Preparation for School Art

Young Children's Meaning Making Practices in Out-of-School Settings

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Student Number: KRLBEN001

A Thesis submitted as partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Education

School of Education

Faculty of Humanities

University of Cape Town

Supervisor

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Course Code: EDN6057W

2015

Acknowledgements

There are a few people who have helped me in different ways in carrying out this research and to whom I offer my sincere and heartfelt thanks. To my wife who supported me throughout the whole project and without whom I would not have been able to complete this project. To Shirley, Graeme, Maxine and Gareth Zacks for accommodating me in their home and being willing research participants. To Anne Jordaan for offering to proof read my thesis at just the right time. To Karen Levitt for making it so easy for me to take time off to work on this research. To Vafa Hakimi for generously offering to type up my handwritten notes and handwritten copies of recorded data. To Mastin Prinsloo for his useful and encouraging supervision.

Declaration

I declare that *Preparation for School Art: Young Children's Meaning Making Practices in Out-of-School Settings* is my own work, except where indicated, and that it has not been submitted before for any degree or examination at any university.

Signed:

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2015

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Abstract

This thesis examines children's meaning making with art related media in the home of a set of siblings, a brother and sister, of 8 and 6 years old respectively. It is argued that children's meaning making with art related media is a self-sustaining, multimodal and dialogic site where family narratives, identity and childhood aims and intentions converge. It is argued that when art oriented adults, who seek to promote their child's artistic growth, are sensitive to the dynamics of child meaning making, especially those that relate to play, they can achieve a more fruitful, aligned and relevant extension of these activities toward early art related goals.

In order to make this argument material is presented from a lengthy session of play dough modelling involving the two children and their father, which includes dialogue surrounding this activity, and observations gleaned from video footage and written field notes. This thesis looks at how children's meaning making in out-of-school settings, has elements of a distinct semiotic domain; not one where 'art' or art related media are the focus of the domain, but rather one where play and its affordances for certain kinds of child agency lead and shape the flow of meaning making. It is found that where the end product and pictorial qualities is not the focus of meaning making, and instead other communicative modes are given expression, such as imaginative and collaborative play, children's interest is sustained as shared cultural resources are more easily integrated into the events.

Chapter One Introduction

The general problematic of my study came about through reflection, as an art teacher, on the discrepancies that I have observed in the artistic performance of Grade One children when they arrive at primary school and engage in art lessons. Many children who arrive at art lessons require a lot of support and scaffolding from the art teacher in order to feel as if they are doing well in art lessons. On the other hand there are a few children in each class, more in some classes and less in others, who appear to be completely comfortable making representations of objects in their lived environment whether drawn from memory or when provided with subject matter from a primary source using standard art materials such as crayons and paper. These children arrive completely prepared to deal with the demands of the art curriculum in Grade One. References to the notion of talent is usually the first reason given when these children's success in art is discussed. They seem to have a mysterious innate ability in the visual arts whereas other children appear not to possess this ability. Although many working in the field of education generally and early childhood art education specifically may quickly dispel the ideas of talent being the primary factor in determining the success of these children, there still seems to be little understanding of how some children can display such competence in art upon arriving at school.

There is far more clarity about why certain children do well in literacy when starting school. Studies that have contributed significantly to answering this question are informed by the sociocultural approach to literacy learning. From this perspective:

> Children bring to the classroom community-based language practices (oral and written), values and ways of acting and believing that may be similar or vary from school practices. (Dantas, 1998: 19)

The values and ways of acting and believing referred to in the above quotation represent forms of socialisation. Children often acquire language practices through "becoming socialised into the norms and values of their communities" (Gee, 2008b: 85). This represents a feature of the sociocultural approach to literacy that language learning and socialisation go hand in hand (Gee: 2008b).

Heath's study (2001, 1983) of early literacy and language practices in a southern USA town is a seminal piece of research exploring this question. Heath showed how 'mainstream' (or middle-class) children, from as young as eighteen months, were socialised into 'ways with words', and how this has prepared them for a school environment that recruits the same language practices, values and ways of acting and believing.

One norm that Heath's study focuses on is the ritual of the bedtime story. Heath shows that through this literacy event, school- oriented parents nurture particular language resources that seem natural in schools as well as other institutionalised settings that are encountered in the everyday lives of these children such as banks and post offices.

One resource is the "initiation –response – evaluation" sequence so common to school settings. Requests for children to label things encountered in story books like in questions such as "what's that" and "whose that", and the characteristics of things like in questions

such as “what does the doggie say?” and “what colour is the ball?”, is a way of training children in this sequence. This dialogic sequence gets internalised and is available for use in undertaking many school based comprehension tasks, tests and writing about stories. Other aspects of their conversation also reveals that these parents change the tone of their engagement toward the end of an event by asking the opinion of the child such as whether they liked this or that and what they thought about it as a means of bringing the event to a close. This is much like the plenary part of a school based lesson which serves the same purpose.

Heath’s work as described above has been particularly influential in shaping the rationale for this study. Although one may ask what does language and literacy have to do with art, Kress claims that meaning making media such as drawing, painting, building and even various kinds of play are forms of communication that have principles that can be understood in the same way as what written and spoken language can. Kress also argues that reading is a form of meaning making.

Gee claims that much of what Heath’s “middle class” “super baby” producing parents do with their children when they “do” books with them is tacit. In other words, the knowledge that these parents are imparting to their children resides in the interactions between them and not in their heads (Korhonen: 2010). If one could quantify what these parents ‘do’ in more broadly defined pedagogical terms then their practices are similar to what Gee (2008b: 178) calls acquisition-lead teaching. In a school setting this would amount to apprenticing “students in a master apprentice relationship in a Discourse wherein the teachers scaffold the students’ growing abilities to say, do, value, believe, and so forth, with that Discourse through demonstrating her mastery and supporting theirs even when it barely exists.” Gee (2008b: 3) explains that

> Discourses [with a capital D] are ways of behaving, interacting, valuing, thinking, believing, speaking, and often reading and writing, that are accepted, as instantiations of particular identities (or “types of people”) by specific groups, whether families of a certain sort, lawyers of a certain sort, church members of a certain sort, African Americans of a certain sort, women or men of a certain sort, and so on and so forth through a very long list

Gee argues that this immersion in practices is an important part of education without which no real progress will be made no matter how much explicit teaching of content is done (Gee, 2008b, 178). Teaching that leads to “learning”, as Gee (2008b, 178) describes it, is what one typically associates with school-based instruction which “uses explanations and analyses that break down material into its analytic “bits” and juxtaposes diverse Discourses and their practices to each other”.

My question when I considered these claims was whether the meaning making activities that children undertake at home can be thought of as such a Discourse and if so what would the enculturation process look like in this context? To answer these questions we would need to interrogate how people act and interact when they are involved in meaning making activities in out of school contexts, and thereby see how they place value on things.

The term meaning making is taken from the field of semiotics. Kress (1997) states that children choose different modes and media to make signs based on their interests and what is available to them. Mode refers to the "stuff" they use to make signs, such as blue play dough or graphite pencil or speech; medium refers to the means of communication, namely an explanation, drawing, sculpture or a prop for playing with. A sign refers to the meaning being expressed and is done so through the form that the sign takes, for example, the meaning of 'road works up ahead' is conveyed by the form of a red triangular border with a silhouette of a man holding a spade. Form combines mode and medium to convey intended meaning.

Kress claims that children will make meaning with whatever media available to use for their purposes such as cardboard, scissors, paper, toys, blankets, corners of rooms, pens, string, tape, and many more. Pahl (2002), in her study of children's meaning making at home, has found that even a text as short-lived as a map made out of a string of prayer beads can be considered as a form of meaning making.

Although meaning making within the home may be seen as a form of communication, I have chosen not to use it interchangeably with the notion of art-making, even when the media employed is generally associated with early childhood art, such as play dough. Instead, like in the research of Kress and Pahl, mentioned above, I have chosen to view children's meaning making in out of school contexts, as part of the broader communicative practices of children in the home. Child meaning making in out of school contexts when various media are employed is often playful and hence largely self-initiated. The child research participants in Pahl and Kress's study do not consider their meaning making activities as 'art' activities, even when they are doing drawings or building constructions.

Furthermore, society defines art broadly and views on art are often contested or polarized. Myths and beliefs about art and creativity that circulate in society, including varying notions of what counts as art, add complexity to the matter. For some cultures, art is for the elite, for others it is part of everyday life. "Some look for skills and technique in art; others look for freedom and spontaneous self-expression" (McArdle, 2002: 2).

Without discounting the many different types of art and notions of art and their benefits, for the purposes of this study I will use Kindler's (2010) definition. It is based on how experts working in the professional domain of art view it, namely as a serious creative activity subject to review and assessment by those same experts. I also make use of the term 'school art'. I make the assumption that school art has some relationship to art as defined by its experts, just as school science would have some relationship to how science is practised by scientists.

This definition of art as a serious creative activity has implications for the notion of development in art. It implies that adults have an important part to play in this development, and, as will be discussed in Chapter Three, this is located in a move toward considering sociocultural factors in art learning. Therefore one of my research questions addresses the role adults can play in children's out of school meaning making.

It is not certain that parents can play a role in apprenticing children into the domain of art production. However, if meaning making acts such as drawing, painting and sculpture or

construction are seen as communicative acts that follow the same principles as communicative acts such as reading and writing, as Kress argues they do, then in the years before schooling it may follow that these former acts (drawing, painting), as they are performed by children in the home, can be shaped and nurtured by adults toward art related goals, in similar ways to how the latter acts (reading, writing) are shaped and nurtured by adults toward early literacy goals as described in Heath's study above.

One could imagine parents who, in their desire to see their children develop in art, take an active role in promoting and supporting their children's communicative practices where art related media is involved. This may involve supplying children with time, space and the art materials in question, as Kress recommends, or it could involve actively participating in these communicative practices with their children and extending these practices in various ways toward early art learning goals such as building on the child's emergent representational ability. It could even involve initiating new kinds of meaning making events that may promote art related goals - this would amount to a more direct form of instruction.

Another influence on child meaning making, and which represents another line of inquiry in my study, is the notion of childhood cultural interests. I consider play as one of these cultural interests although play can also be seen as a communicative act in its own right and as such can be seen as a 'mode' (Kress: 1997). Moreover, Dyson (2010) describes the types of playful collaborative and coordinated practices that young children engage in while writing in a group setting such as 'writer's workshop' as 'participation modes', which she adds are shared communicative acts belonging not to one individual, nor to the group, but to a relationship (Dyson, 2010:). Play can therefore be associated with other modalities such as speech, gesture and even drawing, assemblage and installation. However, due to the pervasiveness of play within children's lives whether manifested in emotional expression and vocalisations (Lysaker, Wheat and Benson: 2010) or in dramatic and imaginative ways, it can be seen as integral to the notion of childhood and therefore for the purposes of this study I call it a childhood cultural interest.

During play and other meaning making acts carried out individually or in a group setting children draw on cultural resources from their different social worlds- home, school and peer-governed worlds. These cultural resources could be family narratives, popular culture, and children's experiences of the routines and activities of the three social worlds (Dyson, 1993). The cultural resources that children recruit in their meaning making will be considered in my study. A final factor that will be explored are the social influences arising from family members' relations with one another and how this can impact positively or negatively on children's meaning making. I have included the exploration of the influences of cultural resources and interests, on children's meaning making as another research question.

