12-2016

Refreshment for the Soul: A Phenomenological Study of the Student Experience of Beauty in School

Paul Reiff
National Louis University

REFRESHMENT FOR THE SOUL:
A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY
OF THE STUDENT EXPERIENCE OF
BEAUTY IN SCHOOL

Paul Reiff

Curriculum and Social Inquiry

Submitted in partial fulfillment

of the requirements of

Doctor of Education

National College of Education

National Louis University

December, 2016

REFRESHMENT FOR THE SOUL:
A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY
OF THE STUDENT EXPERIENCE OF
BEAUTY IN SCHOOL

Submitted in partial fulfillment

of the requirements of

Doctor of Education

in the National College of Education

Paul Reiff

Curriculum and Social Inquiry

Approved:

Chair, Dissertation Committee

Member, Dissertation Committee

Member, Dissertation Committee

Dean's Representative

Program Director

Director, Doctoral Programs

Dean, National College of Education

12/20/2016

Date Approved

Abstract

Prompted by the ratio-scientific emphasis in the curriculum, I conducted this study to explore the lifeworlds of students to understand their lived experience of beauty in school. This investigation entailed a phenomenological study, the method of which included in-depth interviews and focus group discussions with four high school students. This study aimed to examine the essence of beauty in the lived experience of students in school, to explore the perceptions of students regarding school as a place to appreciate beauty, and to understand the needs of students as a place that develops their aesthetic sensibilities. The findings include the description and interpretation of the experiences of students and the identification of six characteristics defining their experiences. Implications of the experiences and perceptions of the students on the curricular and extracurricular program of schools are discussed. Given that our ability to appreciate beauty is one of the defining characteristics of our humanity, exploring its place in the curriculum is of vital importance.

Acknowledgments

Special thanks to...

Antonina Lukenchuk, my methods teacher, who showed me that
the way out of the cave begins with wonder.

Todd Price, Eleanor Binstock, Susan McMahon, and especially Sara Efrat Efron,
my committee members, without whose guidance and support
this project would have never have been completed.

Karyn McElroy, my colleague and fellow traveler in the doctoral program at NLU,
who never failed to encourage me as a friend and inspire me as a scholar.

Patrick Roberts, my seminar teacher, whose adage "The best dissertation is a done dissertation"
kept me moving forward when I was tempted by tangents or spinning my wheels.

And finally, to my sons: Nick, who shows me time and again what *arête* looks like; Ben, who shows me time and again what a great teacher does and what a great man is; and my son Nate, who shows me time and again that no dream is beyond reach with passion and perseverance -- thanks for keeping me on track by asking, "How's that dissertation coming along, Dad?"

This is for you, Cathleen.

Thank you for filling my life with beauty and love.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Tables

List of Figures

It is the function of the scholar to evoke into life wisdom and beauty which, apart from his magic, would remain lost in the past.

Alfred North Whitehead, *The Aims of Education*

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Background and Context

The myriad trends in curriculum can be as confounding as the many heads of Hydra but as captivating as the colors of the rainbow-robe of Iris. The issues are daunting on the one hand, delightful on the other. Take, for example, two different presentations I recently made at national conferences mere weeks apart: "A Blueprint for Creative and Coherent Systemic Assessment" presented at The Learning Forward Conference in Washington, D.C., and "Honoring the Imagination in an Era of Measurement and Standardization" presented at the Conference on English Leadership in Minneapolis, Minnesota. The former presentation focused on sharing strategies for district-wide implementation of standardized assessments, while the latter focused on encouraging teachers to keep the spark of wonder alive and nurture the flame of imagination in the face of increasing pressures to prepare students for standardized tests.

At both conferences, one could find a variety of workshops and presenters - the tents are large and the voices varied - but the trends in education dominating the conversations are premised on defining a successful school experience as measured by performance on standardized tests such as the ACT or SAT. Evidence for this trend can be heard in the words of Doug Christiansen, chair of the board of trustees at the College Board (the makers of the SAT), who said that we need to stop thinking about the SAT as a single transaction and envision a series of such tests as playing a role throughout a student's "educational journey" (Gray, 2015). So although at large national conferences, as well as in the classrooms of schools across the country, one can find examples of educators honoring the imagination and nurturing the creativity of their students, it is increasingly considered the norm, the expectation, the purpose of

education to help students achieve high scores on assessments that measure students through quantitative means and standardized tests.

Posing a question like "What is the student experience of beauty in school?" may seem out of place in the current educational context, but this is precisely the question I want to explore (and to encourage other researchers and teachers to explore similar topics). I want to better understand the student experience of beauty because I fear that the current educational context does not welcome, nurture, or develop student interest in, or discernment of, beauty. Perhaps the current mood is so far away from the imaginative, the poetic, the metaphoric, that beauty is even perceived as inappropriate for serious consideration as a significant part of the curriculum. I hope to learn more about the current educational environment and the place of beauty in that milieu through my research.

