bad.”

Next, I guided students through a process-based painting experience by mimicking the methods of Jackson Pollock. Pollock’s action paintings are considered to be some of the first significant, process-based paintings that drew attention to the medium of paint itself (Kleiner & Mamiya, 2005, pp. 1037-1038). Pollock himself said,

I don't work from drawings or color sketches. My painting is direct… Sometimes I use a brush, but often prefer using a stick. Sometimes I pour the paint straight out of the can. I like to use a dripping, fluid paint. I also use sand, broken glass, pebbles, string, nails or other foreign matter. The method of painting is a natural growth out of a need. I want to express my feelings rather than illustrate them. Technique is just a means of arriving at a statement.

When I am painting I have a general notion as to what I am about…
Sometimes I lose a painting. But I have no fear of changes, of destroying the image, because a painting has a life of its own. I kind of let it live. (Rose, 1980, p. 97)

From Pollock’s description of his work, he clearly indicates a lack of predetermined planning while highlighting the materials and process of creating his paintings.

To get started with the activity, a large piece of paper was unrolled on the floor in the middle of the classroom. On either side of the paper, buckets of paint and paintbrushes were placed for students to use. Students then divided into two groups and took turns splattering and dripping paint across the paper until, collectively, the class felt the painting looked complete. Of course, this made a huge mess, but students seemed to enjoy this carefree, wild approach to painting. Throughout the activity, Pollock’s process of painting was repeatedly stressed as revolutionary for his time and integral to his work.

Digital and Internet-based Art

Are Internet memes considered art? When this question was initially posed, only three students raised their hands. To introduce students to digital and Internet Art, several visuals of memes common to students’ everyday experience on social media were shown. An Internet meme is a cultural idea presented visually in the form of an image, video or text, usually in a
creative or humorous way ("Meme," n.d.). Mike Rugnetta from PBS Idea Channel then presented claims that according to the ideas of Leo Tolstoy, Aristotle, and Andy Warhol, memes might be considered art (PBS, 2012). This prompted a great class discussion on the validity of memes as art: Katy boldly argued against memes, because she felt concerned about the authenticity or originality of a meme. To her, memes were simply borrowed imagery. Kade felt that memes were insincere and “did not make [him] feel anything.” He believed memes lacked true meaning. However, others defended memes as a way of expressing yourself visually. Art qualifiers discussed in our conversation included intentionality, originality, meaning, feeling, beauty, etc. It seemed that several students in the class could agree that memes had the potential to be art if they were created with the intention of being art, but it did not necessitate them as good or quality art.

**Installation Art**

Similarly, a class discussion on installation art provided another opportunity for aesthetic debate. *Installation art* is art that fills and transforms the perception of a place. Installations are often, but not always, site-specific (i.e. the location is important to the meaning of the piece), inside, multi-sensory, and temporary ("Installation," n.d.). As a sketchbook warm-up activity, students were shown ten images of ordinary rooms, festive decorations, and actual installation pieces. I was pleasantly surprised to hear many students energetically arguing back and forth about why one space could be considered art and the other could not. Misha seemed to have a very broad and accepting vision of art, to the point of accepting birthday and Christmas decorations as valid art forms. Others reiterated previous discussions, to argue that art must be made with the intention and purpose of being art. After facilitating this debate, I felt very proud.
of my students’ growth. Their comments demonstrated critical thinking, an expanded vocabulary, and matured views on art.

**Post Surveys & Interviews**

At the end of the semester, I gave each participant a post survey about their experience and thoughts about art and the class. This survey proved to be one of the most valuable sources of data for this case study because it required students to provide answers directly related to the research questions. Judging by the responses, several students confirmed that their definitions of art had expanded. Daphne said, “My eyes were completely opened to what could be art...There are so many different types of art than I thought.” Another student commented, “I've learned to appreciate more art forms and styles. My art style was strictly painting and sketch work, but now, it's a lot broader and I love this class for showing me how much more there is.” These quotes reflect a fraction of positive survey responses, yet clearly illustrate how this class of new genres challenged preconceived notions of art to include a broader variety of art media.