The two questions read as follows:

1. When participating in meaning making practices in out-of-school settings, are children being apprenticed, and how, whether directly or indirectly, in a domain that is networked to the domain of school art?

2. How do other social dynamics, those that arise from children's embodiment of childhood cultural interests as well as those that arise from other social influences within the home influence children's meaning making in out of school settings?

Chapter Outline

In order to build the conceptual framework for my study I draw on a set of concepts that set the stage for looking at how early out of school meaning making practices could relate to the domains of school art and art as it is practised in various professional domains alluded to in the introduction. I will explain how I use the notion of social practices in relation to these activities. I do this by referring to Dyson (2010, 2008). I then explore concepts from Kress (1997) concerning the principles of child meaning making. Next I look at the affordances that art related media have for child meaning making generally compared with meaning making in the medium of writing. I then discuss the concept of multimodality and how this permeates children's meaning making. After discussing the differences in children's meaning making using two and three dimensional media I consider the relationship between play and instruction in order to build an argument about the pedagogical affordances of play. I then discuss in more detail the notions of play as it relates to identity.

Chapter Three is divided into two parts: both are discussions on the subject of art. The first elaborates on the definition of art mentioned in Chapter One and goes on to review a theoretical contribution to the field of art. In the second part I discuss some of the other theories of artistic growth that have shaped the field of art education during the last century with a specific focus on the role of adults in shaping this growth.

In Chapter Four, I introduce the research participants and give some contextual background to the study. I then give an overview of the methodology used in the study and list the data collection, organising and interpreting strategies that I have adopted.

This brings us to the two analysis chapters. Chapter Five is the first of two analysis chapters and focuses on child-initiated meaning making events. Although occasions when adults make suggestions and give feedback are included, the main focus is on how children draw on resources from their own experiential knowledge and those arising from peers working alongside them. Section one explores the dynamics of peer mediated meaning making practices and section two looks at the social dynamics that give rise to rich and meaningful individual meaning making practices.

In Chapter Six I examine the nature of adult involvement in child meaning making practices. The first section sets the scene for considering the collaborative potential of play. The next section explores how this collaborative setting can be thought of as a semiotic domain. In the following section I explore how easily adults can misread children's actualities. The last section explores an example of when adults are well aligned to children's actualities and the consequences for art learning.

In Chapter Seven I conclude by discussing the findings of my study in more detail, especially the implications of an approach that values the potentialities inherent in children's play for achieving art related goals.

Chapter Two Children's Emerging Semiotic Dispositions: Conceptual Framework

Semiotic Domains

Theoretical concepts are needed for thinking about how out-of-school settings can give rise to learning that is valuable within a school setting. I start by referring to the notion of a semiotic domain developed by Gee (2008a). The best way to understand what a semiotic domain is, is to look at an example. Among those examples that Gee gives of distinct semiotic domains, each with their own distinctive design grammars, are cellular biology, postmodern literary criticism, first-person-shooter video games, advertisements, and Roman Catholic theology. 'School science' is another example that Gee mentions of a semiotic domain, a domain that is related to the domain of scientific work but is not the same thing. Each of these domains has a specialised set of "representations, modalities, knowledge, and practices". Gee (2008a: 1) claims that a "semiotic domain recruits one or more modalities (e.g. oral or written language, images, equations, symbols, sounds, gestures, graphs, artefacts, and so forth)". These modal resources are what Kress (1997: 7) describes as "stuff" that people use to produce messages. Each of these domains, for Gee, includes a group of people who are considered experts in the domain, who maintain a set of standards about what is considered 'good practice' within the domain and who recruit, initiate and support novices who participate in the domain.

The cultural practices built up by these groups of people can be perceived in the specialised language they speak and the way they combine other modalities, besides those relating to language, in particular ways to produce specialised messages that often only "insiders" can clearly understand. To communicate effectively in the domain and be considered an "insider" participants need to use the design and grammar resources (which provide rules for sense making) to make meanings that are specific to that domain of practice. The resources used to make domain-specific meanings are similar to, and include language resources, but they combine words, images, symbols and artefacts. This makes each domain somewhat distinctive and at least partly insulated from other domains, where different rules of combination apply, though there will always be linkages across related domains. The combining of modalities therefore does not follow universally applicable steps or use generalised resources but rather they are situated and specialised. As an example, the term 'work' in school science has a very distinct meaning to do with force and vectors, and is thus not a broadly generalizable term that carries its meaning unchanged across domains of activity. This distinctiveness regarding meaning-making resources and how they are used makes it decidedly difficult for beginners to operate within a domain. But it can also be rewarding because no two situations are exactly alike, even within a domain. Therefore it is always a creative act to "match nuances of meaning to nuances of situations." Gee, (2008a: 8) explains that "one is always, in a domain, taking features of possible meanings (a resource from the history of practice in the domain) and combining them in ways that work here and

now for this situation." There are things called discourse models that help beginners do this. "Discourse models" are the principles and rules of thumb that help one situate meanings in typical situations that arise within the domain.

Gee also explains how semiotic domains are "networked" to other domains. If they are encountered and engaged with on one's path toward another semiotic domain, then they are called "precursor" domains. According to Gee (2008a: 12) "[t]his is so because one or more of the elements associated with the precursor domain (ways of situating meaning, pieces of social language, cultural models [discourse models]) facilitates learning in the other domain". Also, being a member of the group of people associated with the precursor domain could help one to become a member of the group of people associated with the other semiotic domain. This is because the "values, norms, goals or practices of the precursor group resemble in some ways the other group's values norms, goals, and/or practices." For example, certain kinds of skills learnt or resources acquired playing arcade games provide precursory resources for persons who later start to play video-games on computers.

A key question that Gee raises is how the semiotic domains that pertain in particular home settings, whether they are mastered or not, relate, or do not relate, to semiotic domains that exist in school and society beyond that. Gee argues that children who participate in domains at home that are well networked to domains at school will have a better chance of succeeding, if not thriving in school settings:

> I suspect that for children who come to school looking "gifted" at schooling, they have been (and are) immersed in a wide variety of precursor domains, and that they continue to be immersed in ever newer precursor domains, in and out of school, for domains they face later in school and life. (Gee, 2008a: 12)

Note that the key question Gee raises is similar to my research question. One of the aims of my study will be to establish whether children's meaning making practices in out of school contexts where art related media are involved can be thought of as a semiotic domain.

Practices

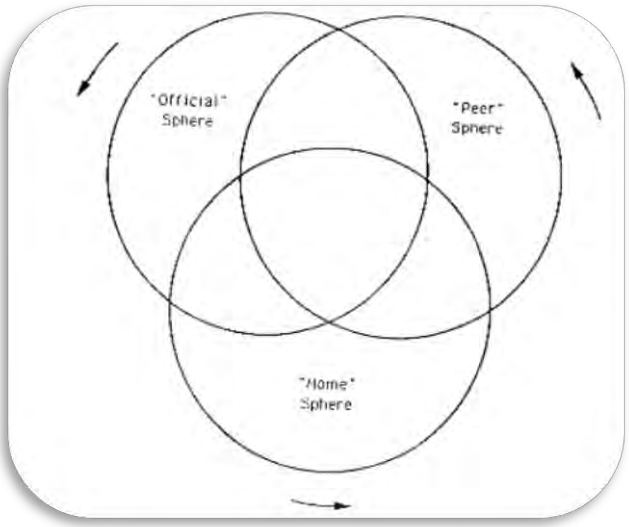
So far I have referred to children's meaning making undertaken at home as a practice. This notion of practices needs clarification. Dyson (2008: 15) defines practices as "socially organized, recurrent, ideologically-infused and goal-driven manipulation of symbolic media". Dyson (2008: 121) draws on Vygotsky to explain the educational value of practices:

> The recurrent practices of everyday life, with their technological tools and embodied human relationships, with their organized actions, their enacted values, and their interpretive norms – these are what make learning possible from a sociocultural point of view.

In a claim that relates equally well to modalities found in visual art, Dyson (2008: 121) says that as children participate in social activities that involve text [clay, play dough, crayons, paper], they not only learn the limits and possibilities of the medium of writing [drawing, sculpture] but also "locally valued ways of being and relating to others". In this sense, a

practice view necessitates that writing cannot be reduced to a set of textual features or conventional rules to be mastered. Similarly, within this view, we could neither reduce art nor development in art to a set of pictorial features to be mastered.

Moreover, in clarifying the concept of practice, Dyson distinguishes it from the notion of an 'event' where she adds that "any official school activity is a kind of "event" – a situated enactment of a cultural "practice" itself steeped in cultural and ideological meaning". The ideology arises when certain aspects of the activity are valued in certain ways by teachers, albeit tacitly, thereby creating a locally valued way of doing the activity which children learn to anticipate. This in turn shapes it as a 'practice'. The value teachers place on certain aspects of a school based practice, such as school writing time, would represent an influence coming from the 'official' sphere (see diagram below). However, just because children are participating in an event governed by school time and space does not mean they are only making use of resources supplied from the 'official' sphere. Dyson explains that children draw on resources taken from the 'home' and 'peer' governed worlds as they make sense of what they must do in the official world. Children make use of their "experiential, linguistic, and textual resources", that may have their origins in any of the three 'spheres', to construct "meaningful frames (i.e. meaningful social practices)", as they orientate themselves in an activity (Dyson, 2008: 123). As children engage in school writing practices, which Dyson has found includes a lot of drawing, social expectations are placed on one another, including expectations to engage in talk, expectations to write about the same things as one's friends and to include each other in one another's texts. Dyson (2008:8) has also found that "children's products could bear traces of their sometimes choreographed efforts to textually link their social selves; these traces include shared topics and phrasings and even imagined worlds". Imaginary play is also central to the kinds of interactions Dyson describes. Over time this recurrent influence arising from the 'peer' sphere can "solidify into peer practices" (Dyson, 2010: 15).



Another aspect of these "familiar relations and childhood practices" is that they arise out of children's social agency. Social agency refers to children's social intentions and expectations and how they go about fulfilling them. It also refers to how children assimilate shared cultural

resources present in society such as inviting friends to a birthday party, and the initiative one needs to take in order to carry out the accompanying actions such as deciding who to include in the list of invitees.

One way in which this desire to be social plays out, when situated within meaning making practices in the home, is that there is a shift from an individualistic mode of creating to a more "participatory" mode of creating (Dyson: 2010, 15). These communicative engagements are called 'modes' because they behave like other modes referred to earlier. However, in this case, the message being produced does not belong to one person but rather to a relationship (Dyson: 2010). In this sense, children see collegiality and collaboration, key features of a participatory mode of engagement, as possible resources with which they can make meaning, although in this case it is shared meaning.

With regard to the talk that children engage in Dyson (2008: 7) found:

> Through such talk, social expectations were built, relationships were sustained, and composing figured into the production of their own shared childhoods – of the communicative and often playful practices that constituted their lives as children…

Requirements of Communication and Representation

We have discussed how effective communication within any semiotic domain involves producing messages that can be understood by other members of the group associated with the domain. The notion of communication then has a focus on the audience. Kress argues that sign makers also produce messages according to their interests and based on their experience. I will now discuss the requirements of communication and representation as they have been described by Kress (1997) and their relation to art and art learning. These requirements, Kress argues, are important to consider when trying to understand children's meaning making.