It is my goal to better understand the perspective and experience of students regarding beauty. As the years roll by, the gulf between my perspective and my students' seems to widen. I read "Rip Van Winkle" or *Julius Caesar* with eyes so different from the students. I struggle to see through their eyes, to understand what they see, so I can help connect them to the text. Their questions, assumptions, confusion, and responses are a mystery to me. And this gap widens year after year as my familiarity with the texts grows, as my ability to appreciate art grows, as my power of literary analysis grows. But the world, the context, in which art like Shakespeare's and Irving's exists has also changed. Take as one example the stunning, ubiquitous, digital images that fill the world of students; surely that impacts their notions of beauty and their expectations of art. So I need to conduct this research project to better understand my students. I need to conduct this research to share with the profession the results of my exploration into the mind, perspectives, and experiences of students with beauty in school.

Defining "the experience of beauty"

In this section I explain exactly what I mean by the term "experience of beauty" as I used it in my research. I then elaborate upon four relevant characteristics to describe the concept more fully.

My use of the term "experience of beauty" generally signifies unique experiences prompted by an encounter with, engagement of, and reflection on some kind of artistic text, product or process (Chatterjee, 2014; Johnson, 1998; Luca-Marshal, 1980; Hobbs, 1977). My use of the term "experience of beauty" specifically echoes the term "synthetic experience" and "proleptic moment" described by Patrick Slattery (2013), the "aesthetic response" as described by Elizabeth Valance (1990), and the "aesthetic experience" as described by John Dewey (1934) and Maxine Greene (1995). Similarities and difference between these terms will be further explored in the literature review. By conducting this research, I hope to see the educational landscape through the eyes of students. I wonder if they have had experiences such as these in school, what they have been like, and what brought them about.

To be precise, when I wonder about the "experiences of beauty" students have had, I am wondering about aesthetic experiences that have both of the following qualities.

1. An experience that involves an encounter of, or interaction with, an "art object" (artifact, object, scene, poem, text, song, etc).
2. An experience that elicits one, some or all of the following reactions:
    a. evoked empathy,
    a. prompted reflection,
    b. triggered the imagination,
    c. provoked an emotional response,

d. elicited curiosity, awe or a sense of wonder,
e. sparked insight (into the inner world of the self or the world "out there"), or
f. aroused a new understanding or perspective of a profound, empowering or an unsettling nature.

Most likely such encounters are not structured as linear learning experiences, the results are not expected to be universal or predictable, and the teacher has not designed the experience to lead students to a single correct response, answer, or understanding. Rather, the event is probably structured to allow for a divergence of individual and unique expressions, responses, or reactions.

Free Play. My use of the term "experience of beauty" borrows from Kant's notion of *free play*. In encounters with beauty, the free play of the imagination and the understanding are set apart from other kinds of cognitive, rational judgments we make. But unlike Kant (1790), my concern is not with identifying a universal criteria or set of standards for this judgment. I am not concerned with discovering and articulating a universal taste that springs from a shared understanding, a *sensus communi*. Rather, I define taste as the ability to use the aesthetic senses, to perceive and receive beauty, to be attentive to the power of beauty. The role of the teacher must include the aim of sharpening and developing this ability to perceive beauty, to be receptive to the experience of beauty, to recognize, judge and appreciate beauty for oneself. As Maxine Greene (1995) noted, informed engagements with the arts is the most likely mode of releasing our students' imaginative capacity and giving it play. However, this won't happen automatically or naturally. "Simply being in the presence of art forms is not sufficient to occasion an aesthetic experience or to change a life" (Greene, 1995, p. 125).

Students need practice giving free play to their imaginations and their understanding; they need practice consciously participating in a work, practice noticing what is there to be noticed in the play, poem, or quartet, and practice actively entering a work perceptually, affectively, and cognitively. As John Dewey (1934) states, interactions with art grow our ability to *see*: "The moral function of art itself is to remove prejudice, do away with the scales that keep the eye from seeing, tear away the veils due to wont and custom, [and] perfect the power to perceive" (Dewey, 1934, p. 338). Since the free play of the imagination and the cognition allows us to see and perceive differently, attention ought to be paid to the student's experience of developing these gifts.

Elevation of the Soul. In "The Philosophy of Composition," Edgar Allan Poe (1846) states that Truth is the satisfaction of the intellect, Passion the excitement of the heart, and Beauty the pleasurable elevation of the soul. This sensibility is central to my definition of beauty. I share Poe's conviction that beauty is a matter of the soul, by which I mean it is a matter of the spirit, a matter that transcends what can be neatly counted or precisely measured or conveniently standardized. I mean those dimensions of our humanity that make us human. By beauty I am referring to that which "elevates the soul," that nearly ineffable, abstract, open-ended, mysterious thing - not the intellect, not the heart, but something more, something including both; not just a combination of the two, but an elevation of each to something more. It is the "pleasurable tingle" that signals and separates ordinary experiences from purely aesthetic ones according to Howard Gardner (the other three criteria being interest, memorability, and the desire to return).