Most students also seemed to acknowledge contemporary new genres as just as valuable as other traditional art media. For example, Taryn recognized that new genres “are [evolved forms] of those traditional [art] forms, and absolutely as important.” The curriculum provided brief historical contexts of the development of these new genres and cited several seminal works institutionalized by museums, galleries, and art historians. By presenting process art, video, installation, and performance art as evolutions of painting and sculpture and accepted contemporary art forms, this approach may have further legitimized new genres in students’ minds. Another student responded, “…I feel like [new genres] bring up issues and emotions that are just as valuable as those in the past.” The curriculum also taught students how art often reflects the artists’ personal, social, and/or political intentions. By analyzing and interpreting
works of art, students could find individual connections to the works and then imbue their own artwork with personal meaning and feeling. Lastly, Shaylynn insightfully explained one of the valuable aspects of new genres was that “instead of only viewing art people have the option to experience it.” Installation and performance art, for example, often invite viewer participation within the work. Prior to this class, students may never have touched, felt, smelled, or tasted art, but rather only viewed art at a distance behind glass and security markers.

However, despite the curriculum’s diverse examples and experiences with contemporary art, some students (approximately 3-5) maintained their prior notions of art and felt that they had neither improved their artistic skills nor found new genres as valuable as traditional art forms. Now and then, a couple of boys vocalized their skepticism about certain artworks. However, others were always quiet about their opinions. Denise, exemplified one of these quiet skeptics. In her survey, she said, “I feel like I am one of few who feels the way I do about this class. I didn't want to be looked at differently or hated for not liking it.” Fortunately, through private conversations and a recorded interview, I was able to understand some of Denise’s concerns:

Denise had taken one art class in junior high and, according to her mother, shown some promise in drawing. Interests in sports and other hobbies occupied her extracurricular time in high school until this year when she took a drawing class and my Studio Art class to fulfill her art credits. When asked if she would consider herself artistic, Denise responded, “I've always enjoyed art, but I'm not super passionate about it.”

Throughout the semester, Denise repeatedly expressed concern about her grade and how she simply took the class for an arts credit. At times she felt confused or lost as to what to do because my class was formatted so differently than her other art classes. In her other art classes, she had always been given clear guidelines about what to do and how to do it. By contrast, my projects felt very open-ended, and this freedom and the process of developing meaningful ideas appeared paralyzing at times. She said, “I have a hard time coming up with an idea and putting emotions behind my art. Sometimes I just need the grade; so, I'll just do something but I never think about what my feeling is behind the piece.”

At the end of the year, Denise especially expressed her disapproval of performance art. Speaking of some of her peers’ work, she said, “Some of the performances were hard to
watch…. some of the performances were I think too far for a classroom setting.” When asked to elaborate on why she felt this way, she tried to explain that some of these pieces made her feel uncomfortable or “dark.” Yet, Denise acknowledged that it was important for art to be unique and talk about serious subject matter, but her personal taste favored art that was more beautiful and uplifting.

When asked if her definition of art had expanded at all because of this class, she acknowledged “a little bit” because she had seen video art projected in museums before. She also admitted, “I think if I was more into [new genres], maybe my view would probably expand even more but since I just haven't gotten into it, it's just hard” (personal communication, May 20, 2015).

Denise provided insightful feedback about students who appeared unconvinced about new genres. The few students who seemed less-than-converted to contemporary new genres appeared to hold firmly to their views about art because they felt uncomfortable changing them. Some students simply could not expand their definition of art beyond aesthetically-pleasing objects that require time and skill.

In summary, this new genres curriculum appeared to be successful in expanding most students’ definitions of art. At the beginning of the class, most students shared a very broad definition of art. Students most frequently used words such as “anything,” “everything,” and a means of “expression.” By the end of the year, students continued to use similar definitions, but also added qualifying conditions such as work with “purpose,” “meaning,” “intention,” a “concept,” or “idea.” With the exception of a few skeptics, the curriculum also nurtured positive attitudes toward contemporary art.

Can a contemporary new genre curriculum increase students’ confidence in art making? Do students self-identify as creative, artistic, and/or artists more as a result of this class?