Kress argues that people always attend to, what he calls, the requirements of communication and representation, when they go about assigning symbolic meanings to objects. Kress (1997) explains that the requirements of communication are that the sign-makers produce their message in such a way so as to make their meaning as transparent as possible. This he says has a focus on the audience. The requirements of representation, on the other hand, are that the sign-maker, while making the sign/message, chooses the best, most plausible form for the expression of the meaning they intend to represent. The latter has a focus on the interests of the sign maker. Kress claims that all genuine forms of meaning making are bound by these requirements. Even children's early representational drawings have some focus on the audience; some thought of how to render the meaning transparent.

Kress claims that when trying to represent something often one aspect of the thing is focused on as being "criterial". In an example that provides evidence for drawing also being a form of communication Kress describes a drawing made by a three year old boy which includes circles drawn on a page to stand for wheels and the wheels as being the things that represent a car. The wheels were considered to be most clearly representative of the idea of 'car' – this is

a focus on the audience. And the resources available to represent this meaning are circles, which represents the focus on the sign makers' interests and available resources. This is an example of how drawing can communicate meanings.

Kress (1997: 9) claims that "in the meanings which children make, meaning and form are indistinguishable wholes. To illustrate this point, Kress gives the example of children wanting to create a make-believe camping scene, and therefore they need a 'tent'. Bed covers and blankets are draped over a table and chairs which provide the material and the form which, for their purposes, adequately expresses the idea of 'tent'. There is a logical relation between the form of the sign; blankets draped over a table in a particular way, and the thing being represented, the tent. This is perhaps why children take to communicational modes like play, drawing and constructing so enthusiastically because within these modes the communicational (transparent) aspect of their messages relies on their experience of the thing being represented.

Kress argues that the notion of the unity between meaning and form within children's meaning making creates a semiotic disposition for children. This means that they approach all new meaning making activities, events and experiences with the assumption that signs have a logical and apparent connection to the thing they represent; circles to stand for wheels.

Affordances of Art Related Media

Kress argues that children have a natural appetite for making meaning with anything they can get their hands on such as furniture and household items arranged to make an elaborate play scene; mark-making materials such as crayons and paper; the use of materials to construct things such as scissors, tape, cardboard, string. He also claims that once children arrive at school their meaning making with the use of such materials is not taken further and developed in any serious way like their meaning making with words written or read is taken up and developed.

Dyson (2008) has shown in her study of young children in a school situated in a Midwestern town in the United States how these children make enthusiastic use of the space above their journal writing for drawing. Time is also allowed for children to 'plan' their writing in this space. In this study Dyson has found how drawing provides certain affordances such as enabling the expression of spatial relationships within children's texts. Dyson found that children used this space as a site to carry out complex play practices with one another involving castles, fire power and competing armies in one case. Dyson calls this space and time that children seize in school for their own purposes the 'unofficial' world because children have more freedom to exercise their agency. This is contrasted with the 'official' world where space and time is more tightly prescribed by the teacher and the curriculum.

Dyson explores how this space for drawing often reveals more information than the writing below them does. Although primarily focusing on the participatory potential that this space

provides for children composing alongside one another, which is a focus that my study will draw on, the point I am trying to make here and which Dyson's study also highlights, is the ease with which children take to the medium of drawing and other forms of play for their communicative purposes. This relatively simple point will be important when exploring the potential of children's self-initiated meaning making practices.

Multimodality: Play and Other Forms of Meaning Making

When children are involved in meaning making their messages are often multimodal. This means that children draw on various modalities when making meaning (Kress: 1997). Even when the focus of the activity is drawing, children working alongside one another will use the modes of speech with all its potential for sound effects and gesture. In addition to these the drawing may rely on forms of imaginary play to frame their ideas, as in the example of the boys drawing castles.

As mentioned earlier symbolic and dramatic play can be seen as forms of meaning making and therefore part of communication similar to how writing and speech are forms of communication (Kress: 1997; Lysaker, Wheat and Benson: 2010). As children assign symbolic meanings to certain objects during play, they learn that symbols carry meanings independent of their physical presence. Lysaker, Wheat and Benson (2010) give the example of a block of wood being assigned the meaning 'car'. Lysaker, Wheat and Benson (2010: 212) explain how in dramatic play these symbolic meanings are social: "[f]or example when a child says 'You pretend to be Mommy, I'll be the little baby' he/she engages in pretend play by taking on a new identity (Mommy)".

Meaning making in Two and Three Dimensional Media: Different Affordances for Imaginative Action

If we return for a moment to the example of the block representing the car we can imagine how this sign can easily be incorporated into a play context where things can be done with the car. The block can be moved around in physical space and be incorporated into a play world that has been created by assigning symbolic meaning to other available materials such as pieces of furniture configured in such a way as to represent a garage for the car. Kress argues that drawing engages the imagination of the child in a different way. He explains that a drawing also depicts an imaginary world although a more distanced one, accessible through the mental action of the child. It is an inner world where the child enters the imaginative space of the page.

Kress shows how the imaginative action of the child can be exercised in a single drawing of a car by an eight year old and can be a site for the production of quite sophisticated sets of

signs. He explains how difficult it is to translate the meanings produced by these signs in written language. Some of the signs expressed through the use of 'line' indicate the streamlined jet like quality of the car. Others are produced by rubbing the pencils intensely to produce the effect of glossy paintwork. In another drawing of a car by the same child at the same age, the energetic use of repetitive lines in a single direction coming out from behind the wheels as if to indicate sparks flying out show the great speed at which the car is travelling. The latter drawing depicts the object in an environment.

Over the years of his study of children's meaning making in a home setting Kress has found that children sometimes like to cut out their drawings. His interpretation of this act is that the cutting out their drawn subjects allows the object to be incorporated into imaginative play in physical space. Kress explains that children cut out their drawings when the communicative potential of the drawing reaches its limit and the child wants to incorporate the object into a different kind of play context existing outside of the page. When the object is cut out it enters the child's imaginative world informed by the play context outside the page. An example is a drawing of a person interacting with objects in some or other setting. When the figure of the person is cut out it could become a puppet that can interact with objects in the play/real world outside the page.

Kress goes on to explain that when children cut out their drawings, that is:

> when "the representation 'comes off the page' it enters another world. It shifts from the world of contemplation into the world of action, into the world of my practical here and now; from a world of mental action to a world of tactile, physical, objective action. While it is on the page I can do 'mental things' with it…When it is off the page I can do physical things with it. It has become a real object, accessible by feel and touch as well as by sight."

Kress (1997: 9) claims that in school, drawing and various kinds of play as well as painting and building are generally treated as "*expression* of children's feelings, desires, emotions, rather than as forms of *communication"*. If we consider them as forms of communication then play and drawing can be seen as serving similar interests for a child: they are effectively placed in the same category. Normally, we wouldn't think of play and art as two different meaning making media.

Similarities Between Play and Instruction

Kendrick (2003) in her study of a young Chinese girl's early language practices found that her research participant, Leticia, played out roles within her family and cast the researcher as different members of her family. Kendrick (2003: 46) resisted interpreting this event from one of the dominant perspectives within the play literature, as Leticia's preparation for her future role as a mother, and instead saw Leticia's play practices as a means whereby she could gain an understanding of the world around her and practise the "social behaviour, skills and activities" that are presented to her in her social life and cultural life.

Concerning play's role in development, Vygotsky (1933) claimed that play functions as a 'leading activity'. Instruction is also viewed by Vygotsky as a 'leading activity' and he has mentioned the similarities between play and instruction (Lysaker, Wheat and Benson: 2010). The instruction children receive, while attempting to accomplish a domain specific task, sets up what Vygotsky calls a zone of proximal development (ZPD) which allows development and growth to occur. Play also sets up a ZPD in which learning and growth can occur (Lysaker, Wheat and Benson: 2010). These authors have found that the way play resembles instruction is in the kind of learning space it creates. They have found that the imaginative play that children engage in has a profound effect on the way they interact with others and the way they undertake the activities they engage in; in this case it was a writer's workshop. The result is the setting up of a learning space in which children "redefine what counts as knowledge". Lysaker, Wheat and Benson (2010: 213), refer to this space as "the third space". They claim that it has features that resemble instruction such as the construction of "new relationships and new knowledge".

Referring to the spontaneous form that play can take, Lysaker, Wheat and Benson (2010: 212) explain that children's symbolic and pretend play is often accompanied by musical expression. Musical exploration and expression is a way children "transform environments" to meet their own needs and these can take various forms such as "spontaneous vocalisations", "improvisations of well-known songs", and "self-directed chanting and humming"(Lysaker, Wheat and Benson, 2010: 212). Other forms of spontaneous play were expression of emotion and pretend play. Some of the functions of play that were observed were that it creates "personal authenticity", "affirmation of self" and "exploration of possible selves" (Lysaker, Wheat and Benson, 2010: 217).

Play and Identity

Play allows children to create "'possible roles in possible worlds' in a space where pretend identities are appropriated" (Dyson quoted in Kendrick, 2003: 46). This view of play sits well with current conceptions of identity within the literature on this subject. Identity is no longer seen as relating to a person's individual essence but rather something that manifests within relationships with others and is influenced through interactions with others (Compton-Lilly: 2006). This is consistent with the notion that people can have many different identities. As they engage in different contexts within their lives they acquire new identities as they appropriate new Discourses, as well as drop some identities along the way as they become distanced from groups of people associated with particular Discourses (Gee: 2008b).

Adult' Involvement in Children's Play: Toward a Knowledge Creation Pedagogy

Kendrick (2003) states that she did not find the same richness in Leticia's play practices at school compared with home. Kendrick draws on the notion of 'actualities' to understand why not. I make use of the notion of actuality to assess the quality of adult's involvement in children's play. "'Actuality' is the world of participation, shared with other participants with a minimum of defensive manoeuvring and a maximum of mutual activation" (Erickson quoted in Kendrick: 2003: 171). Kendrick uses the notion of actuality to understand the effect of adults' presence in Leticia's classroom and found that it served to inhibit children from fully exploring the possibilities of dramatic play even when the adults were not actively watching the children. I use the term to understand how adults position themselves within children's play as a co- participant. I explore how the awareness or lack of awareness of these actualities can affect the play practices of children.

In an argument that is relevant to our focus here, Korhonen (2010: 2), in describing a new approach to literacy learning, advocates for literacies which are "social and collaborative in nature and developing in authentic conversational environments". Literacy, as she uses the term, refers to the competence or capabilities one has in any communication media whether written or visual. Korhonen explains that such environments are associated with out-of-school contexts within communities where authentic interactions are common place; these operate within a knowledge creation paradigm. Korhonen (2010: 2) compares this with school based technologies which "occur in goal-defined and structured teacher-led contexts", and which operate within a traditional knowledge-transmission paradigm.

