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Taylor & Francis Group

Studies in Art Education
A Journal of Issues and Research

ISSN: (Print) (Online) Journal homepage: www.tandfonline.com/journals/usae20

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To cite this article: Mary Ann Stankiewicz (2020) At the Table: **A Reflexive Essay on Research Dispositions**, Studies in Art Education, 61:3, 195-206, DOI: 10.1080/00393541.2020.1778605

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/00393541.2020.1778605

Published online: 17 Sep 2020.

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Studies in Art Education: A Journal of Issues and Research
2020, *61*(3), 195–206
DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/00393541.2020.1778605

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"Reflexive inquiry leads to understanding that the field of art education... produces and legitimates its objects as well as the categories and instruments we use to perceive and understand them."

At the Table: A Reflexive Essay on Research Dispositions

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In response to a call for submissions for a theme issue of *Studies in Art Education*, I examine concepts of orientations, dispositions, and habitus, combining personal reflections with analysis of research literature to examine the history of one art educator and researcher. Significant influences included graduate school, the research discourse of the field, and social networks formed with peers and faculty. Sara Ahmed's notion of orientations resonates with Pierre Bourdieu's concepts of dispositions and habitus; both have roots in phenomenology. However, while Ahmed examined racial and sexual orientations, Bourdieu applied his concepts to sociological analyses of artistic and cultural fields. In other research, I have adapted Bourdieu's conceptual framework for historical analysis and interpretation of the field of art education. This reflexive history draws on concepts of orientations and dispositions to reflect on how the field structured one art educator's habitus.

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At the Table I

In my earliest memory of drawing, I am at the kitchen table. My mother is working behind me, near the sink, perhaps starting dinner. On the table in front of me is a piece of light-colored paper. It seems to cover much of the table, but that may be because I am relatively small. I do not think I have started school yet. There are crayons on the table and I want to draw, but I am not sure how to start. What can I draw? I ask my mother, who suggests drawing a large circular form, using several different crayons, like one I drew several days earlier. I think I remember that drawing and the feeling of my arm stretching out and circling around and around, seeing the colored lines overlapping each other. Right now, remembering that drawing is not satisfying. I want to draw something. I may be whining in frustration. My mother suggests I draw an apron. Make the circular form and then draw a long rectangular band across the top. She may have shown me how to do this, or I managed it myself, but I was not yet satisfied. This was not the something I wanted to draw.

Time passes. I start kindergarten at the three-classroom public school I can see from our living room windows after the leaves fall. I still like to draw. One day, as my mother is walking me home, my teacher, Mrs. Allison, stops us. She tells my mother I seem to have some ability in art. She recommends my mother buy a book, *Your Child and His Art* by Lowenfeld (1954). My mother buys the book and keeps it on one of the lower shelves in a bookcase in the living room. I sit on the floor while my mother takes her afternoon nap, looking intently at colored illustrations of drawings by other children, noticing how they solved visual problems, and imagining I could draw that well.

Many years later, I start college. During the third semester, I take my first class toward a major in art education. The assigned text is the fourth edition of *Creative and Mental Growth* (Lowenfeld & Brittain, 1964). The illustrations look familiar. The first time I return home I find *Your Child and His Art* in the bookcase and take it back to campus. The fact that I was introduced to Lowenfeld as a kindergarten-aged child becomes part of my origin story in art education. Using Lowenfeld's stage theory, I describe the large circular form on the paper at the kitchen table as a controlled scribble. Lowenfeld (1954) explained the child who names scribbles is beginning to think in mental pictures. Because I do not remember having a mental image of what I wanted to draw, he might have said she was "not yet ready to relate her thinking to her drawing" (p. 77).

This origin story reveals several dispositions that have shaped my research: I look for and tell stories about how people who would become art educators learned about art as children. I use drawing or mapping to aid my thinking. I interpret historical data through theory. I often focus on the lives and achievements of female art educators, using lenses informed by feminist theory. I am frequently dissatisfied with my work in progress. These orientations were

encouraged by a family aspiring to middle-class status and some involvement with culture (Bourdieu, 1984). Being female came with the assumption that I would marry, but as my mother often told me, not until after I graduated from college. In the memory above, my body exists in the world of the *feminine mystique* Friedan (1963) would later criticize. My mother was a housewife who did not work outside the home, although she had worked successfully in an insurance office before marriage. As an only child, my world was bounded by our postwar house and working-class neighborhood. My starting point as a nice girl (Dewhurst, 2019), who was very shy, contributed to the self-criticism I recall in my early drawing experience and to a certain degree of introversion and reserve. I turned toward visual art as a way to soothe myself when I argued with my best friend, imagined a future, documented visual impressions, or visualized other times and places.