Echoing Immanuel Kant (1790), when I refer to the experience of beauty, I refer to an experience that is subjective. I am trying to capture the nature of an observer's response to a work of art and I am concentrating on beauty as the way, the means, through which we respond

to art objects. I am not using the term to refer to beauty as something intrinsic to the properties of the objects themselves, nor am I trying to discover universal qualities or define strict criteria of the art object or the experience of creating it. My primary focus is on the participant's experience of beauty, not the form of beauty, as the term "experience of beauty" denotes.

Refusal to Control. By claiming the experience is subjective, it easily follows that the experience will be unique and individual and unpredictable. As Greene (1995) points outs, this focus on individual meaning is perhaps the most significant reason one has to justify finding a place for experiencing beauty in the curriculum today. "The refusal to control what is discovered as meaningful strikes traditional educators as at odds with their conception of norms... Indeed, this kind of refusal, which I see as essential, may well be at the root of certain administrators' preoccupation with national standards today" (Greene, 1995, p. 125). This refusal to control, this tolerance for an indeterminacy of result, reflects a postmodern orientation to curriculum - a topic I will return to, and a theme I will explore more completely, in the following pages.

Interaction. Following the path of modern movements away from concentrating on questions of form and concentrating instead on matters of experience, I am considering the art object loosely, as any object, text, or document, for instance, that invites an aesthetic response. I am not arguing, therefore, simply for a respect for art for art's sake. I am adopting Kant's terms that the thing (object, text, et al) that invites the response has purposiveness. By this I mean the thing has artistic intent rather than mere natural beauty. The thing has been conceived and created to provoke response; the thing reaches out to the observer. Therefore, in an experience of beauty as I use the term, things, such as art objects, screenplays, pictures, poems, literary texts, films, or any other number and variety of artistic creations, invite imaginative contemplation from an observer; these things, as Kant (1790) stated, are organized with a final purpose in mind.

However, defining the beauty of the art object is not the focus of my research; rather, the observer's experience is the focus. My definition of beauty aligns with that of Howard Gardner (2011): "beauty reveals itself in the course of an experience with an object" (p. 41). Art that invites contemplation, that has *purposiveness*, is only half the equation for an experience of beauty. The other half is hinted at in Kant's notion of *disinterestedness* and relates to the stance of the observer as interested, attentive, active. The observer must reach out, must respond, for a meaningful experience to occur. This is why the curriculum needs to honor the development of aesthetic sensitivities. An encounter with art, an aesthetic experience, an experience of beauty, if anything significant or meaningful is to occur, must happen as an interaction between the object and the viewer. In other words, the subject must be integrated with their environment, alert and attentive, because much, if not all, of our non-aesthetic experiences are often causally conditioned by the habits we take to them (Stroud, 2014). We simply focus our attention elsewhere and miss the aesthetic. We can engage the present moment skillfully, or mechanically or randomly. Therefore, an aesthetic attitude must be cultivated since any activity can be rendered aesthetic by a skillful deployment of the right orientation by a subject (Stroud, 2014). Our attitude, our habits, our orientation creates the outcome.

Moreover, the encounter is mutually impacting for both the observer and the observed. When I encounter art, I must attend to the moment, to the experience. I must wonder and care and attend; I must open myself up to the art. To use the terms I am proposing for my research, in an experience of beauty, the observer must attend to the beauty, respond to it, encounter it by opening oneself to it, and the beauty must invite, provoke, prompt a reaction. The experience is interactive since the observer sees again, sees differently, and the art object changes by being seen differently, anew. The observer changes and the thing being observed changes. When

attending to a work of art, both the experiencer and the object of experience have changed (Jackson, 1998, p. 5).

Importance of the Research to the Educational Community

In this section, divided into five parts, I explain the significance of my research for the educational community and argue for the importance, significance, and relevance of the topic and the study.