Chapter Three Adult Involvement in Children's Artistic Development: an Overview

There has been a recent trend in art education and research to acknowledge the role of adults and peers in children's development in art (Thompson: 2006). This new research has emerged partly out of the wider movement in early childhood education toward more explicit instruction in the early years. It has also come about as a challenge to the belief that children learn art spontaneously and without any adult intervention (Kindler: 1995).Before, children's development in art had been seen in terms of fixed stages of development that are not subject to adult intervention through systematic instruction, a belief that was born in the child-centred approaches of the early 20th century and gathered momentum to become the mainstay in art education (Kindler: 1995).This approach, which was outlined in the art teacher handbook by Lowenfeld (1952), was widely practised and had a major effect on how art centres and art programmes in schools were organised. The teacher's role was merely to provide materials and time, but not to influence the child. Particular care was taken not to provide the child with any adult drawings to copy. Children were seen as having an innate ability to make art and this should not be disturbed. These ideas had much in common with, and drew on, prevalent understandings of Piaget's theorisation of 'stages of development', which were used to describe children's intellectual growth (Kindler: 1995).

Only recently, in concert with the contemporary movement in early childhood education toward sociocultural approaches to development, has there been a focus on adults and peers and how they may influence the child's development in art (Thompson: 2006). Thompson (2006) claims that most of the research exploring a more active role that adults can play has been directed at school programmes. She claims that few of these studies have looked at preschool programmes and even fewer have looked at the role of parents in the home (Thompson 2006). This is not to say that adult instruction in art has never been practised, but rather that due to the uncontested theories described above there has not been much research into the role of adults in art education.

Terreni (2010) presents a detailed historical account of art education in New Zealand and describes how art teaching practices have been influenced by the change in international trends which have been incorporated into the guidelines of the Ministry of Education. One of her findings was that the adoption of a sociocultural approach has had the most profound effect on arts education in New Zealand because it has highlighted for teachers the importance of adult involvement in children's artistic development. Brooks (2009) used a Vygotskian sociocultural framework to study children's drawing processes. She examined the dialogue that children were engaged in with the teacher as part of a drawing lesson in a Grade One classroom. Brooks highlights the important role adults can play in assisting children during the art making process. If art is seen as an individualistic activity then teachers will feel as if they are intruding on the child's natural process of making art. She has found that when this is the case, teachers will miss opportunities to help children engage with their surroundings in a profound way.

Vygotsky did not regard language as only relating to the spoken and written word but also included "different resources that humans use in communication such as gestures, pictures, drawings, maps and other visual information objects" (Korhonen, 2010: 3). This allows us to think differently about his theory of mediation. In this theory, "learning and development first take place on the social plane and only then on the psychological, individual mind plane. First learning appears between people as an interpsychological interaction, and then within the individual as an intrapsychological category" (Korhonen, 2010: 3).

A rich example of how this can take place in a setting involving art materials comes from research conducted at the Reggio Emelia schools in Italy. According to Barroqueiro, these schools relied heavily on Vygotsky's theories in establishing the approach that they have developed. Drawing, painting and three dimensional constructions are regarded as languages that children make use of as a few of the 'hundred languages of children' (Barroqueiro, 2009: 6).

Barroqueiro (2009: 6) explains that the Reggio Emelia approach "emphasizes relationships and the social construction of knowledge within the context of collaboration, dialog, conflict, negotiation, and cooperation with peers and adults".

Toward a Working Conceptual Framework in Art

Gee (2008) claims that some school subjects do not appear to be preparing learners for entry into any particular semiotic domain. School science, for example, sometimes only provides for learning facts and details about a scientific domain but this knowledge is different to what real scientists do when they do science in their jobs. In these cases the learners do not have the design grammar to help them combine words, images and artefacts to produce appropriate messages within the domain, nor are they learning norms and values that these scientists possess which would facilitate entry into the group of scientists associated with the scientific domain.

Gee claims that a school subject like science, and arguably also art, can be thought of as a semiotic domain in its own right because it possesses all the features of a semiotic domain such as a specialised design grammar and ways of situating meanings. However, these features may not appear in any other domain such as the domains associated with professional scientists, or artists: the design grammars and sets of norms and values about doing things in the school subject domain may not match the professional domain.

There is more consensus about the kind of design grammar and sets of norms and values that appear in the domains of school science and school literacy compared with the design grammar and sets of norms and values that appear in school art.

Kindler (2010: 2) explains that there is confusion about even the term art:

> The confusion, stemming from its casual use, about the meaning of the term "art" (at least in the English speaking world) – from a discipline as defined by its experts, to any, even most naïve, forms of human engagement with the visual – has made it very difficult to define artistic development in any meaningful ways.

Kindler advocates for the teaching and learning of art in school to be well networked to the domains of professional artists.

> If one understands art as a field of serious professional creative activity, which is subject to review and assessment by those who possess the relevant expertise and experience to make such determinations – then the idea of artistic development has to be related to the attributes and features which characterize artistic production of recognized artists and the expectations of the "custodians" of the artistic domain. If one understands art as any form of human pictorial activity – than the definition of artistic development becomes both impossible and unnecessary in the absence of any criteria that would allow to define a direction (or directions) of progress. (Kindler, 2010: 2)

She claims that most of the theories of artistic development that have dominated the field of art education during the past century have not adequately incorporated a vision of artistic growth that is networked to the domains of professional artists. One of the more recent theories called the U- curve model has aligned itself to the world of art but Kindler claims it has used a set of norms that have their origins in only one semiotic domain, that of modernism, thereby making the theory less applicable to development in other domains. Repertoire theories in artistic development represent another example of an alignment to the world of professional art. However, this set of theories allows for learners to follow trajectories in any domain that makes use of pictorial representation. This wide range of semiotic domains includes all forms of visual image production (Kindler: 2010). Kindler claims that this is a disadvantage of the theory in terms of its ability to isolate features of the domains that relate exclusively to art, as she has defined it above.

Kindler has developed a theory of artistic development which she aligns more closely to the characteristics inherent within the domains of art as it is practised by professional artists. She interviewed a group a Chinese artists that work in a range of media and styles such as "traditional Chinese paintings, as well as art forms such as cartoons and installations"; and who were considered by the team of researchers to have undergone a "fairly complete developmental process in art" (Kindler, 2010: 8).If we relate this to our discussion of semiotic domains these artists would be associated with different semiotic domains within the field of art. Kindler (2010: 8) adds that

> The artists were asked to reflect on the nature of their artistry, suggest key abilities, competencies or skills that fund artistic development and comment on the key factors, both internal and external, that accounted for their artistic development.

Some key attributes emerged that were consistent across the group. These were compiled and used as a tentative "axis of artistic development" (Kindler, 2010: 8). Those that relate most to early childhood are considered here. "Visual acuity and sensitivity, and the ability to carefully and imaginatively attend to the natural and human made environment" is one of the features that emerged in the responses of the artists. This involves "drawing children's attention to visual phenomena, nurturing their inborn visual curiosity and building on their early representational efforts" (Kindler, 2010: 8).

The second is related to "pictorial ability within a medium – with a focus on technical proficiency" (Kindler, 2010: 8). Here Kindler (2010: 8) explains that the interviewees did not privilege any specific pictorial repertoire "such as optical realism, expressionism etc." Instead, they referred to reaching a level of mastery in any repertoire that did not only include those that made use of traditional media. There was also a focus on the "artist's profound understanding of the full potential of the medium" and being able to control its use (Kindler, 2010: 8). Kindler recommends children use the adult versions of the art materials instead of the 'kiddie' version, such as real clay versus plasticine or play dough because it allows children to become familiar with the limits and possibilities inherent in a medium that they are likely to encounter later in life.

I will refer to these attributes of artistic development when analysing the art practices of my research participants. I will also refer to my own knowledge as a primary school art teacher during the analysis.

Chapter Four Methodological Considerations

As stated in the introduction, children's language learning is intimately connected to their socialisation. In the discussion of semiotic domains I have made the argument that entry into and mastery of the domain of early childhood out of school art practices is also largely a matter of socialisation. Children are socialised into the norms and values of the locally occurring practice and ways of situating messages that are produced through the manipulation of symbolic media made available to them. This socialisation, which really is a form of apprenticeship, does not take place in a vacuum but is subject to certain social dynamics that arise out of participants' intentions as well as arising out of the relationships between individuals.

My research questions, in the way that they are intricately linked to certain key concepts discussed in the conceptual framework such as apprenticeship within a semiotic domain as well as the notion of social practices, would be better answered within a qualitative research paradigm. Furthermore my study draws on contributions from the field of sociocultural literacy studies. This field is traditionally associated with qualitative research design.

The purpose of my study is to inquire into the possibility of children's apprenticeship and socialisation in the domain of art in out of school settings. I do not assume that apprenticeship occurs. Therefore a series of exploratory studies of the home art practices of a few families seemed to be necessary in order to select families where it seemed more likely that apprenticeship in art takes place. I conducted some informal interviews with parents of the children that I teach at the school. This process lead me to choosing the Zacks family.

A case study approach would allow me to explore the extent of my research participants' socialisation and the nature of the surrounding social dynamics at a level of depth that would not be achieved had I chosen to research a larger group of families. Also my questions do not rely on a comparative study approach for their validity as I am seeking to gain an understanding of *any* sort of apprenticeship, and if indeed there is such a thing, occurring in the home setting.

In reporting on my methods of data collection and analysis it may be useful to clarify my unit of analysis. To understand how my research participants are being apprenticed into the domain of art would require me to observe them performing some aspect of the design grammar or the norms and values of art. This could be together with those doing the apprenticing, or it could be that the children are performing aspects of what they learnt on their own which I also consider to be valid. The notions of socialisation and social dynamics imply a focus on communicative modes as they occur between people in dialogue, or any of the other communicative modes discussed thus far such as visual modes or participatory modes, or those found in play. My data collection strategies would then need to be varied in order to cater for the diversity of modalities. After a brief background of the case study I list the data collection strategies that I use and explain them in more detail.

The Case Study

Fortunately Gareth (8years) and Maxine (6years) need little encouragement to get involved in doing some or other art activity at home. Their mother, Shirley, explained to them that I would be coming to see how they do art at home, and so my visit was considered a kind of event, at least for Gareth, whom I teach art to at school once a week and with whom I have a comfortable relationship. On one visit, around which the bulk of my study centres, Shirley had bought some new tubs of play dough for them to play with. Gareth immediately began making a teddy bear which he found an image of on the package of the tub. He sat at the dining room table which Shirley describes as "where it all happens". What ensues from this point on, spanning the entire afternoon, is an involvement in play dough sculpting and imaginative play which includes Maxine, who arrives a little later from playing at a friend's house; Graeme, who gets drawn into their play and sculpture making; and Shirley, who also supports their sculpture making and play routine.

The visit, referred to above, took place on Sunday 30th March 2014 from 3pm to 7pm. Other visits were made close to this date. There was one evening session where activities took place after supper. The data collection strategies are listed and described below.

Data Collection Strategies

Field Notes

While Gareth and Maxine were engaged in playing with the play dough I would spend most of my time sitting near them at the big dining room table and write constantly in my note book. I found that this took the focus off them as opposed to if I was merely sitting there and actively observing them. I was mainly focused on their speech during this time. Although I would occasionally look up to see what they were doing or if one of them asked me a question or showed me what they had made, I would respond. I found that because of my relationship with Gareth and Shirley my presence in their home was not intrusive.