What Do We Do When We Do Research?

In the call for submissions for this themed issue of *Studies in Art Education*, senior editor O'Donoghue (2019) invited potential "contributors to think about what they are doing when they conceptualize, plan, and pursue inquiry, and share research outcomes" (para. 2). Elsewhere, I have described how I approach processes of historical research (Stankiewicz, 1997, 2014), and I have argued that history is more meaningful when researchers consciously reflect on values that inform the type of interpretation they craft (Stankiewicz, 1995).

Graduate school was where I became more mindful of art education's research discourse. In planning this reflexive essay, I hypothesized that influences from faculty teaching in my doctoral program, perhaps through articles published in *Studies in Art Education* during my graduate school years, as well as face-to-face contact in courses, might have been significant.[1] I set myself a small historical research project, rereading volumes 16–20 (-1974–1979) of this journal as well as selected publications from the period. Having kept many of the issues, I found underlining and marginal notes I had made when I first read an article. Using standard documentary research methods, I took notes, then analyzed and interpreted the data (Mogalakwe, 2006). This article integrates that bibliographical research with reflective personal history.

I am a White, cisgender, heterosexual woman who grew up in the years following World War II and during the Korean conflict, coming of age during the Vietnam War. I was born into a working-class family, but I grew up middle class after my father moved from the factory floor into management. I carry the "invisible knapsack" (McIntosh, 1989, p. 1) of White privilege, which I have slowly begun unpacking (Stankiewicz, 2013). My orientation to art education research was to a large extent molded by formal education, especially graduate degrees. Carpenter (2019a) has written, "There is no one art education.… What matters in art education at any given time depends on who is talking and who is asking" (p. 6). My point of view reflects one of many possible versions of art education, and it should not be generalized to apply to others in my professional cohort.

In this article, I examine concepts of *orientations*, *dispositions*, and *habitus* as they may be applied to a field of practice such as visual arts education. In reflecting on how I was socialized into the field, I use two metaphors: the first metaphor is one of being at a table, and it shapes stories of socialization at three points in time. A separate undergraduate interlude interrogates how aspects of preservice art education contributed to habitus more fully formed later. The second metaphor is of the field as a game, and it is informed by Bourdieu's (1984, 1996) discussions of culture as a game where capital is unevenly distributed, produced, and reproduced in the struggle to play. Games of culture and education have winners and losers; for example, see Rooks

(2017) on how "segrenomics" (p. 2) benefits business and harms students of color. Cooperative games also exist, but explaining game theory or playing strategies is beyond the scope of this article.

Orientations

"What do researchers turn toward and turn away from? What dispositions of inquiry do researchers adopt, advance and are shaped by? What stances do they take toward their phenomena of interest?" (O'Donoghue, 2019, para. 5). To better understand how the terms *orientations*, *dispositions*, and *stances* are commonly used, I read entries from the *Oxford English Dictionary* in my university library's digital databases. I searched online for writings by scholars O'Donoghue cited to understand how they used the concept.

Feminist scholar Ahmed (2006, 2014) explained *orientations* in relation to sexual or racial orientation. Ahmed (2014) wrote, "To think with orientations is to think of how we are involved in worlds; it is to write from our involvement" (p. 95). She explained that orientations shape a world starting from the body's existence and the space where it lives. Ahmed (2006, 2014) drew on Husserl's phenomenological description of his writing table as the place from which his world unfolds. Her essays inspired me to reflect on drawing and writing tables as sites where my orientations began, and how "being directed toward some objects and not others involves a more general orientation toward the world" (Ahmed, 2006, p. 546).

According to Ahmed (2014), "Whiteness is an orientation that puts certain things within reach" (p. 100). Additionally, McIntosh (1989) emphasized the point: "My skin color was an asset for any move I was educated to want to make" (p. 12). Being White offers some degree of control over how social systems work and allows one to criticize the dominant culture (McIntosh, 1989). White privilege and middle-class status put art lessons, infrequent museum visits, and a college education within my reach.