One of the main motivations for creating this new genre curriculum and concurrent Studio Art class, was to welcome students with little to no art experience and validate their creative potential regardless of inherent talent. Students have many options to fulfill their fine art credit in high school, and sadly many avoid the visual arts because they supposedly “cannot even
draw a stick figure.” This class intended to increase students’ confidence in their artistic abilities by emphasizing conceptual thinking, problem-solving, meaning making, and creating art with non-traditional mediums and processes.

**Process Art**

To ease students into the class, we began with process-based art. First, I wanted students to worry less about the final product (e.g. whether they could draw or paint realistically) and simply have fun trying new processes. I asked students to experiment with various art materials and processes. After participating in a TASK party and Jackson Pollock-inspired painting, as described previously, we looked at how other process artists like Robert Morris, Richard Serra, Lynda Benglis, and Barry Le Va for inspiration. In Richard Serra’s *Verb List* (1967-68), for example, Serra wrote down several verbs to guide his explorations of materials and processes. These verbs “to roll,” “to crease,” “to splash,” etc. motivated students to think about how they could apply art materials in new ways. I observed many students playing it safe with traditional paint and paintbrush, but there were some making wonderfully, huge messes. For example, one student used his hands to paint beyond the borders of his paper and create a swamp of blue and green acrylic paint on his desk [see Figure 21](#). Another student explored new approaches of working with chalk pastel. She drew, scraped, sprinkled, smeared, and painted with chalk dust on the classroom floor [see Figure 22](#). Overall, I observed and felt a palpable energy within the class as students worked with diverse processes: tearing, shaving, peeling, crumpling, splattering, tying, pouring, and the like [see Figures 21-24](#). These experiments then led to an in-depth, out of class process project in which I asked students to examine a daily process or ritual in their everyday life (e.g. sleeping, eating, brushing teeth, and going to school).
In retrospect, process art appeared to be a nice transition into the class because it put non-self-identifying artists at ease about their natural artistic talents and allowed students to conceptualize art as more than just a packaged product. One student, who was already a particularly good painter, said she loved process art in her post-survey because “it was…calming for me and I got to experience new feelings about creating art.” The general consensus seemed to be that students enjoyed freely making messes and trying new things. Alan said he liked process art because, “[I] had a really good time and did a whole bunch of fun stuff and got really messy.” According the end of year survey, many students said process art was their favorite project unit.

*Figure 21.* Niko used his hands to paint a swamp of blue and green acrylic paint on his desk.

*Figure 22.* A student purposefully ignores paper to draw and paint on the classroom floor.

*Figure 23.* A student blindfolds herself to experience the process of temporary blindness while drawing.

*Figure 24.* Katy shaves a crayon using scissors to collect delicate wax sprinkles on her paper.
Digital and Internet-based Art

Next, students learned about a relatively new art form called glitch art. *Glitch art,* according to Moradi (2004, pp. 8-11), is the unexpected result of digital/technological malfunction or the deliberate manipulation of digital code/data. While teaching the class to create their own glitches, students exuded a sense of excitement and eagerness to learn with comments like, “Woah, that’s cool!” and “It worked!” Students interested in film and photography appeared particularly captivated by glitch art. Claire said she liked glitch art because she liked “ruining stuff.” This notion of purposefully ruining, “damaging,” or “destroying” led to an interesting discussion on the value of whole vs. damaged and tangible vs. digital works of art. It also relieved the pressure of creating a perfectly controlled and recognizable image.

At the same time students experimented with glitch art, students also explored animated gifs and cinemagraphs. An *animated gif* is an animated image file format popularly found on the Internet (“Gif,” n.d.). Similarly, a *cinemagraph* is an image in which only part of the image moves subtly and repeatedly to give the illusion of a looped video (“Cinemagraph,” n.d.). Students were provided some online resources, but not much step-by-step instruction on how to make a gif or cinemagraph. By limiting the teaching of specific skills and step-by-step processes,
the primary responsibility of learning shifted to the students. Doing so arguably encouraged
creativity within this assignment because it redirected the focus away from mastering computer
software to creative problem solving (Black & Browning, 2011, p. 21). The hope was that as
students researched digital and Internet art, they would teach themselves and share with their
neighbors or post on our class website and learn from each other. Thus, creating a decentralized
network of knowledge where peers taught one another, rather than solely relying on the teacher
as the source of all gif and cinemagraph-making knowledge (May, 2011).