Audio Footage

I used my Samsung smart phone to record audio footage. This was done by simply placing the phone near where Gareth and Maxine were working. At times I left the room while the recording was going on. This was done when I felt my presence was interfering with the flow of the action, such as when Gareth and Maxine were playing in the lounge with Shirley and Graeme and my presence placed an expectation on Graeme and Shirley to entertain me thereby thwarting Maxine's efforts to gain their attention; or if my presence would be considered an intrusion of privacy. This was the case when I gave Shirley the phone to record a session of her reading a bedtime story to Gareth and Maxine.

Video Footage

The question of how to take a video of children without them becoming self-conscious was uppermost in my mind. I tried holding the phone above my head and pointed it in the

direction of the action while simultaneously writing my field notes with my left hand. This seemed to be acceptable for Maxine and Gareth, perhaps because I was not assuming the stance of actively taking a video of them but my attention was still focused on writing in my notebook. When recording audio I would also sometimes hold the phone in this way which made it seem more familiar and predictable.

Informal Interviews and Follow up Contact

An introductory visit occurred the day before the 30th where I accompanied the family on a walk to a neighbourhood market for lunch. This informal environment allowed me to talk to Graeme about his upbringing and background and the aspirations he has for his children. Shirley spoke about her Masters in Fine Art (MFA) in Computer-Related Design. Informal talks of this nature cropped up from time to time during the course of my other visits or even in the line of the tuck shop for a school play where a discussion with Graeme took place. These informal interviews have been recorded as separate transcriptions and although not containing the unit of analysis, they serve to clarify the dynamics that arise within the meaning making events because they offer insights into the views that Graeme has about art and his own involvement in the children's artistic growth. Shirley and I have worked on projects at the school and so there is a running dialogue about the project. I would occasionally think of a question while working with the data and quickly send Shirley a text message containing my question. She has been open and willing to answer these questions and I am very thankful for allowing me the opportunity to gather data in this way. She would also occasionally send me photos of Gareth and Maxine's artwork via social media.

Organising the Data

Transcriptions of data from all sources were typed up. A coding system was adopted to show the inflections and emphasis of the utterances as well as overlapping talk and other characteristics of dialogue. Substantive categories were used to organise the data. These were inductively developed and usually related in some way to aspects of my conceptual framework such as 'play' or 'relationship building'. Excerpts of data from these categories that I thought were salient were analysed in more detail. These small sections of analysis expanded and became useable within my analysis chapters.

Categories that dealt with different aspects of my argument emerged such as individual child led meaning making, peer mediated meaning making, adult involvement and support in children's meaning making in a group setting and adult involvement in an individual child setting. These became headings for different sections within my analysis. Two broad categories gave structure to these aforementioned categories, first, child meaning making without adult involvement, which became the focus for Chapter Five, and second, child meaning making with adult involvement, the focus of Chapter Six.

Questions of Validity

One of the main threats to the validity of my study is not collecting rich enough data. By this I mean "data that are detailed and varied enough that they provide a full and revealing picture of what is going on" (Maxwell, 2008: 244). By making use of a range of data collection strategies as well as focusing on events that include my unit of analysis I have been able to collect rich enough data for my research purpose. I also conducted some respondent validation, described in the informal interview section above. The relationship I have with the family discussed above has contributed to the reliability of the data. By this I mean that I believe my presence in their space was less of a threat to validity because of my relationship with the children and adults.

Intended Contributions

My study aims to continue the conversation about how children's play can be seen as a form of communication with its own purposes, aims and demands placed on the kind of messages produced within this setting. My purpose is also to start a conversation about how the demands unique to play can serve art related goals when art media are present. These ideas could be useful in formulating an approach to organising early childhood art education programs. I also seek to uncover some myths about the reason for certain children appearing gifted in art lessons at school, especially myths that use talent to explain this phenomenon.

Ethics

My research participants were recruited through connections with the school I work at. Shirley worked at the school and I taught her children art. Through getting to know Shirley she told me about her interest in art and ceramics. When deciding on research participants for this piece of research I approached Shirley and explained the project to her and she was enthusiastic about it. After getting written consent from her and Graeme and verbal consent from Maxine and Gareth I explained to the children that I would be spending some time finding out how they do art at home so that I can learn how to teach art to children in better ways at school. I also spent time explaining the project to Graeme in an informal interview.

When I explained to Shirley that I will be using pseudonyms she said she wanted to have the family's real names kept in the thesis because she wanted Maxine and Gareth to read the research one day and see their names appear in it. Special consent forms granting me permission to do this have been signed by all four research participants.

Chapter Five Child-led Meaning Making Practices

Section 1 Peer-Mediated Meaning Making Practices

There are two things I aim to explore in this section: I first briefly discuss how children, who are working productively alongside one another, can easily become uncooperative with one another and how this can affect their alignment to one another's actualities. This is important to consider in terms of my argument about social factors influencing children's meaning making. Secondly I explore the nature of this learning when cooperation is restored by drawing on Kress' notion of the requirements of representation and communication involved in producing any message. I also explore how Gareth apprentices Maxine in the semiotic domain of art production.

The excerpt below depicts the climax of a period of tension that had arisen between Maxine and Gareth and involved accusations of copying. Shirley intervenes in lines 13 to 15 and peace is restored. Commentary on this part of the excerpt is given below before the second part is introduced.

1. Gareth: Banana/
2. Maxine: Bananas are not for matza
3. Gareth: I know. Here's my hambur- I mean my um pancake with –
4. Maxine: No::: it isn't::: you tricking:: me:::
5. Gareth: It's a pancake with a pancake.
6. Maxine: I'm putting holes in it/ (1) one
7. Gareth: I'm making cheese burger:::
8. Maxine: No, this is a hamburger, you can't copy me
9. Gareth: =Its a hamburger, this is a cheese-
10. Maxine: This is a cheese burger. Anything, burgers are any burger, you can't copy me!
11. Gareth: Well, I'm make'n a cheese burger.

12. Maxine: I'm make'n a (.) cheese (.) banana (.) so I'm not copying.

13. Shirley: =Max! It's fine if he makes the same as you (.) he just thinks it's great he only wants to make one.
14. Maxine: baaa
15. Shirley: Kay play nicely.

This breach in the bonds of collegiality shown above has affected Maxine and Gareth's ability to learn from one another. Accusations of copying discourage sharing of ideas. This prevents them from learning from one another. Interestingly, it is Maxine who does not want to be copied, even though she is two years younger than Gareth and less experienced in art and would therefore seem to benefit more from the affordances of copying her more experienced brother. In order for Gareth to continue using Maxine's idea of a hamburger he finds himself having to convince Maxine that he is not copying her. Until this point in the episode Gareth has found value in Maxine's ideas of what they could make, therefore a more cooperative form of participation would allow a better flow in his own meaning making.

The notion of "defensive manoeuvring", which points to a lessening of children's actuality, can be found between Maxine and Gareth in the dialogue above (Erikson quoted in Kendrick, 2003: 171). Kendrick argues that an increase in actuality is linked to favourable conditions for play to occur. One cannot see much playfulness in the scene above, whether dramatic play or spontaneous play expressed through singing or emotional expression which usually characterises Maxine's play practices (Lysaker, Wheat and Benson: 2010). There is also none of the usual collegiality that characterises Maxine and Gareth's relations.

As will be shown in the next part, Shirley's intervention(line 13 above) achieves the desired result. With newly granted permission to copy from the powers that be, the remainder of the excerpt depicts Maxine's systematic copying of all Gareth's food items. Notice the instances of laughter and the playful use of accents in the pronunciation of words such as tomato and potato, which are indicators of more harmonious relations. Maxine and Gareth's play dough sculptures can be seen in figures 1 and 2 below.

16. Maxine: Gareth, can I copy you anything what you did. Gareth, can I copy anything what you did cause Mommy said I can?

17. Gareth: Okay.

18. Maxine: Put my banana in the oven. Ring ring. Ring ring.

19. Gareth: ((laughs)) banana in the oven.

20. Maxine: ((laughing)) ring ring ring ring

21. Gareth: [I'm making an] orange chocola-

22. Maxine: =My pastas ready

23. Gareth:= I'm making chocolate.

24. Maxine: Now I'm making chocolate/. I mean I'm gonna make those ball balls (.) are they called ( )?

25. Gareth: Grapes.

26. Maxine: Grapes, grapes, grapes are for-

27. Gareth: I can use this ( )

28. Maxine: Taken, where you, wait. My banana's not done. (31) Done my balls. Mmm grapes. Ring ring my bananas out the oven. Now for my grapes in the oven. Grapes in the oven ((singsong voice)). Gareth I'm putting my grapes in the oven. (5) What's that orange thing that you made? This orange thing that you made?

29. Gareth: It's an orange.

30. Maxine: That's an easier, just take the orange and make a orange. ((giggles)) That's easier.(3) Oh Ring ring, take my grapes out the oven. Put my orange in the oven.

31. Gareth: =I'm gonna make a chocolate banana-

32. Maxine: What's that red thing?

33. Gareth: A tomato ((American pronunciation))

34. Maxine: Tomato, tomato, tom-
((alternating British and American pronunciations in a singsong voice))

35. Gareth: Tomatotomato ((alternating British and American pronunciations))

36. Maxine: Huh?

37. Gareth: Tomatotomato

Fig. 1 Maxine's food items from left to right: tomato, orange, grapes, banana, bowl of soup, hamburger and challah (Jewish bread)

Fig. 2 Gareth's food items from left: banana, tomato, orange, grapes, hamburger and bowl of soup.

Kress (1997) argues that in order to understand children's meaning making at any age level and in any medium one needs to consider the ways in which they have attended to the requirements of communication and representation in the production of their message. The play dough banana and grapes that Gareth has made have forms that make them easily recognisable. Each has features that are "criterial": for the banana it is the curved shape and colour that are foregrounded to represent a banana; for the grapes it is the bunched together feature and the colour that are used to represent a bunch of grapes. The skill here seems to lie in choosing which aspect of the represented object to foreground as being "criterial". Kress argues that children will draw on their available resources from experience or elsewhere to make these choices. However, he goes on to add that often these choices may not lead to a very transparent or recognisable representation. Nevertheless Kress argues that children always have some intention of having their messages understood by others. In our case Gareth has drawn on his memory of what these food items look like. Gareth appears to know what aspects of each object to focus on in order to make them recognisable. If one examines

his banana in Figure 2, one can notice a nuanced bulge which helps to communicate the idea of banana effectively. Also he has considered the relative sizes of each fruit when placed next to one another. Maxine can see Gareth's pieces of fruit and tries to copy them. By seeing Gareth's products and trying to copy them Maxine is being apprenticed into the semiotic domain of art production generally and play dough sculpting more specifically by receiving help with making some of her items appear realistic. In other words she has learnt some of the design grammar of the domain of play dough sculpting. The aspect of design grammar that Maxine has learnt refers to "all the elements that pattern together to form the message" 'realistic likeness to the object being represented'. Maxine has not achieved the same nuances of meaning that Gareth's items do with regard to these elements of the design grammar, namely, relative size of the pieces of fruit and shape of banana. However, her efforts are adequate for her purposes, that is, for creating props for playing with. For example in line 13 above one can see the flow of items going in and out of her 'oven'. Having permission to copy Gareth's items facilitates the ease with which Maxine is able to carry out her play routine. Maxine's play purposes provide the motivation for her to copy Gareth. The immediacy with which Maxine asks Gareth if she can copy his food items (line 16) after Shirley grants permission (line 13) is evidence of this motivation. Gareth's purposes and motivations are different. He enjoys the challenge of rendering something realistically; arguably a purpose that is more aligned to the semiotic domain of art production than Maxine's play-led purposes. Maxine's play routine is not strictly associated with the domain of art production. Therefore one could say that Maxine is learning art related skills while participating in an entirely different domain; perhaps we could call this domain 'playful meaning making drawing on cultural resources'. This domain is networked to the former domain in that the play routine requires realistic props for playing with, something that can be achieved through linked action to the art related domain which Gareth models.