Dispositions, Habitus, and Fields

When *orientations* signify starting points, Ahmed's concept resonates with Bourdieu's (1983, 1984, 1996) concepts of *dispositions* and *habitus*. Although known as a sociologist of culture, Bourdieu studied philosophy with Merleau-Ponty, giving him a starting point in phenomenology (Grenfell, 2004). For Bourdieu, *dispositions*, or preferences, exist within persons. Examples he associated with avant-garde artists included "disinterestedness and daring" (1983, p. 343) and "self-assurance, audacity, and indifference to profit" (1983, p. 349). *Habitus* are learned "systems of dispositions" (1983, p. 352), defined by the relationship between "objectively classifiable judgments and the system of classification" (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 170). In other words, habitus exists within the social networks—the structured spaces, or "recognizable bounded territories" (Grenfell, 2004, p. 27)—Bourdieu identifies as *fields*. Structures can be displaced over time when agents from previously marginalized class factions enter the game. When first-generation college students (as I was) strive for academic credentials, second-or-later-generation students seek more elite educational institutions or more rarefied qualifications to maintain their advantage in interclass competition, leading to "an inflation of academic qualifications" (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 133).

From my perspective as a researcher, art education is one *field*. To use a metaphor Bourdieu (1984, 1996) favored, art education is a kind of game played within a field of power. In turn, this political field exists within a larger field of class relations (Bourdieu, 1983). Persons active in the field—*agents* in Bourdieu's term—bring *capital* to the game and have the potential to gain more. Capital can be economic, cultural, social, or symbolic (Stankiewicz, 2007). During the 1980s, the J. Paul Getty Trust brought economic capital to the art education game. At the 1965 Penn State Seminar, Allan Kaprow brought his cultural capital as an avant-garde artist to the table (Mattil, 1966). By choosing a particular doctoral program, I gained social capital, joining

colleagues who held various positions within the game. The doctoral degree I earned gave me symbolic capital that advanced my potential position-taking in the game.

The habitus is fluid and dynamic, durable but neither static nor eternal (Wacquant, 2016). Silva (2016) identified four dimensions of the habitus: a *hexis*, or bodily posture and gesture; morality, or ethical values; a cognitive dimension; and an aesthetic dimension related to taste. Primary habitus formed in infancy, such as binary notions of gender, tend to be more significant than secondary habitus refracted by formal education. When changes in the habitus result in upward mobility, an agent may experience *habitus clivé*, a discrepancy between lower-class origins and high academic achievement (Eribon, 2013; Friedman, 2016).

The field structures the habitus, and the habitus gives meaning to the field. According to Grenfell (2004), Bourdieu understood *field* and *habitus* to be homologous; that is, they share "generative principles" (p. 27) and similar structures. The habitus that shaped me as an art educator came from the field as it existed during my [grad] student years. My habitus inform how my teaching, research, and service contributions structured the field. The system of dispositions one learns in the process of being educated for work in a field is most meaningful within that field or game. My son is a cognitive neuroscientist. I can follow his explanations of his work and see patterns of thought or behavior that bear some resemblance to my sense of research, but his game is very different from mine. Likewise, the habitus my daughter exercises as a teaching artist resonates with some aspects of my experience as an art educator, but a Venn diagram would show our fields of community art education and academic art education overlapping but not identical.

Undergraduate Interlude

Two undergraduate faculty members influenced research approaches I would use as a doctoral candidate: One taught freshman honors English, and the other sophomore design. Freshman English required a limited number of readings, emphasizing depth rather than breadth. Fall semester began with readings in linguistics and ended with *Alice in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking Glass*, annotated by Martin Gardner (Carroll & Gardner, 1960). Guidelines for the final paper explained the *Alice* books could be read as fables about the uneasy relationship between the world of words and the world of experience. I would recast this duality as I developed a body of research: categories and experience, theory and ideology, structures and experience. Later, dualities between state educational bureaucracies and the habitus of art educators informed my examination of how alumni from one institution disseminated art education (Stankiewicz, 2016).

I trace my disposition to visualize concepts and theoretical frameworks to the sophomore basic design course. Each student was asked to identify a concept or big idea to be explored visually through the academic year. During the fall semester, we focused on two-dimensional work, culminating in giant drawings of about 4×6 feet. In the spring, we created maquettes for even bigger public sculptures, photographing our models with figures cut out of magazines to suggest scale. Each semester began with one short assignment, after which we devoted our time to the major assignment, focusing on individual explorations we regularly discussed with the instructor, who encouraged us to work fairly independently on self-defined projects—good practice for later work on the big project of a dissertation.