However, contrary to expectations, students kept most of their discoveries about digital
and Internet art to themselves and little networking developed. One of the limits of this teaching
format was clearly illustrated by Niko’s frustration,

When working on his animated gifs, Niko seemed totally lost. He simply sat in front of
his computer screen staring helplessly. As I tried to give him pointers and suggestions, I
sensed frustration and possibly tears building behind his eyes. I tried to give him space
and be as kind and encouraging as possible, but by the end of the week he failed to
complete the assignment requirements.

In Niko’s case, it is clear that a few examples or help worksheets could have aided those
students intimidated by technology. Perhaps better preparing students with resources prior to
independent learning would have avoided the daunting task of trying a new art form.

Although, Niko demonstrates a limit of this particular teaching method within the
curriculum, in general, digital and Internet art may have increased students’ confidence in art
making by its sheer accessibility and formulaic process. Students may have found that something
as simple as a meme, a glitch, or an animated gif on the Internet could be contextualized as art.

Installation Art

While viewing several examples of installation art, students appeared excited by their
comments of wonder, “How did they do that?” and “Wow, that’s crazy!” Immediately following
the presentation, a few students felt ready to talk about some great and ambitious ideas. I felt especially thrilled to see Denise so excited about a project, because this was the first time she appeared truly engaged with the class. As elaborated previously, Denise appeared hesitant to accept many of the new genres explored in the class because they appeared to lack time, skill, or beauty. However, installation art seemed to fit her aesthetic appeal. Installation also prompted extraordinary enthusiasm from another difficult to reach student:

Niko rarely, if ever, freely offered his thoughts and opinions during class discussions. When he was placed in groups, he usually kept to himself and needed encouragement to participate. Hence, it came as no surprise that Niko requested special permission to work on the installation project by himself. Though I cautioned that an installation requires a lot of work, he seemed sure in his choice to work singly.

Niko wanted to create an elaborate paper manikin that could be placed in different positions and places around the school library. By the next class period he returned with part of a hand made of intricate bones of rolled paper and strings that he said had taken him at least six hours to build [see Figure 27]. Niko continued to spend hours and hours outside of class to finish his paper sculpture [see Figure 28].

This was the first time I had truly seen Niko excited and motivated about the course work. As the teacher, I offered little if any instruction on how to construct the manikin. Niko simply had a vision and worked twice as hard as every other student to create his sculpture. Had the curriculum structured the outcome of installation projects too tightly, Niko may never have felt proud or enthusiastic about anything he created in the class.
One of the most extraordinary installation projects, however, combined the forces of four female seniors. The project provided a multi-sensory and participatory experience for the viewer by welcoming the audience into a quiet, enclosed room wherein they were greeted by an instructional text, a step stool, paper shredder, and video projection of places in the school see Figure 29. The text invited senior students to ceremoniously shred old readings, worksheets, and notes as a means of letting go of their high school experience see Figure 30. This work clearly demonstrated a thoughtful concept of coming of age and became a source of catharsis for the soon-to-be-graduated artists.

Unfortunately, we were unable to critique the installations as a class before AP testing commenced in the library. However, our caring librarian went to the trouble of organizing a semi-formal discussion panel during lunch to highlight the students’ work. This lunch panel included nine case study participants and several non-class members who frequented the library. He and I took turns interviewing students about their artwork, which provided an opportunity for groups to articulate their thoughts about their creative process and the meaning behind their pieces. For the participants, the panel provided a much-deserved spotlight on their hard work and perhaps even allowed students to see themselves as genuine artists.
Pre and Post-Surveys

Before the class began, students completed a pre-survey to gauge their initial confidence levels in their artistic abilities and whether individuals self-identified as an artist or not. Most students gave a modest ranking of their artistic abilities. Compared on a scale from 1-5, the class confidence level averaged 3.2. Interestingly, only 3 of 23 students responded definitively with a “no” – they would not consider themselves artists. By the end of the year, the Post-Survey results revealed approximately 28% of students reported an increase in confidence while only 2 students reported a lower ranking than their pre-surveys.