Nurture Human Aspiration. This is an important area of research for a number of reasons. Due to the increased emphasis on a curriculum geared toward quantifiable measurement of student achievement and the increased perception that the job of school is preparation for standardized tests, aspects of education that are founded on the imaginative, the speculative, the artistic, and the creative are sacrificed. As Herbert Kliebard (1992) points out, aspects of the curriculum that have to do with the arts and the humanities, subjects that have the power to "stir the imagination, enhance the appreciation of beauty, and disclose motives that actuate human behavior" have been hit with the steepest decline over the course of the twentieth century (cited in Slattery, 2013, p. 244). Kliebard warns that if the decline continues, artistic expression and appreciation will be "the province of a handful of sensitive souls" (cited in Slattery, 2013, p. 245). The irony, of course, is that those aspects of our culture, of any culture, that we consider hallmarks of human expression of experience and aspiration and achievement entail the arts (such as music, painting, sculpture and poetry), yet these are the same parts of the curriculum being pushed aside. Moreover, Patrick Slattery (2013) notes that modern curriculum development paradigms, with their emphasis on rational discourse, time on task, lesson implementation, and objective evaluation "discourage aesthetic experiences while elevating

mathematical computation, scientific methods, and reading comprehension in the core of the curriculum" (Slattery, 2013, p. 245).

Current educational philosophies and structures work against teachers and students trying to engage in releasing the imagination, a trend Slattery labels as a moral failure since they promote mere data transmission (Slattery, 2013, p. 252). Ultimately, this topic matters because nurturing our capacity to appreciate beauty, developing our sensitivity for aesthetic experiences, using our imagination, being open to and alert for moments of growth, insight and transformation, are integral to our humanity. Therefore, they should be integral to the place we call school.

Break Down Walls and Bridge Gulfs. Furthermore, the inclusion of the development of aesthetic sensibilities in the school curriculum through varied and plentiful exposure to aesthetic experiences is a crucial concern because of its power to help us understand each other. It bridges the gulf between souls. As John Dewey writes, no other means of communication can help us understand each other as powerfully and directly as art. Aesthetic experiences, like all experiences, move us in internal and external directions. First we encounter the work of art or find ourselves in a moment of artistic contemplation, and we see something in a new way. Then, we realize we have changed as a result of this new way of seeing, this insight, this new perspective. In turn, the thing being contemplated has changed as well. The power of aesthetic experience is to move us within as well as without. "In the end, works of art are the only media of complete and unhindered communication between man and man," Dewey wrote, "that can occur in a world full of gulfs and walls that limit community of experience" (Dewey, 1934, p. 109). We are in sore need of ways to break down walls that divide and to bridge gulfs that

separate individuals from each other. The school curriculum is a place where this should be occurring.

In addition to honoring that which is best in human achievement and integral to our humanity, and in addition to helping us to understand each other, the contemplation of beauty can help us understand ourselves better. The aesthetic experience brings us into the presence of an object outside ourselves, but it also brings us into contemplation of ourselves, our values, our experiences. Aesthetic contemplation not only contributes to the student's understanding by adding to his perception that of the viewpoint of the artist through interpretation, it also awakens his own awareness, strengthening his own unique perceptions and their value. As Jean Barsam Temple (1928) stated, "[The arts] interpret for him his present experience, and without that last there is no true educational process" (p. 231). This movement to look within is too often neglected in schools. The emphasis on intellectual analysis with which the educational process is obsessed is a fundamental weakness. Abstractions are accepted as realities. Temple cites Dewey as saying, "these principles cannot supply the demand of the soul for joy... only attention through art to the vivid but transient values of things can affect such refreshment" (p. 230). By seeking to understand the current educational scene by looking through the eyes of students and exploring their experience, my research is one small step to combat the erosion of aesthetic sensibilities, restore the contemplation of beauty to school, and provide refreshment for the soul.

Allow Students to Thrive. Kenneth Robinson (2009) provides evidence for the disturbing educational trends I have referred to. "In the United States, for example, more than 70 percent of school districts have cut back or eliminated arts programs because of No Child Left Behind" (p. 236) and according to the Government Accountability Office, individual states will spend between $1.9 billion and $5.3 billion each between 2002 and 2008 implementing tests

mandated by NCLB. The pressure to test leads to reinforcing the old hierarchy of traditional disciplines and the elimination of arts programs. It also leads to a greater emphasis on assessment, further eroding experiences of beauty (the artistic, the imaginative, the creative) in school, "the very things that make schools and students thrive" (p. 236). The problem is not the tests per se - used the right way, the data they provide can be essential to supporting and improving education, but the problem comes when "these tests become more than simply a tool of education and turn into the focus of it" (p. 237). Robinson calls for not just reforming education, but to transforming it. The transformation will occur not through standardizing it, but through personalizing it.

The kind of education Robinson envision aligns with what I refer to as experiences of beauty - building achievement on discovering the individual talents of each child and their passions through painting, music, drama and other forms of art and through other ways in which humans learn. Robinson sees the need for eliminating the traditional hierarchy of subjects which too often impedes the principle of dynamism; students need to see there is great skill and objectivity in the arts, just as there is passion and intuition at the heart of science. I share Robinson's assessment of the exigency facing education: too many students pass through education and have their natural talents marginalized or ignored. "The arts, sciences, humanities, physical education, languages, and math all have equal and central contributions to make to a student's education" (p. 247). My research will explore the assumptions and assessments Robinson and I are making. The work is important since it will contribute to ascertaining the need for the kind of transformation Robinson outlines.