My visualization of the relationship between categories and experience combined swirling masses with short vertical lines (Figure 1). By this point, I had learned to relate thinking to drawing; in fact, drawing—or more accurately, visual mapping—became central to my prewriting process (Sandell & Zimmerman, 2019). One reason I was drawn to Bourdieu (1996) was his use of dualities—autonomous

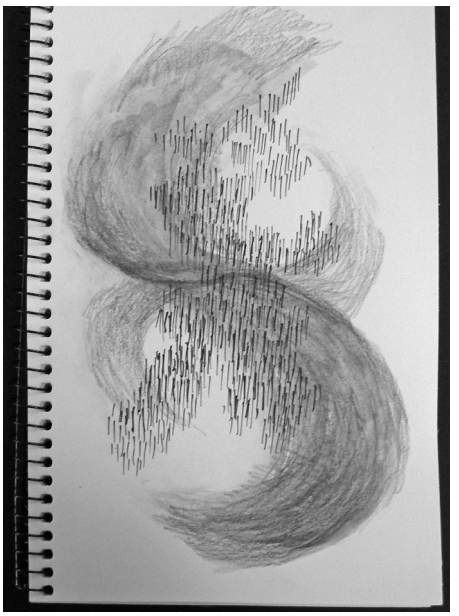


Figure 1. M. A. Stankiewicz, recreation of final drawing for Basic Design 2, ART 015A, Fall 1967, "Categories and Experience." 2016. Original approximately 4′ × 6′, graphite and ink.

and heteronomous fields, or high consecration versus low consecration, for example—as poles in mapping the artistic field. Just as my drawing synthesized initially opposing ideas into one drawing of both/and, so Bourdieu explained how dynamic fields encompass both art for art's sake and art for markets, elite art, and popular art.

At the Table II

I wrote much of my doctoral dissertation on the drop-leaf wooden table where I ate meals. Sometimes I wrote on a sewing machine cabinet. Sometimes I typed on a round folding table. In a one-bedroom apartment, I could not get away from academic work. When I completed my doctorate and started my first university position, I promised myself a separate space for scholarly work, renting a two-bedroom apartment. In later apartments and houses, one room became my home office. Nonetheless, I write at the kitchen table.

My back is to the line of uncurtained windows facing the backyard (Figure 2). The morning sun shines on the table; later, afternoon sun will warm the red tile floor to my right. This kitchen table is blond wood, like the drop-leaf table where I wrote my dissertation, but long enough to seat eight with both leaves inserted. Graduate seminars met around it when classes were small enough. Frustrated children doing homework left gouges or scratches on the top. I position myself so my left hand is close to the end of the table, where a printer sits on a rolling kitchen cart. When I bring books or journals up from my ground-floor office, I stack them to my right on the table or on the window seat behind me. I keep a runner and placemats on the table, even though I am the only person living in the house. Unlike my mother's kitchen table, this table reflects intersections between woman and scholar. Ahmed (2006) noted that the kitchen table provides a surface where women work. However, she added, a surface associated with domestic work can be reoriented when used for feminist research and analysis of the politics of domestic work. My introduction to feminist art education research in graduate school reoriented many of my primary dispositions.

Habitus for Art Education Research

In my late 20s, I entered a doctoral program where faculty brought a range of orientations to the field. The program had recently been ranked among the top five graduate programs in the field (Hardiman, Shipley, & Zernich, 1975). Coming from a smaller art education department where I felt indoctrinated more than educated, I wanted a breadth of perspectives. I got what I wished for, but found the critical stances discomforting. I felt I was being asked to



Figure 2. The corner of the kitchen table where I write. Photograph by M. A. Stankiewicz, 2019.

question everything I had been taught during my previous 6 years in higher education. I was excavating all my intellectual foundations, but I did not—during my first quarter—have new construction available to replace them.