This discussion shows how children can learn from one another while participating in meaning making activities alongside one another in a group setting, and where art related media are employed. If some of the children's meaning making, in this setting, is shaped by childhood cultural interests, it can elevate the multimodal conversation and provide for heightened motivation. Although this kind of scenario could lead to apparent "unruliness", as Dyson (2001: 11) discusses in her study of a classroom where collegiality and play are encouraged, the potential for learning is evident.

Extending one's ability to make one's visual messages communicate more effectively is never an unwarranted practice in art. The extended practice Maxine is getting in doing this, spurred on by her rich play routine, would perhaps be more appealing and relevant to her than hours of practise within disembodied curriculum items such as those that appear in school settings. This section has explored a few ways in which children's purposes as they arise during play in a group setting have natural alignment to some art related goals. School art programmes that are designed with consideration for these alignments are likely to be more relevant and meaningful for children while still providing for the achievement of realistic domain specific goals.

In this section I have explored children's collegiality and cooperation within art practices. In the next section I will explore the social dynamics that give rise to children's individual meaning making purposes.

Section 2 Social Dynamics of Children's Individual Meaning Making Practices

With reference to Kendrick's ideas about the cultural and gender based influences on children's play I follow on with the discussion in the previous section about how children's meaning making purposes have certain alignments to art related goals, but in this section I explore how the above-mentioned influences can give rise to alignments with more sophisticated art goals.

Fig. 3 Maxine's Pesach Seder plate (screen shot from video footage)

There came a point within Maxine and Gareth's meaning making session where cultural interests that are informed by gender based norms and roles cause Maxine and Gareth to choose different subject matter although still within the broad theme of food preparation.

At this point in their meaning making session Maxine and Gareth are still working alongside one another, but now they are no longer doing the same things as in the previous section. Instead Maxine has decided to role play the preparation of a specific Jewish meal associated with the Holy period of Pesach which has specific foods that correspond with those eaten by the Israelites when they left Egypt. The Jewish day school they attend puts on a ceremony for the children where they experience having a Seder meal with the following items: matza, kneidel matza balls in soup, egg, parsley, and a bone amongst others. Maxine's play dough versions of these food can be seen in Figure 3.Some families including the Zacks family will also observe these requirements at home over this period.

Possibly informed by the newly formed cooperation indicated in the previous section, Maxine invitingly asks Gareth if he is also setting up for Pesach, to which there is no reply. This silence turns out to be a decline of Maxine's offer as Gareth finds himself making other food items instead. It is likely that Gareth did not find the idea of setting up for Pesach appealing because of its gender based implications as will be explained below.

It appears that the idea to set up for Pesach had come from earlier in their play dough sculpting session. Maxine may have even got the idea from Shirley who engaged her in a conversation about making matza. I have included this bit of conversation because it relates to our discussion of gendered roles more specifically and the ongoing theme of adult involvement in children's meaning making practices more generally.

1. Maxine: Mommy, mommy.

2. Shirley: Yes.

3. Maxine: =Mommy, now I'm making matza

4. Shirley: Okay (2) I love it! I love it just ready for Pesach huh? (2) hey are you gonna show us what you did at the matza place. At Pick n Pay, cause you went on an outing last week.

In line 4 Shirley is expressing her own joy about the upcoming period of Pesach which will take place in April 2014. The way this line is framed as a question renders it as a kind of suggestion to Maxine that she set up for Pesach, and could quite possibly be the origin of this idea. Maxine finally manages to ask Graeme to get the play dough tool box and she begins to make play dough sculptures based on the theme of Pesach. The energy with which she approaches this task seems to be fuelled in part by the introduction of the tool box containing different plastic tools including mini rolling pins, mini pizza cutters, plastic knives and various other modelling tools.

> I'm setting up for Pesach (.) Daddy. (3) We ( ) the cutting tools, we ( ) cutting tools, cut cut. (2) I'm (.) are you setting up for Pesach Gav? Cause I am. I'm pretending its Pesach. ((There is no response from Gareth while Maxine searches for a response)) (3) Pesach. (2) Cut this into a square. (5) Now cut, take that away. ((humming while she presses a piece of blue play dough flat with the palm of her hands. She gets a cutting tool now)) Cut that into squares. Cut that (.) to squares. (1) And the last, cut that (2) cut (3) there! (2) there's my square, a teeny matza! ((Laughs))
>
> [The numbers in this excerpt refer to pauses, in seconds]

Kendrick (2003) claims that as children participate in creative activity informed by play, they begin to explore what it means to be a male or female within the culture that they find themselves. Kendrick found, in her own study of a young girl of Chinese origin, whom she calls Leticia, that she enacted her ideas about motherhood, girlhood, family relationships, commerce and possibilities for her future within her play routines. Kendrick (2003: 173)

argues that this practice of Leticia "communicates her understanding of what it means to be a female member in her family and culture".

Within this scene Maxine is exploring her ideas of what it means to be a woman in a Jewish home. The use of the tools seem to authenticate this exploration as they resemble some of the kitchen 'tools' that Shirley uses to prepare meals. The tools are therefore used to validate her play: the plastic knife she uses to cut the matza is symbolic of a real knife 'as if' she is making real matza (Kendrick, 2003: 50). Her vocal expressions of "cut cut" indicate how the tools are enhancing her role-play of preparing the meal. These tools as they are used within this make believe context could also be serving art-related goals, like when she presses a perforated mould into the play dough to add texture to the matza or using a knife to cut out the square shape of the matza.

I began a discussion in the previous section about how the purposes that arise from children's play have certain affordances for realising some art related goals. The Pesach Seder plate, with its aesthetic layout and positioning of each food item and in the importance it holds for Shirley as a Jewish woman, and consequently for Maxine, does not merely depict props for playing with, but is more of a presentation of items that have their own aesthetic quality. Maxine is aware of this aesthetic and strives to reproduce it in her play dough rendition. To achieve this presentation aesthetic Maxine has carefully laid out all the items neatly on one of the play dough mats which came with the tool box. She has also tried to get help from Gareth in achieving this aesthetic quality.

Maxine's evident absorption and "deep engagement" in this activity indicate the relevance it has for her. This is arguably due to her own investment and effort in shaping the initial 'idea' for this piece of meaning making; an idea that received minimal prompting from Shirley. This section demonstrates how a meaning making event can take on more relevance when children are allowed to be in charge of their meaning making. Powerful cultural narratives serve to sustain children's engagement in the activity. The way Maxine recruits these cultural narratives as instantiations of her identity within her meaning making with art related media could help explain why she, and other children with similar opportunities and resources for meaning making, do well in art classes at school.

In the next chapter I will explore the role of parents more directly within children's meaning making practices.

Chapter Six Adult Involvement in Children's Meaning Making: Alignment to Actualities

Section 1.1 Maxine's Imaginative play as a Context for Discursive Action

This section explores how Maxine's imaginative play routine; in the rules it prescribes, helps establish a theme to shape and structure meaning making in a group setting. When others follow this lead and take ownership of this structure, a dynamic learning environment is created. The features of this environment, which will be discussed in section 1.2, includes many of the learning principles contained in 'good' video games. In section 1.2 I make the argument that the structure that Maxine's play lends to the group's meaning making practices and the manner in which the other's respond and further develop this structure render their practices as a kind of semiotic domain.

I first describe some of the background context of the episode on which the three sections will be based before examining extracts of dialogue from this episode.

Maxine has sought to role play a typical day of an adult woman getting up in the morning, getting dressed and going out shopping. Maxine no longer wants to take an active role in making things but rather seizes the opportunity to recruit Gareth and Graeme to make some of the products she may need in her dramatic play. "Ga? (Gareth) ..you have to do clothes stuff and food, and lots of stuff. Daddy, you also be a shop man". After some negotiations their job descriptions are defined: Graeme to make products for a clothes shop and Gareth products for a food shop.

Maxine uses 'dollars' which also need to be made from the play dough to buy the products: "Gareth, can I tell you something? Everything is one", as in one dollar. She also has strict rules about how the products are to be made, for instance, Graeme can only make 'new' products, which means that he shouldn't make an object twice - "because I only make stuff, new stuff… I don't make that thing and that thing all around, like another lipstick, another lipstick… I don't [need] a whole bunch of lipstick". A rule that turns out to be the most constraining of all is that Graeme can only use play dough that Maxine gives him for making his sculptures, this is given as 'money' (dollars) which is play dough taken from 'old' unwanted sculptures or from the packets. She also allows him to recycle old sculptures – "Dad! You can do this. You can like take the stuff what people give to you and rip it apart and break it. Then you can make new stuff if you don't like it you can rip it apart, break it, and make new things."

With regard to the rules Maxine creates, Kendrick (2003: 46) explains that during play children "replace the rules of ordinary life with precise, arbitrary unexceptionable rules that govern the correct playing of the game". At first the rules described above are seemingly arbitrary and unexceptionable yet they are aligned to her purpose which is to create an

"ongoing flow of events" that she is in control of (Lysaker, Wheat and Benson: 2010, 223).The rule that there should be a transaction between her and Gareth or Graeme every time they want some play dough, and that this transaction is precisely that, a transaction of 'money', adds to the complexity of the play experience and contributes to Maxine getting "caught up in the fantasy much the way one might be caught up in the world of a book while reading" (Lysaker, Wheat and Benson, 2010: 223).

Maxine's play also serves to create a thematic focus for Graeme and Gareth's play dough sculpting. This thematic focus is not a disembodied one that often occurs in formal instruction such as a teacher would use to organise a series of teacher led activities but rather a thematic one that is a meaningful extension of an authentic play real context. Gareth and Graeme have not merely chosen to recruit this theme to organise their efforts but rather Maxine has recruited them as productive actors within her world. As Gareth and Graeme make each requested item they are playing out their designated roles as shop men. This serves to enhance Maxine's play and provide her with useful props for her play purposes.

It is also interesting to note that in this episode Maxine is not physically making any products. One may then conclude that she is not learning any art here. I would counter this argument by saying that sometimes when people are involved in a team, not everyone does the same thing. In group work teachers often try to give children the same kind of roles in an effort to be fair. However, the new global workplace, arguably even in the fields of art and design such as one may find in creative teams within advertising or curating, require team members to work on different aspects of a project.

Maxine's play practices appear to involve a division of labour that is more in tune with the skills of the participants. Art teaching in schools is likely to have fruitful results if art teachers are less prescriptive in their use of group work and are able to find ways to tap into children's resources of social agency such as Maxine has performed in the above episode. This may foster more authentic kinds of collaboration amongst children in a group setting. In the next section I explore the extent to which the Maxine, Gareth and Graeme's meaning making practices can be thought of as a semiotic domain.