Judging by the post-surveys, most students also agreed that they had gained artistic skills by participating in this class, Joy wrote, “Before this class, I thought I couldn't draw, but because of this class I know that art isn't just drawing. I've learned so many new art forms and I have learned how to use them.” Similarly, Katy said, “I may not be skilled with painting and drawing but I have learned that I have artistic ideas.” These students, who typically thought of art as drawing and painting, were exactly the kind of students the curriculum hoped to engage and encourage in the arts. Another student stated, “I understand art ten times more than ever. I've always looked at it like it's all about your skill, but it's about meaning [too].”

In regards to whether students self-identified as artists or not, the post-survey also showed 8 students changing their initial answers of “maybe” to a positive “yes.” For example, Misha commented in her post-survey, “I have learned so much about art and I have a whole new perspective and respect for people that devote their lives to it, and I learned that I can make art. I never would have called [myself] ‘artistic,’ but now that I have developed some skills, I feel like I can make art.” Similarly, Taryn said, “This class brings me fresh ideas, new perspectives, connections, and truly makes me become an ‘artist.’” Reviewing this information alone, one
might conclude this curriculum successfully allowed encouraged students’ confidence and
allowed students to consider themselves as artists.

**Conclusion**

Naturally, over the course of a semester-long class, an infinite quantity of data could have
been gathered and analyzed for this case study. The examples presented within this chapter
highlight answers to the research questions, but in no way describe the class or all of its
members in extensive detail. Overall, the research supports the majority of students responded
positively to a new genre curriculum. Most students expanded their definitions of art and/or
became excited about art, and created personally relevant and meaningful artwork. A more in-
depth summary of the data and analysis follows in Chapter 5.
Chapter 5: Conclusion

This case study sought to understand the affordances and limitations of a secondary art curriculum investigating contemporary new genres. As the teacher-researcher, I gained many valuable insights into my own teaching practice including how to curate and pace the curriculum, how to present lesson material, how to work with parents, support staff, and administrators, etc. The following conclusion, however, presents the most significant discoveries gleaned from this investigation.

Affordances

Collaborative and Community Building

One of the positive returns of this case study resulted in building a safe, creative environment for most students. This was accomplished by prefacing the class as a new, fun, and experimental art class where all skill-levels might feel welcomed. Additionally, students became better acquainted with their peers through frequent partner and group activities. Over the course of four months, students repeatedly broke comfort barriers to build trust and work with their peers. Thus, by the end of the semester, students’ performance projects shared beautiful and poignant moments with one another.

Another realization occurred toward the end of the case, when I recognized my role as a teacher in fostering a respectful learning environment was somewhat limited. I could set up the conditions for collaboration and a strong classroom community, but the students ultimately built the community.

Expansive

The curriculum successfully exposed students to a variety of contemporary art forms, which included process art, digital and Internet art, video, installation, and performance art.
Within these art forms, students viewed several works of art and practiced a variety of processes. These artworks then prompted discussions that debated their validity. From these experiences and discussions, students began to formulate or refine their beliefs about art with distinguishing qualifiers. By the end of the semester, most students indicated their initial definitions of art, artistic skill, and what it means to be an artist expanded as a result of participating in this class.

**Confidence Building and Validating**

This case appeared particularly effective with students willing to take risks and sincerely try new genres. Doing so, opened greater possibilities for art making for these individuals. Instead of feeling overly self-conscious about lacking skills, students could acknowledge the process of creating art and other artistic strengths such as problem solving, creativity, expression, and intent. Students may also have felt validated through peer performances sharing similar themes and ideas related to conflicts of adolescence.

**Relevant & Meaningful.**

By teaching students how to analyze and interpret art, several students made connections with artwork relevant to their personal lives. Additionally, in several class discussions, students repeatedly reiterated the importance of intention and emotion within an artwork. Learning how to critique works of art and acknowledging intentionality encouraged students to create meaningful works of art.