I began to construct new conceptual foundations through professional conversations in and after classes, at the so-called existentialist bar where grad students gathered around sticky tables on Friday afternoons, and by reading journals and books. Emerging dispositions included:

- A search for criticality—that is, a tendency to question underlying assumptions, to examine theoretical frameworks, and strive for clarity in constructing arguments (Chapman, 1978b; Efland, 1976; Giffhorn, 1978; Lanier, 1974, 1977).
- Recognition of the need to interrogate and clarify terms and concepts, grounded in studying philosophy and strategies of conceptual analysis (Clark & Zimmerman, 1978; DiBlasio, 1978; Geahigan, 1976; Korzenik, 1976).
- An emphasis on historical research in and about visual arts education, defined broadly to include not only preK–12 but also higher education, art and design schools, art museum education, and community cultural institutions (Efland, 1978; Erickson, 1977, 1979; Logan, 1975; Norris, 1975).

- Understanding the importance of acknowledging and questioning my values, beliefs, and assumptions through research/writing processes informed by feminist lenses (Chapman, 1978a; Collins, 1978; Loeb, 1979; Packard & Zimmerman, 1977; Sandell, 1979).

The art education game was changing during my graduate school years. According to Eisner (1965), the field had been rooted in fine arts and had only recently "taken a serious interest in scholarship and research" (p. 280). Reporting on a 1963 survey of graduate programs, Eisner distinguished technological and theoretical roles in the field. The first described doctoral graduates primarily engaged in teaching, supervision, and administration. Theoreticians, or researchers, on the other hand, were tasked with producing "historical and philosophical theory as well as scientific theory relevant to art education" (Eisner, 1965, p. 280). Theoreticians needed sophisticated understanding of fields related to their research. For example, historians of art education should produce "first-rate history" (Eisner, 1965, p. 291).

More than a decade later, a roundtable of doctoral advisers (McFee et al., 1978) explained that significant research must take "into account the complex interaction of historical, psychological, cultural, and social factors relating to art learning and teaching as viewed from a solid philosophical and theoretical platform" (p. 2). They noted evaluations for early career, tenure-track faculty were becoming more rigorous. Although effects on art education were not clear, "The anti-intellectual climate of the 60's [*sic*] is changing to a conservative emphasis on more rigorous research" (McFee et al., 1978, p. 5).

Editors and authors in *Studies* called for art educators to become more critical. Kuhn (1974) and Lanier (1974) identified the challenge as "establishing clarity and priority in the theoretical framework of studies in the field" (Lanier, 1974, p. 26). Philosophy offered intellectual tools necessary to rebuild my conceptual foundations and engage in the discourse of criticality. Other doctoral students were using conceptual analysis in their research, so I was encouraged to take courses in analytic philosophy of education (DiBlasio, 1978; Geahigan, 1976). My original dissertation proposal was a conceptual analysis of *synesthetic education*, the name my previous art education program had adopted in the early 1970s. With that goal in mind, I took several philosophy and philosophy of education courses, some focused on conceptual analysis and linguistic approaches to contemporary philosophy. I decided one chapter would describe the historical development of visual art education at the university, so I also studied historiography and historical research methods. After my dissertation adviser saw the outline for this historical chapter, he suggested it should be the body of the dissertation. As they say, the rest is history.

Historical research in art education was engaging the interest of faculty and alumni (Efland, 1978; Erickson, 1977, 1979; Norris, 1975, 1979a, 1979b). Reviewing a British history of art education (Macdonald, 1970/2004), Norris (1975), who would be my dissertation advisor, explained that history was more than mere chronology. History "tells a story about the past. It has a plot, theme, or some other sort of organizing principle which links facts, which explains the course of events" (Norris, 1975, p. 71). Norris called for historians to use imagination to bring the past to life. He argued the field needed

> some perspective on itself especially today for, as a field we know neither where we are nor where we are headed. To see where we have been, to understand our values in the sense of the humanities, can help toward that end. (p. 71)

Later, I would find similar ideas in White's (1978) meta-analysis of narrative in history.

From the late 1970s, art education research transitioned from predominantly quantitative approaches grounded in quasi-empirical

methods to more qualitative approaches (i.e., away from positivism toward phenomenology, ethnography, and related disciplines). A number of *Studies* articles encouraged me to acknowledge values, beliefs, and assumptions through research/writing processes (Giffhorn, 1978; Lanier, 1974). Wilson (1974) argued: "Art education research should have a value component" (p. 50). Four years later, Chapman (1978a) recommended knowledge in art education, as in other disciplines, might be "expanded and refined by challenging well-established values, concepts, classifications, definitions, and actions" (p. 5).