Grow R-Directed Thinking. Whereas Ken Robinson (2009) applies his thoughts and ideas about creativity, imagination and empathy to the world of education, lecturer and best-

selling author Daniel Pink (2006) applies his thoughts and ideas about creativity, imagination and empathy to the world of business. In his book *A Whole New Mind: Why Right-Brainers Will Rule The World*, he uses a metaphor to explore two different forms of thinking or attitudes toward life: one approach is L-Directed, the other R-Directed. L-Directed thinking is characteristic of the left hemisphere - sequential, literal, functional, textual, and analytic. R-Directed thinking is characteristic of the right hemisphere - simultaneous, metaphorical, aesthetic, contextual, and synthetic. The former, ascendant in the Information Age, is exemplified by computer programmers, prized by hardheaded organizations, and emphasized in schools, the latter, underemphasized in the Information Age, is exemplified by creators and caregivers, shortchanged by organizations, and neglected in schools. However, Pink goes on to assert that, due to forces such as globalization, abundance, and automation, the importance of L-Directed Thinking is diminishing and the importance of R-Directed Thinking is ascendant. The R-directed aptitudes, such as "artistry, empathy, taking the long view, [and] pursuing the transcendent" (Pink, 2009, p. 27) will now, rather than be dismissed and disdained, increasingly determine who stumbles and who soars. L-Directed aptitudes are still necessary - but they are no longer sufficient.

Furthermore, Pink draws our attention to the tollbooths that have become important gate-keepers for entry into our meritocratic, middle-class society and that any American must pass through on his way to the land of knowledge work - the PSAT, the SAT, the GMAT, the LSAT, the MCAT. All are instruments that measure what is essentially L-Directed Thinking, requiring logic and analysis, and, as exercises, linear, sequential, and bounded by time. We live in "an SAT-ocracy - a regime in which access to the good life depends on the ability to reason logically, sequentially, and speedily" (Pink, 2009, p. 29).

Preparing for Tomorrow. My research into Beauty (my term for that which Pink labels R-Directed Thinking) is timely and relevant. Ironically, when I talk to administrators at the school district where I work about the topic of my research, many think it is hardly relevant at all, hardly serious educational research, and of minimal importance or consequence. (Interestingly, whereas as administrators tend to react dismissively, teachers react with affirmation, interest, and encouragement.) But as the comments from Pink show, we do our students a disservice if we do not at least provide them with experiences in school that are *both* L-Directed (sequential, literal, functional, textual, and analytic) *and* R-Directed (experiences that involve artistry, empathy, taking the long view, and pursuing the transcendent). If, however, Pink's prognostications are correct, we are actually putting our students and our nation in peril by preparing them for the world of yesterday and not the world of tomorrow. My research will explore the experience of students in school to determine their familiarity with Beauty and with R-Directed Thinking; this work matters because artistry, empathy, and transcendence should not be dismissed, disdained, neglected or short-changed at any school, in any age.

Personal Importance of the Research Question

In this section, divided into two parts, I try to articulate the importance and significance of the research topic to me personally. I completely turned myself over to the topic of this research, opened myself to it, because the experience of beauty is intrinsically meaningful, profoundly intriguing, and innately consequential to my perception of myself and the world. In other words, I try to explain why all of this matters to me personally and I try to show the extent to which these ideas are a part of who I am and what I care about.

Constantly Growing. I grew up in a household in which Mom and Dad had a clear and uncompromising vision of Life. Although beautiful, loving, devoted parents, they were as ardent

in their Catholicism as they were steadfast in their conservatism. I grew up in a staunch Republican household in which Archbishop Fulton Sheen and Barry Goldwater were iconic figures from the recent past, and Ronald Reagan and Rush Limbaugh were revered in the turbulent present. My six brothers and sisters all attended the Catholic elementary school down the street where Dad served as the president of the school board. I was raised in an environment in which Mom and Dad knew the Truth. Republicans and Democrats, for instance, did not just differ - one was right and the other wrong. Catholicism was not one of many religions, it was the One Way. To this day, I still feel awkward insofar as I do not have the same absolute conviction about anything as my parents and siblings seemed to have about everything.