**Student Archetypes**

One of the unexpected outcomes of the case study involved a discovery of student archetypes that described ways in which students engaged with the curriculum. These archetypes by no means describe the complexity and individuality of each student in all situations, but rather
provided an opportunity for me to understand my students in new ways. As I presented the curriculum, students reacted in primarily one of the following ways:

**The Seemingly Unenthusiastic and/or Unmotivated.** This student remained quiet and reserved the entire semester. Despite my sincere efforts to exude friendliness and provide opportunities for students to get-to-know each other, this student preferred to remain alone and unbothered. Thus, working with a partner or group proved to be extremely difficult and often fruitless. Extrinsic motivations such as grades and praise had little effect, while an occasional intrinsic desire to create an individual project produced best results.

**The Skeptic.** The skeptic primarily participated for the sake of his or her grade. Other motivators may have included friends and fun, but a sincere interest for contemporary new genres never truly manifested itself. Throughout the course, the skeptic repeatedly showed expressions of disbelief, sarcasm, and pessimism. Yet, despite apparent skepticism, these students produced fair work that demonstrated understanding of curriculum material. Toward the end of the case, their perceptions of art and artistic skill had altered very little.

**The Open-minded Traditionalist.** This student may or may not have had art experience prior to the case. Regardless, their notions about art and artistic skill primarily involved traditional media such as painting and drawing. However, this student was willing to learn and try new media. By doing so, his or her concepts of art expanded and he or she found greater confidence in understanding and creating art.

**The Enthusiast.** The enthusiast most often typified students with several years of art experience (often repeat students of mine) who truly embraced a broad definition of art. However, enthusiasts could also be found in students less experienced with art, yet supported by friends within the class. This student was willing to take greater risks with new media, which
produced meaningful, quality work and demonstrated a greater level of trust with his or her peers. The enthusiast frequently vocalized positive and insightful comments about the artwork discussed in class and demonstrated greater leadership in group projects.

Thankfully, in this case, the majority of students exhibited open-mindedness and enthusiasm for the curriculum. Again, with these archetypes I do not intend to superficially label students into categories in every situation. However, these patterns allowed me to reflect on how I could better serve the seemingly unmotivated and skeptical learner in the future. Perhaps additional thought should be given to how curriculum design can serve all archetypes within a class.

**Limitations**

**Exclusive**

To a degree, this curriculum excluded several contemporary art forms including drawing, painting, and sculpture. Students may have briefly drawn or painted in an exercise. However, the curriculum excluded in-depth projects involving more traditional media. This may have given students the false impression that such media are not equally valued in the contemporary art world. The curriculum also privileged institutionalized artists and artworks. It ignored commercial, folk, and emerging contemporary artists. However, this limitation of exclusivity may then infer that all curricula inevitably omits some media, artists, and processes. In fact, when designing any curriculum, it seems unavoidable that some art and artists are excluded based on a variety of limitations including instructor bias, time, funding, standards, and the like.

**Overwhelming and Uncomfortable**

To some students, this curriculum may have felt overwhelming and uncomfortable because it required students to consider and create art in new ways. A lot of the artworks shown
in class deviated from perceived norms, which may have been difficult for students to accept as quality art. When attempting these new genres, some struggled with a lack of scaffolding (e.g. student examples, worksheets, step-by-step guides) and the open-ended nature of the projects. Students may also have felt uncomfortable when asked to work with peers.

**Time and Exhibition Space**

Time and exhibition space are constant challenges to my program, and these two challenges especially affected the installation unit. Unfortunately, due to Advanced Placement (AP) testing, students were hard pressed to complete their installations in just two weeks from start to finish. Installing before testing commenced was crucial because our only large public display space was in the library where testing occurred. The issue of exhibiting originates from a lack of opportunity to exhibit elsewhere in the school. To date, I have felt very much supported and trusted by my administration. However, when it comes to displaying artwork in public areas of the school, my principal feels wary of what that artwork looks like and how others will treat it. As a result, my hallway display case and the library are the only exhibition spaces available to my students.