Section 1.2 Semiotic Play

In this section I make the argument that the group's meaning making can be thought of as a semiotic domain in various ways. Firstly, Graeme's participation as a co-worker within this setting helps create a learning environment where distinctive kinds of knowledge, values, norms and ways of making things are shared. Secondly, the structure supplied by Maxine's play context and the agency with which Graeme and Gareth participate in this context, creates a distinctive activity domain that is at times "pleasantly frustrating", which Gee (2005: 7) claims is a feature of good learning as the tasks that emerge are challenging enough to keep the participants engaged. The rules and goals of Maxine's play context, which are the

kinds of rules and goals that children typically recruit for their play purposes, seem to create a game-like setting, in the challenge they present for the participants and the consequent team work this challenge elicits. The excerpt chosen to illustrate the points I have just made is a lengthy one. This is partly to show the level of engagement that the participants present in this activity.

1. Graeme (father): Okay Maxine::! You looking to buy (.) pink lipstick.

2. Maxine: Ooh:: I'm () lipstick. Let me take some money off me. Some blue money.

3. Graeme: I managed to buy some from another shop so I've got some. You need to bring me, you need to bring me money.

4. Maxine: = Okay. I bought () money:: Ooh thank you. One dollar. Here we go::

5. Graeme: Thank you. Here's the lipstick.

6. Maxine: Thank you ((sigh of satisfaction)).

7. Graeme: ((giggles))

8. Maxine: Ooh needs nail polish. Can you make nail polish? I know how to make nail polish.

9. Graeme: Nail polish is a much thinner tube with a longer thingy on top.

10. Maxine: Uh-hm! It's like this.

11. Graeme: Okay.

12. Maxine: Look you have to do that.

13. Graeme: Ja.

14. Maxine: And then (.) do that and then do that.

15. Gareth: I'm making nail polish.

16. Maxine: For dad, 'cause –

17. Graeme: Are you doing nail polish okay.

18. Gareth: You have to turn the lid off.

19. Graeme: Maxine got a pink lipstick and a purple lipstick. Ah, is he out?((referring to the cricket)).

20. Maxine: Morning aah! I puttin' some pink lipstick on.

21. Graeme: What is he on? It's fine, he did the damage ((referring to the cricket)).

22. Maxine: I'm puttin' some pink lipstick on.

23. Graeme: Blue cylinder and now:: I need a much – I need more. What colour's this? Orange?

24. Maxine: = No ().

25. Graeme: I need some more orange, I can't do anything with just one colour.

26. Maxine: ((gasp)). I want to go to that shop again ((acting voice – perhaps as if she is an adult woman)).

27. Graeme: Ah:: That is brilliant.

28. Maxine: Okay, I'm:: come to the shop to buy that. Um. La la la la la.

29. Graeme: Here we go. Here's the bottle that's from Gareth.

30. Maxine: I give one dollar, one dollar. Over there, over there.

31. Graeme: () the dollar, I like the colour.

32. Gareth: Here's the mirror.

33. Maxine: No, that's for your cheeks. Ja, take –

34. Graeme: Ja, that's the – that's to powder your cheeks. Excellent.

35. Shirley: Wow::

36. Graeme: Brilliant powder effect.

37. Gareth: Did you make ( ).

38. Graeme: No, no, I'm not sure I've made that but I'm not sure yet what I want to do with it. Um.

39. Shirley: [A brush, you need to make a brush]. Okay. Make an orange and try and put it in.

((the last three turns Maxine has been singing a repetitive sound))

40. Gareth: With what?

41. Shirley: An orange ().

42. Maxine: Done my nail polish. Ooh! I need some –

43. Graeme: I've just bought now from Gareth's shop. Maxine! Maxine! This is to (..) powder your face.

44. Maxine: Ooh! That's a lot of money. I need to give you two moneys. I mean I need to give you this kind of money. One/, here we go.

45. Gareth: Here's the apple.

46. Maxine: Daddy up dad.

47. Graeme: Ja. It is that's the powder and you put it back (..) ja.

48. Maxine: I'm ready to go to eat, to go to eat. Taking some of my money with.

Gee (2005), in his research of the learning potential of video games has listed 16 ways in which video games contain 'good' learning principles. Some of these principles are present here, in the design structure of the play context; principles such as the focus on *production* rather than consumption that the play context demands; the *interaction* that is encouraged between participants as they play out their respective roles and scripted relations between one another such as shop owner and potential customer; the *identity* work that the play context summons, both for Maxine in her playing out of an "expansive woman" who controls other members of the family (Kendrick, 2003: 106), and for Gareth who is able to 'shadow' his father in a master apprentice relation within an authentic 'work' context. These are just the first 3 of 16 principles that Gee describes in his article.

This playful semiotic site is also a good platform for the sharing of domain specific knowledge, values and norms. Graeme's encouraging remarks in line 36 concerning Gareth's face powder sets the production standard of acceptable contributions. This standard is a kind of norm that relates to those inherent in school art, where children's creative manipulation of art media to represent their lived environment is encouraged. In lines 8-14a moment occurs where Maxine explains her version of how to make nail polish. Although her role was previously a consumer of goods, here she slips into a production mode.

Considering these principles for learning and Graeme's dialogic style of apprenticeship, could help explain why Maxine and Gareth as well as other children who participate in similar activity settings at home where art related media are employed, do well in school art.

The following section looks at how a momentary breach in the bonds of cooperation can so easily arise within an activity domain where the wrong kind of engagement from adults occurs.

Section 1.3 Children's Meaning Making Purposes: Consequences of Adults' Misalignment

When Graeme does not align himself to the 'actualities' of Maxine's rules and purposes for play and instead tries to extend the practice to achieve domain related goals such as enhancing the aesthetics of the products they make, tension arises and results in Maxine having to insist on her rules being followed. This scene can be contrasted with another scene, that is featured in the next section, where Graeme and Shirley do align themselves to the 'actualities' of Maxine's play context and thus achieve a more harmonious extension of her practice toward domain specific goals.

1. Graeme (father): Wow (2) I'm making something but I'm not quite sure what it is actually. I'm just enjoying the colours the yellow and the purple.
2. Maxine: I:: need some lipstick I'm going out.
3. Graeme: Jassus.
4. Maxine: Okay, now I'm ready. I'm first getting (.) I'm first getting dressed ((gasp)). I missed one thing. I need new nail polish.
5. Graeme: Oh no I know this – I just made a little cupcake.
6. Maxine: ((gasp)) um. Give it to Gareth for the food shop.
7. Graeme: [There we go]
8. Maxine: Give it to Gareth for this food shop.
9. Graeme: Ja. Gareth! No no no no no no. It's actually a bit boring I need another colour, give me red.
10. Maxine: No no! No!
11. Graeme: [For the straw]. Can you do it? Put a little strawberry on top like that, like Mommy's does.
12. Maxine: No only if (.) you mu- you can break that.
13. Graeme: It's a bit boring with the yellow on –
14. Maxine: Daddy! Can I tell you something? You can break that and do a new thing.

15. Graeme: [No okay well]

16. Maxine: [Okay. You can take that and put red on]

((10 seconds later))

17. Graeme: Okay. Gareth! (1) Gareth, cupcake.

18. Maxine: For your shop. I love cupcakes. That's what I'm gonna buy. Taking some money::

19. Graeme: [((laughs))]

20. Graeme: [() all these cupcakes for inspiration there (.) come! Some chocolate twirls and that on top Gareth. ((indicating that Gareth should put chocolate twirls on the cupcakes))

Maxine seems to value having Gareth and Graeme available to make realistic props for her to play with. However, this is all she needs for her purposes. She does not need elaborately embellished products. This reveals a clash of objectives in the excerpt above. Graeme follows his usual practice of arriving at a recognisable form while modelling the play dough in his hands, yet before he can add the final touches, orders are given to have it delivered to Gareth's food shop. These 'final touches' relate to an objective that values the final image and its pictorial qualities: to the aesthetics of the product. Needless to say this is a valuable bit of artistic practice on many levels. However, Maxine is not having any of it. She thwarts Graeme's attempt to achieve his objective by referring to her rules for play.

Graeme motivates for Maxine to give him a different colour play dough by declaring that "it's a bit boring with the yellow on it" as if the principle of aesthetics would surely warrant an exception to her rules. What Graeme does not realise is that Maxine has made certain rules and objectives for her play scenario that do not include spending too much time on embellishing the play props. Referring to Kress's work, Gee (2008a: 8) explains that children "make up semiotic resources that are apt for their purposes". Embellishing cupcakes is not apt for her current purposes and even interferes with them. Graeme even tried to persuade Maxine to attend to some pictorial features by saying "you do it, put a little strawberry on top like that, like Mommy's does". He expected Maxine to be motivated to enact her mother's identity as someone who takes pride in her baking, thereby trying to create an authentic and plausible reason for her to embellish the cupcake, similar to when Maxine was making her Pesach Seder plate. While he correctly interpreted her purposes to be informed by a play context he did not consider that these purposes are mainly concerned with actually playing imaginatively with the objects and not playing in the sense of producing objects which is what his and Gareth's role is. Maxine's intentions here echo Kress' description of how children cut out the main subjects of their drawings to play with.

Although Graeme has largely been well aligned to the actualities of Maxine's play, it is useful to point out how easily a momentary breach in cooperation can occur and how this may arise. Graeme's actions in this moment resemble the means by which teachers and parents try and get children to conform to the adult's wishes. This happens typically in art

lessons where the teacher will want to encourage the young child to add more detail to their work or attend to some or other visual element of art in order to enhance the final product. In these cases a mismatch between the teacher's purposes and that of the child can easily arise.

Although Graeme's efforts do not achieve the desired effect, still one could regard his engagement here as an act of apprenticing Maxine and Gareth into the semiotic domain of art production. The fact that his pleas are met with resistance seem to accentuate his values, norms and ways of making meaning with art related media. His saying that it is boring with only yellow is a clear statement of value concerning how things should be made, that is, in ways that are visually interesting. Nevertheless, apprenticeship, by definition, requires a willing learner.

In the next section I explore how adults can align themselves to children's actualities and the results of this alignment.

Section 2 Example of Adult Alignment to Actualities Inherent in Children's Meaning Making

By drawing on play theory outlined in Chapter Two, I explore how a seemingly everyday interaction between a parent and child can bring about positive gains in art learning. The forthcoming excerpt, drawn from data obtained through an audio-recording and field-notes, describes a scene where Maxine is making an ice cream out of play dough for her parents, Graeme and Shirley.

Maxine is sitting at the dining room table working with the play dough. Graeme is watching the cricket on TV and Shirley is reading her book. They are both in the lounge. The lounge and dining room are separated by French doors which are opened to allow easy movement between the two rooms as well as communication between each room. At the start of the excerpt Maxine is in the dining room and then she moves to the lounge to interact with Shirley and Graeme.