Second-wave feminism (Collins, 1978; Loeb, 1979; Packard & Zimmerman, 1977; Sandell, 1979) contributed to challenging values. In grad school, I read research identifying barriers women artists and scholars faced, reappraising fields such as art and art history, and restructuring art education (Loeb, 1979). Collins (1978) examined how a feminine sensibility might affect art teaching, prophesying an androgynous future. Sandell (1979) defined feminist art education as a hybrid "between feminism taken as an ideology, and the theory and practice of art education" (p. 18). As I came to understand how women were a dominated class in a predominantly male academic culture, I learned to question expectations instilled with my primary habitus. Feminism became part of my system of dispositions.

[A Seat] at the Table III

My habitus was structured by art education as it existed during the 1970s, at a time when the field was seeking greater autonomy, tensions between art education as fine arts and broader definitions of visual arts were rising, and women were claiming greater power. Membership in an active social network of emerging leaders—social capital—gave me a seat at the table, a position among those who would make decisions about the direction the field would take. Through doctoral study, I learned the rules of the art education game. White privilege contributed to understanding that as a player, I could begin to adapt those rules. As part of the conversation or discourse of the field—through conference presentations and publications—I extended social, cultural, and symbolic capital.

Reflexive inquiry leads to understanding that the field of art education—as one of many social worlds—produces and legitimates its objects as well as the categories and instruments we use to perceive and understand them. Objects here refer to conference papers, articles, books, and other texts, as well as curated exhibitions and performances of student work. That is, how we as art educators think about the field of art education is a product of our professional habitus, of how we learned to understand the field. My taken-for-granted or normalized assumptions about art education tend to revert unconsciously to the structures of the field I learned when I first encountered it as a body of knowledge, theory, and practice. If I am not watchful, I can lapse into the language of a Lowenfeldian stage theory rather than the discourse of constructivism. On the other hand, through teaching, research, and writing, I strive to question outdated objects, contributing my voice to more current interpretations of art teaching and learning.

O'Donoghue (2019) asked authors to consider several questions. What do I do when I identify research questions, investigate primary and secondary sources, draft timelines and concept maps, then interpret ideas and events through historical narratives? Doing and disseminating research became part of how I navigated the field, how I constructed a conceptual site where art education history was more than curriculum history. My historical research interpreted the professional lives of individual art educators, how they learned, and what they contributed (Stankiewicz, 2013), and it analyzed how institutions and social and intellectual capital shaped the field (Stankiewicz, 2007, 2016).

In this reflexive history, I have drawn on orientations and dispositions to reflect on how I entered the field, how the field molded

me, and what I might have contributed to its discourse. My initial hypothesis, that grad school faculty were dominant influencers, was inaccurate. Peers, fellow graduate students, and recent doctoral alumni—my social network—became significant to my understanding of the field. To extend what sociologist White (1993) wrote about artists to art educators: "An art [education] world combines artists [art educators and researchers] and their works with others into a pattern that can reproduce itself, may become aware of itself, and does impose itself as reality upon those in it" (p. 9).

What dispositions are current graduate students building? What habitus will they use in advancing the field? One reviewer suggested "the chronological structure" of this article "lends itself to a conclusion based in future practices" (anonymous reviewer, personal communication, January 6, 2020). However, as I wrote above, my point of view reflects only one possible version of art education and should not be generalized to apply to others. Carpenter (2019b) pointed out that it took 6 decades before a person of color edited this journal; we should not assume imagined readers share "a common culture, interests, and perspectives" (p. 273). In homage to Bourdieu's (1996) use of dualities as poles in mapping artistic fields, perhaps we should ask, as Carpenter (2019b) did, how does diversity of expertise interact with progress toward defining art education?

DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

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ENDNOTE

[1] My use of *reflexive* to describe my research is adapted from sociology, where reflexivity refers to the capacity of an agent to recognize forces of socialization, what Bourdieu (1996) referred to as "the space of possibles" (p. 206), and analyze their place in the social structure. I thank senior editor Dónal O'Donoghue for recommending Didier Eribon's *Returning to Reims* (2013), an example of reflexive writing by a French historian and literary critic who examined his working-class upbringing and formal education. Like Eribon's autobiographical book, this article fits within the tradition of humanities scholarship broadly conceived and informed by social science theory.