**The Teacher**

I, myself, am limited in knowledge and experience with new genres. I only took one semester-long, undergraduate course exploring time-based media. A sparse background, coupled with limited time to research and try new genres myself, made me feel inadequate to expertly teach these art forms. For example, I fear that I may have failed to accurately contextualize digital and Internet-based art as legitimate, avant-garde art forms because I barely knew how to create glitches and animated gifs myself. Many of my lessons would have been enhanced by greater preparation on my part.
Final Word

Reflecting back on my experience as a child, I came to love art by coloring with crayons, but perhaps future generations of students will come to appreciate art through a love of music, dance, video, relationships, or the Internet. This research study grew initially from a personal love for contemporary art, especially new genres, then with a desire to share art with those who felt incapable or less confident in their artistic abilities, and lastly, with the hope of expanding the definition of art and artists for young students. Throughout the course I found success in fostering a trusting classroom environment, exposing students to new ideas, materials, and processes, and saw how new genres gave voice to students’ thoughts and feelings.

By generalizing the examples found within this case study, art educators may potentially expand their teaching practices and find valuable curricular ideas. A new genre class may also expand secondary art programs beyond drawing, painting, sculpture, and ceramics courses. However, this case study provides only one example of a new genre curriculum, further investigation of the affordances and limitations of new genres could provide greater understanding of their affects in the art classroom. In terms of its significance, the implications of this study may suggest that exploring contemporary new genres provides opportunities for students to access art and express themselves in new ways, perhaps ways that are wholly unique from traditional media.
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APPENDIX A: Consent Forms

Student Permission

Dear Student,

Welcome to Studio Art! It’s going to be a crazy, fun, and interesting class. I would like to invite you to take part in a research project about this class. My art education professor at BYU, Dr. Dan Barney, will monitor this study. This form will tell you about the project to help you decide whether or not you want to participate.

What is this study about?
In this study, I want to learn how high school students respond to an art class inspired by contemporary art (art being made right now).

Do I have to be in this study?
No, you don't. Participation in this research study is completely voluntary. You may withdraw at any point without affecting your grade/standing in school. However, regardless of participating in the research study or not, you will be expected to complete the curriculum assignments and activities for your grade in the class. If you choose not to participate in the study, your assignments, projects, and participation will not be recorded within the research.

What am I being asked to do?
If you agree to participate in this research study, the following will occur:

• You may be asked to offer your opinions about art, assignments, and the class in a survey or interview approximately once per term: Surveys will be written while interviews may be audio recorded for accuracy. These surveys and interviews will take place during regular classroom time and will take no longer than 30 minutes total.
• Your participation in class activities may be documented with photographs.
• Your artwork may be documented with photographs and video.

What are the benefits to me for taking part in the study?
Taking part in this research study may not help you in any way, but it might expand your knowledge about art. It also will help me become a better art teacher. It may also help other art teachers see the benefit of contemporary art in the classroom.

Can anything bad happen if I am in this study?
I think there are very few risks to you by participating, but you may not like some of the art we study in class. You may feel strange trying new things. Remember, you don't have to answer any survey or interview question you do not feel comfortable with and you may drop out of the study at any time.

Who will know that I am in the study?
Only your parents and the school administration may be aware of your participation with this study. Everything you share will be private. Your name will be changed with any information I choose to use in writing and presenting about this study.
What if I have questions?
If you have questions at any time, you can ask me and you can talk to your parents about the study. You may contact me via email alyssaridge@alpinedistrict.org or (801) 810-8165 ext.104. You may also contact Dr. Dan Barney at (801) 422-1581 and daniel_barney@byu.edu. Questions about your rights as a study participant or to submit comment or complaints about the study should be directed to the IRB Administrator, Brigham Young University, A-285 ASB, Provo, UT 84602. Call (801) 422-1461 or send emails to irb@byu.edu.

If you want to be in this study, please sign and print your name:

Name (Printed): ______________________ Signature: ______________________ Date: ______
I give my permission to have my voice recorded for interview accuracy. _____ YES _____ NO

Photo and Video Release

Instructions: As part of researching this class, I may take photos and video of you participating. Please indicate what uses of these images you are willing to permit, by initialing next to the uses you agree to and signing at the end.

This consent form is optional! I will only use the photos and video in the ways you agree to. Any use of these images will not be identified with your name.