1. Maxine: ((in the lounge now with Shirley and Graeme)) What dat?
2. Shirley: That's Gareth's (4) what about:: ice cream ( ) in a bowl.
3. Maxine: Okay. What do you want?
4. Shirley: I would like/
5. Maxine: You can have every/::: thing/:::
6. Graeme: I want ice cream ( ) a big blob of ice cream, ( ) ice cream wise ( ) =
7. Maxine: Oh Ja::: ((as if just realising something)) what are you going to eat the ice cream in?

8. Shirley: Okay ice cream in a cup. Any flavour's fine.

9. Maxine: Mmmm okay, can you have chocolate? Chocolate blue.

10. Shirley: Chocolate's fine or blueberry, actually I'll have blueberry.

11. Maxine: [Dad!] okay blueberry. ((to Graeme)) what kind?

12. Graeme: Chocolate =

13. Maxine: Okay, we have the blue and chocolate.

14. Graeme: Okay, that's fine.

15. Maxine: Okay (.) Ta da! ((runs back to her work area in the other room and proceeds to make the ice cream for Graeme and Shirley while singing the lyrics to a song with accompanying gestures and body movement)) We'll never forget:: , all over the world::, constantly making::

    ((Twenty seconds of activity elapse, it is mostly quiet apart from the accompanied singing and sounds of rustling plastic packets in which the different colours of play dough are kept. Gareth is busy highlighting the main words for an oral presentation due for homework the next day))

16. Maxine: ((to Gareth) I'm making an ice cream for them.

    ((one minute of more activity elapses))

17. Maxine: Mommy, it's you first.

    ((another 20 seconds elapse. This time sounds of rummaging in the play dough tool box can be heard))

18. Maxine: Mommy here's yours, oh you ( ) a cone, let me make a cup.

    ((13 seconds later))

19. Maxine: Daddy, dark chocolate or light chocolate?

20. Graeme: Dark please.

21. Maxine: kay (.) <u>I knew it!</u> (11) ((humming the same tune for five seconds)) Here dad! Here dad.

22. Graeme: Maxine that's amazing! (2) Look at this.

23. Shirley: Wow::::

24. All: ((giggles))

25. Shirley: Don't stand on Gareth's play dough.

26. Maxine: Oooh::/ Wa:::/ (4) Okay I'm making ( ) ice cream ((singsong voice))

    ((she is back at her work area))

27. Maxine: Ow!

28. Gareth: Why did you kick the chair?

29. Maxine and Gareth: ((giggles))

    ((Maxine has completed the ice cream for Graeme even though she planned to make Shirley's first. Now she is busy with Shirley's))

30. Maxine: Mommy! Two scoops or one scoop.

31. Shirley: ( )

32. Maxine: Two scoops?

33. Shirley: Two scoops.

34. Maxine: ((Singing the same tune but with the words 'two scoops'))

    ((43 seconds elapse))

35. Maxine: Mommy! Here's the spoon. Yours was harder than dad's

36. Shirley: [oh my God] My:::::: Wow::::: aw my gosh, yum! And you know it's my favourite colour.

37. Maxine: ((humming the same tune now))

In lines 2 -15 Maxine discusses with Shirley and Graeme what they would like to eat. Initially, in line 2, Shirley suggests ice cream. In the further exchanges they decide on the specifics such as what kind of container the ice cream will be served in, cup or cone (lines 6 and 7), and the flavour (lines 8 – 14). It is the adult that prompts these specifics, yet it is Maxine who provides the motivation for this interaction: she initiates the action. In line 7 Maxine shifts her focus to ask her parents what container they would like their ice cream served in. In terms of art specific language questions of 'form' are addressed by the parent's prompts, that is, will the sculpture have a cup like form or a cone form? Shirley's comments (line 8) that any flavour is fine introduces the idea of flavours, the corresponding conventional colours of which are generally well known to most children i.e. strawberry is pink, chocolate is brown, etc.

The pride with which she says "I knew it!" (line 21) after getting a response from Graeme about whether to make it dark or light chocolate, is indicative of her affective state during this social act. The pleasure she is deriving from this act can be seen in her singing and talk in turns 15 through 21, yet also fuelled by her parent's willingness to improvise in this narrative, evident in Shirley's line – 'chocolate's fine or blueberry, actually I'll have blueberry'. Lysaker, Wheat and Benson (2010) found that both the expression of emotion and singing and chanting added a personal authenticity to children's creative efforts. Dyson (2010: 15) claimed that children's search for pleasure, and a desire to build and sustain relationships is evident in their situated textual practices, that is, situated within meaningful interaction.

Maxine's play actions which draw on shared cultural resources; that of buying an ice cream at a shop, as well as preparing a treat for a loved one, have added significance in the current context because the generous act is directed at her parents who hold a place of importance in Maxine's life. Kendrick (2003) in her case study found that the relationship between a child and her parents influenced their play practices. Kendrick's primary research participant, Leticia, had the desire to please her father and this was enacted in her imaginary play, for example, by her wanting to buy him a newspaper. Dyson (2010) also found that when children were given free creating time during break times at school, they would frequently make special gifts or cards out of paper for their parents. Another example Dyson gives is of a girl who, wanting to express her appreciation toward her mother, wrote a letter to her mother in her writing exercise book. Dyson (2008) commented on how the book would probably not be read by her mother because it was typically kept at school. This is an example of how certain decontextualised routines of school writing exercises can, at times, become recontextualised and be given meaningfulness by the affective intent of the children who participate in these routines.

The value of Shirley and Graeme's contribution lies in their willingness to respond in character and not in providing overt instruction of how to make a play dough ice cream as would be the case if they assumed a more traditional didactic role. Their improvisational stance allows the interaction to take on the texture of an event that is connected to a real and pleasurable situation, involving the purchase or production of ice cream. In her research Kendrick includes some features of the process of participating in children's actualities taken from Adelman. These include "invited participation, and suspension of adult judgement of reality, priority, significance, and worth" (Kendrick, 2003: 171). By participating within Maxine's play Graeme and Shirley are largely able to conform to these features; certainly in the early discussion they are. They struggle a little with the features of giving priority, worth and significance when Maxine presents the ice creams to each of them in line 22 for Graeme and 36 for Shirley. Shirley is more successful here by framing her pleasure in character. This helps her contribution to stay true to the communicative purposes of the event. Shirley's response in this line validates the multimodality of the meaning produced. It confirms that Maxine's meaning in this event is largely coded in the play and interaction and not only in the end product of the work and its pictorial qualities. To focus only on these qualities would amount to a misreading of the message that is communicated and hence would amount to the same as may happen in a spoken conversation where one doesn't understand what the other is trying to say to you. Kress admits that the meanings of children's signs are sometimes difficult to fully recover, yet from the point of view of the child they are full of meaning. One of the notable things that the school oriented parents in Heath's (1983) study do with their young children, even as young as 18 months, is engage with them as conversational partners starting with baby talk and then progressing to more normal talk. Graeme and Shirley's engagement with Maxine in the above event resembles that of conversational partners, yet the conversation here is not developing one mode (speech) but also forms of play. The above also does not have any of the features found within a knowledge-transmission pedagogy, but rather supports Maxine's engagement with the production of new knowledge.

Graeme and Shirley's participation allows the events within Maxine's imaginative play world to flow uninterruptedly, which Lysaker, Wheat and Benson (2010: 223) have found to produce what they call "deep engagement" with the created world. The authenticity of the event prompts Maxine to draw on her cognitive resources to visualise what a real ice cream would look like. The co-constructed imaginary context demands that a realistic ice cream be produced, or at least one that contains some of the features that were discussed such as a cone or a cup, one or two scoops rather than swirls of a soft serve, chocolate or blueberry flavour. The relatively simple point about what was chosen between cup and cone and between different flavours of ice cream gets translated into concerns about what colours and forms to use to highlight the specificities of what was chosen. This helps to create a mental image of an ice cream for Maxine and becomes a resource she can draw on for sculpting the ice cream out of play dough.

Kendrick has found that the role adults assume in Leticia's school impacted on the children's play practices. The richness and the sophistication that characterises her play at home was not evident to the same extent at school. One possible explanation that Kendrick gives for this is that in Leticia's Kindergarten, play is framed as 'work'- where children can choose different learning centres in which to play. She notes that, in this setting, the teacher not the children define the play. She also claims that the presence of adults, even when they were not watching, served to inhibit children's play. Kendrick (2003: 172) draws the following conclusion:

> From a pedagogical and research perspective, if we are to understand how children see themselves as participants in the world, we need to adopt more sensitive ways of engaging in and extending their play.

Early childhood art educators who structure their activities around the ideas of a knowledge creation pedagogy are likely to facilitate authentic and relevant play experiences which in turn, as my study endorses, can provide conditions for meaningful art learning.

Chapter Seven Conclusion

One of the aims of this study is to explore the role of parents in the nurturing of their children's art sensibilities. The argument was made that child meaning making in out-of-school settings is a practice with distinctive features, such as the presence of play and imagination; the lack of reliance on adult support and input for achieving results; and the multimodality of the messages produced. These features were presented in Chapter two in order to gain a better understanding of children's meaning making practices where art media are involved. On the strength of this understanding an inquiry could then be undertaken into considering the role of adults in extending these practices toward more specifically art related goals.

In chapter one I explained how the concept of apprenticeship within a domain or Discourse is associated with learning that is acquisition-led; and that this process is largely one of socialisation into the values, norms and ways of doing and being that members of this Discourse/domain exhibit. Domain specific knowledge, values, norms and ways of being and doing that newcomers need to learn is coded in the physical actions of more experienced members as they produce domain specific messages and does not reside in their heads, as commonly accepted within a knowledge transmission pedagogy. This poses a problem for acquisition-led learning as this learning needs to take place within authentic interactions between participants.

Play has been found to provide such a context for authentic interactions to occur. This authenticity is not directly associated with the domain of art production, even when art media are employed as children in such multimodal settings where play is a leading factor, do not always consider themselves as 'doing' 'art'. If asked, they may say they are 'making things', or 'playing'. The authenticity serves other purposes for children; 'play' purposes and 'making things' purposes. My study has found that these purposes are networked to some of the purposes found in the domain of art production; purposes such as striving to make it look 'real'. Children can also help each other achieve these purposes and thereby apprentice each other.

When adults get involved in children's activities where art related media are central to the activity they can enhance the authenticity of the event and thereby strengthen and confirm the purposes for action. Again these purposes do not always directly serve art related goals but serve the play goals. Adults need to be sensitive to these purposes and understand that these purposes are not always serving art goals. The watchword here is participating in the actualities of children's play; that is, becoming an 'insider' in their world; and from this position, while adopting the same purposes that children have in their play such as creating props for play, the adult can help them achieve these purposes. Helping them achieve their play purposes where the purpose is creating realistic props for play, for example, would indirectly be helping them learn art. In this way adults can apprentice children in domains that are networked to art related domains.

The fear of disturbing children's natural inborn creativity; a fear that informed some of the earlier theories of art teaching could have some merit in light of the current discussion. When considering the energy and agency with which children take to making meaning with visual media one can understand why adults would not want to dampen this zeal. By seeing this meaning making as part of children's broader communicative practices in all the modes they recruit, speech, gesture, body movements, and the meaning making purposes these modes serve one can begin to perceive how adults can engage with children in ways that are aligned to these purposes. Not only in the interests of art, but for the sake of having more relevant conversations with children and thereby build stronger relationships.

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