Now, just days away from my fiftieth birthday, I am, finally, more at peace with this difference. I realize that whatever view one holds is informed only by what one knows at that time and from that perspective. There are always more perspectives and more information beyond what you see or know. Rather than seeing this proclivity to always be cautious in my claims, to always hesitate to assert or embrace a Truth, as a weakness, I see this tendency, this skepticism, as a strength. I embrace it. It's a postmodern notion, but also a pragmatic one. As William Doll (1980) states, "Knowledge is that which we create - interactively, dialogically, conversationally - always within our culture and its language" (Doll, 1980, p. 136). Due to the nature of reality, to understand the world and make sense of it, we need to employ a process (and devise a curriculum) that goes beyond the factual and into the interpretative, a process that promotes dialogue, a process that is iterative, interactive, and interpretive. We need creative imagination and narrative interpretation and a sense of indeterminacy in addition to logical definition. These ideas provide me with the clarity and understanding, the *self*-understanding, that leads to confidence and self-acceptance.

In addition to Doll, I also find illumination in reading John Dewey's (1930) essay "What I Believe," in which he claims that a search for a single, inclusive good is doomed to failure. Such a stance runs counter to many of the messages of the home in which I was raised and the society in which I live. John Dewey's essay speaks to me in a very personal way.

> Such happiness as life is capable of comes from the full participation of all our powers in the endeavor to wrest from each changing situation of experience its own full and unique meaning. Faith in the varied possibilities of diversified experience is attended with the joy of constant discovery and of constant growing. (p. 25)

Through Dewey I realized that each situation provides me with new experiences that, by the nature of interaction, compels and produces change in me. Being open to, receptive of, and attentive to these experiences is essential for growth.

Challenging Convention. Dewey's willingness to challenge conventional thinking and to question the status quo is even more pronounced in his essay "Pragmatic America." In this essay, Dewey (1927) explains that the worth of beliefs and thoughts can be tested by looking at their consequences on human welfare. This drove Dewey, in the name of truth and love, to fight against scholasticism and dogmatism in all its forms, and to challenge easy, sweeping generalizations wherever he found them. Dewey credits his mentor William James as saying one needs to get down from noble aloofness and into the muddy stream of concrete things. For Dewey, this call to pay attention to details, to particulars, to the mud of the concrete, fosters "a sense of the worth of communication of what is known" (Dewey, 1927, p. 30), and for me, it points to a research methodology that will lead to getting up close to a problem, to people, and to experience. I want to be down in the mud of the concrete, not flitting in the skies of the remote or

the Ideal. I am open to change and receptive to what experience can teach me. I am ready to challenge the status quo.

Another idea that informs my perspective on curriculum, research and life came to me by way of Elliot Eisner (1967). In "Educational Objectives - Help or Hindrance?" Eisner explains that in some subject areas, such as math or science, specific and precise operations and behaviors can be stated, but in other subject areas, especially the arts, that kind of specificity is frequently "not possible, and when possible may not be desirable" (Eisner, 1967, p. 554). In some subjects, uniformity of response is desirable, but in the arts or subjects where novel or creative responses are desired, "the particular behaviors to be developed cannot easily be identified. Here curriculum and instruction should yield behaviors and products which are unpredictable" (Eisner, 1967, p. 554-555). I cite these words directly from Eisner because, in today's educational climate, they are heretical. I don't hear very many people talking this way in education today!

I embrace the idea that there is something essential about disciplines like art and literature that defy the kind of quantification that contemporary movements to measure, to dissect, threaten to destroy. As Eisner says, "The end achieved ought to be something of a surprise to both teacher and pupil" (Eisner, 1967, p. 554). This idea is a beautiful one to me. Sometimes a socially defined, quantifiable standard cannot be applied and a human, qualitative judgment needs to be made. "It is only in a metaphoric sense," Eisner says, "that one can measure the extent to which a student has been able to produce an aesthetic object or an expressive narrative" (Eisner, 1967, p. 556). To impose standards or rules, the qualities of the product would need to be known beforehand, but, when evaluating art, the product being judged is unique, and must be judged according to those unique properties and in relation to the evaluator's experiences and sensibilities. Eisner reminds us that the image of the educated man held in highest esteem is not

one amenable to measurement; we think of civilized societies as those cultures that have created great works of beauty, paintings, sculptures, buildings, poetry. We need to develop those capabilities in school that are measured in metaphoric and poetic terms - curiosity, inventiveness and insight.

The drive to measure learning has only grown over the decades. James Nehring, writing in the August 26, 2015 issue of *Education Week*, surveys an educational landscape in which human judgement plays an even smaller part in assessment. To achieve the goal of objective measurement and precise, scientific procedure, Nehring sees the marginalization, even the elimination, of human judgment from the evaluation process as a matter of course. But not everything that counts can be counted. "Human judgment is poison to accountability," Nehring writes, "but it is the basic ingredient for assessment of learning" (Nehring, 2015, p. 19). Despite Nehring's concession that human judgment is anathema to the former but essential to the latter, one could argue that human judgment is crucial to *any* situation involving accounting or assessing. Therefore, like Nehring, I want to encourage research into other ways of teaching and other ways of thinking about assessment that do not aim to fall within the bounds of current assessment practices predicated on standardization and measurement. Nehring rightly embraces and celebrates human judgment as a method of evaluation and cites the legal system as a model. Through juries we have recourse to the collective judgment of informed adults to address complex ethical issues and to resolve complicated arguments.