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I have read the above descriptions and give my express written consent for the use of the photos and videos as indicated by my initials above.

Name (Printed): ______________________ Signature: ______________________ Date: ______
Dear Parent,

I am your student’s art teacher and a graduate student at Brigham Young University. I am conducting a research study about how high school students respond to an art class inspired by contemporary art (art being made right now). I am inviting your child to take part in the research because (he/she) is in my Studio Art class. My art education professor at BYU, Dr. Dan Barney, will monitor this study.

**Participation**

Participation in this research study is completely **voluntary**. You may withdraw your child's participation at any point **without affecting your child's grade/standing in school**.

However, students are expected to complete curriculum assignments and activities for their grade as usual, regardless of participating in the research or not. If students choose not to participate in the study, their assignments, projects, and participation will not be recorded within the research.

**How will my student participate?**

If you agree to let your child participate in this research study, the following will occur:

- You child may be asked to offer his/her opinions about art, assignments, and the class in a survey or interview approximately once per term: Surveys will be written while interviews may be audio recorded for accuracy. These surveys and interviews will take place during regular classroom time and will take no longer than 30 minutes total.
- Your student’s participation in class activities may be documented with photographs.
- Your student’s artwork may be documented with photographs and video.

**Risks & Confidentiality**

There is a risk of loss of privacy, which I will reduce by NOT using any real names or other identifiers in the written report. I will also keep all data on a password-protected computer. Only I will have access to the data. At the end of the study, data will be either deleted or referenced only by me for future curriculum improvements.

**Benefits & Compensation**

There are no direct benefits for your child's participation in this project, but he/she may expand their knowledge about art and may be able to articulate his/her opinions better. I believe this study will help me become a better teacher. There will be no compensation for participation in this project.

**Questions about the Research**

If you have any questions about this study, you may contact me via email alyssaridge@alpinedistrict.org or (801) 810-8165 ext.104. You may also contact Dr. Dan Barney at (801) 422-1581 and daniel_barney@byu.edu. Questions about your child's rights as a study participant or to submit comment or complaints about the study should be directed to the IRB Administrator, Brigham Young University, A-285 ASB, Provo, UT 84602. Call (801) 422-1461 or send emails to irb@byu.edu.

Child’s Name: _____________________________

Parent Name: ______________________ Signature: ______________________ Date: ______
APPENDIX B: Survey Instruments

Pre-Course Survey

Name: ____________________________________________ Class Period: ______

1. How many art classes have you taken since junior high? _______________________
   On a scale of 1-5 (1 = very little confidence and 5 = very talented) how confident do you feel in your art making abilities?
   1. 1 2 3 4 5

2. Do you consider yourself an artist? _____ YES _____ NO _____ MAYBE

3. Aside from art, what are some of your hobbies? What do you like to do outside of school?

4. What is something you are really curious about (art or non-art related)?

5. What kind of art do you like and dislike?

6. How do you define ART?
Post-Course Survey

Name (optional): ________________________________________________

1. On a scale of 1-5 (1 = very little confidence and 5 = very talented) how confident do you feel in your art making abilities?
   1  2  3  4  5

2. After taking this class, do you think you have more artistic skills?
   Explain why or why not:
   ___________________________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________________

3. Would you consider yourself an artist?
   _____ YES           _____ NO         _____ MAYBE

4. Did your definition of art expand at all because of this class?
   _____ YES           _____ NO

5. How do you define ART, especially good art?
   ___________________________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________________

6. Arrange the following art media from most favorite (1) to least favorite (5):
   _____ Process
   _____ Digital (glitch, Internet, animated gifs)
   _____ Video
   _____ Installation
   _____ Performance

7. Do you feel like these contemporary art forms are just as valuable as traditional media like painting, drawing, and sculpture?
   Explain why or why not:
   ___________________________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________________
8. What was your favorite project and why?
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________

9. Did you feel comfortable sharing your thoughts and opinions in this class?  
   Explain why or why not:
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________

10. Did you feel comfortable working with others in the class?  
    Explain why or why not:
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________

11. Do you have any suggestions or feedback to make the class better?
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
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