Martha Nussbaum also looks to the law as model for more humanistic ways to evaluate and judge. In *Poetic Justice* (1995), Nussbaum explains that judges need to be equipped with technical legal knowledge and capabilities, but also, in order to be fully rational, they need "fancy and sympathy" as well as a capacity for humanity, without which "their impartiality will

be obtuse and their justice blind" (Nussbaum, 1995, p. 121). I offer this example of the law as relying on human judgment to demonstrate that there are myriad ways to evaluate and to assess, not only the monolithic model currently dominating education. Although not directly addressing education, Nussbaum's words have a strong relevance to the topic of assessment in education:

> When simplified conceptions of the human being are in widespread use for predictive purposes, it is all the more important to keep reminding ourselves of the richer picture of human life to which such simplified models are ultimately accountable. (p. 47)

My fear is that since rich concepts like Beauty are difficult to measure with simple models, they are at least shunted aside if not entirely abandoned. The desire for, and use of, simpler models with more predictive value results in simplified conceptions of students and a narrowing of the curriculum.

The Form, Style and Spirit of the Research

In pursuing the research, to insure the validity of the findings and the trustworthiness of the conclusions, I generally followed a traditional process in which the inquiry is intentional, systematic, and purposeful, and an organized process of collecting the data in which the researcher seeks to answer a question, solve a problem, or understand a phenomenon (Efron and Ravid, 2013, pp. 2-3). In this section, divided into five parts, I describe the particular characteristics of the specific research I conducted that make it unique and explain why these qualities fit the nature and subject of the research. I also show how they reveal my own perspectives and values.

Following the advice of Hannah Arendt (1968), I plumb the depths of memory and wrest thought fragments from the past, and, after prying them loose, gathering them in, and bringing them up, treat these crystallized forms, these memories, these stories, as pearls, rich and strange,

that illuminate the present (Arendt, 1968, pp. 50-51). In style I revel in allusion, metaphor and autobiography, following in the footsteps of Maxine Greene (2001). In method I practice phenomenology, following the lead of Max van Manen (2014). In spirit I follow John Dewey's (1934) lead, writing with energy and dynamism. And along the way I hermeneutically inquire into meaning and deploy words playfully, critically and imaginatively to interpret my life and the world around me, seeking sources of struggle and working through them. The aim of my research is not merely to transfer old bones from one grave to another; I want to breathe life into an old, complex problem. I want to explore the experience of Beauty in school.

Qualitative. Considering the nature of my inquiry, it is only natural that the form of my research is qualitative. Qualitative research has a strong orientation to impact and to transform the world (Creswell, 2013; Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011). Qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them (Efron & Ravid, 2013). Qualitative research uses the assumptions of an interpretative or theoretical framework to address the meaning people give to a social or human problem. The approach to the inquiry is emerging, the collection of data is from a natural setting and is sensitive to the people and places under study, and the data analysis is both inductive and deductive, and the aim is to attempt to identify patterns or themes. The final product includes the voices of participants; the reflexivity of the researcher; and a complex and detailed description, understanding and interpretation of the problem. According to Creswell, we use qualitative research when we want to empower individuals, write in a literary and flexible style, understand the contexts or settings of the participants, and when quantitative measures and statistical analyses, which tend to level all individuals to a mean and overlook their uniqueness, just do not fit the problem (Creswell, 2013, p. 48).

Opposed to the tightly prefigured design of quantitative research, the design of qualitative research is emergent and evolving (Creswell, 2013; Efron & Ravid, 2013; Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011). This allows for an inductive, bottom-up approach to be used for the analysis of the data and identification of themes and patterns. Qualitative research also usually relies more heavily on interviews as a strategy for data collection than quantitative. Qualitative studies emerge from broad open-ended questions asked in interviews, present rich narrative description of the subjective meanings individuals ascribe to their experiences, and focus on a holistic understanding of the complex interdepencies that distinguish the environment being examined (Efron & Ravid, 2013, p. 41). This is a natural fit for my research since the focus is on the perspectives, meanings and views of the participants.

While qualitative research allows for a greater degree of reflection on and interpretation of the data by the researcher, it requires a degree of objectivity on his or her part. This is accomplished through allowing the researcher to position himself or herself in relation to the study through reflexivity, which allows the researcher to explicitly acknowledge one's background and its impact on one's stance in relation to the research, and to limit any implicit bias or interest. Furthermore, whereas quantitative research strives to present tight cause-effect relationships through its findings, qualitative research allows for a more holistic and less prescriptive perspective in which the researcher explores the larger picture and admits the complexity of factors, perspectives and interactions involved (Creswell, 2013, p. 45-47). Whereas natural science and behavioral social sciences prefer detached observation, controlled experiment, and mathematical measurement, human science prefers description, interpretation, self-reflective and critical analysis. While biology tends to taxonomize natural phenomena and physics tends to explain the behavior of things, literature aims to explicate the meaning of human

phenomena and phenomenological studies of the lifeworld aim to understand the lived structures of meanings (van Manen, 1990, p. 4)

I set out to see what I would discover as I searched for the answer to the question of the appreciation of beauty in school and as I wrestled with the topic of understanding the student experience of beauty. My writing reveals my discoveries, the result of struggling and wrestling with the topic. I am like Menelaus wrestling Proteus, holding on to "the old man of the sea" as he shapeshifts from seal to lion to serpent, only thinking, "Don't let go!" (Homer, 700 BC, IV:412).

Speculative. The spirit of my dissertation is inquisitive and tentative, like that of an essay. Epistemologically, the essay is a way to know, to think. Although held suspect from those demanding a more traditional, objectively verifiable method, it is the strength of the essay, as Theodor Adorno (1984) states, to reflect "a childlike freedom that catches fire, without scruple, on what others have already done... Luck and play are essential to the essay" (Adorno, 1984, p. 152). Adorno goes on to claim that the essay "gently defies the ideals of *clara et distincta perceptio* [a clear and distinct conception] and of absolute certainty" (Adorno, 1984, p. 161). In addition to having fun and, hopefully, some luck, my research and my writing will reflect this same spirit of catching fire from the inspiration and ideas of others and to avoid the posture of certainty.

As a means of inquiry, the essay provides insights that are, as William Schubert (1980) writes, "integrative, imaginative, and speculative leaps of interpretation that are still soundly grounded in a variety of other research traditions" (Schubert, 1980, p. 64). He goes on to claim that, in many cases, "giving free reign to the insightful imagination is the best way to advance knowledge" (Schubert, 1980, p. 64-65). The speculative essay offers this freedom and this potential. I am sympatico with Schubert, and with Phillip Lopate (2013) who wrote in the essay

titled "The Essay, an Exercise in Doubt" that his mind is filled with "yes, buts" and "so whats?" and other skeptical rejoinders. Lopate sees the essay as a meadow inviting contradiction, paradox, irresolution, and self-doubt.

I dwell on these ruminations about the essay to illustrate that the orientation of the essay in spirit is a good fit for my research topic because it not only relies on intellectual rigor, it relies on the imagination, the playful, and the personal. Furthermore, the orientation of the essayist fits my personal disposition and my orientation to research: the pursuit of knowledge is a speculative endeavor in which claims are made tentatively and cautiously, and a free endeavor in which questions are considered from many perspectives and problems are best viewed from many angles. In this study, as I come to know whatever awaits me, I follow the example of other prominent essayists such as Michel Montaigne (1580) and Ralph Waldo Emerson (1841) - questioning, searching, seeking, and wrestling.

Phenomenological. In her review of historical trends in education over the last 100 years, Gloria Ladson-Billings (2016) notes that the liberal arts (English, humanities, etc) and fine arts are fighting for space in the curriculum. Instead of a focus on rich literature, the arts, and other creative forms of learning, cognitive processes reflect a more skills-based approach. Academic rationalism is what students typically experience in honors and advanced placement courses as well as in elite private school. Ladson-Billings (2016) wonders if perhaps the real future of the curriculum among education researchers will be to defend the right for the curriculum to be fluid and changing rather than fixed and rigid, and if perhaps it is time to once again reaffirm John Dewey's notion of a curriculum that emerges from the experiences of the learners. I see the educational landscape from the same perspective as Ladson-Billings and I have the same questions. The research I conduct turns exactly in the direction she suggests: I turn

to learners themselves to better understand their experiences and to see what emerges. Phenomenology is the natural tool to choose to conduct the research.

James Baldwin (1955) said in the introduction to *Notes of a Native Son* that he sees it as a part of the business of the writer to "examine attitudes, to go beneath the surface, to tap the source" (p. 6). That sentiment captures my feelings about the business of the researcher; it is the business of the phenomenologist to go to "the things themselves" - *zu den Sachen!* (van Manen, 2014, p. 50). To turn to the things themselves is to (re)awaken to the things of the world, to (re)learn our awareness of experience. But unlike any other method of research, phenomenology strives to capture the essence of that experience without altering it or interpreting it; it strives to (re)present experience without filters or lens that would distort or alter the phenomena we are seeking to understand. According to Maura Dowling (2005), the aim of phenomenology is "the rigorous and unbiased study of things as they appear in order to arrive at an essential understanding of human consciousness and experience" (p. 132).

Phenomenology, inquiring into what is primary in human experience, presents descriptions of other people's perceptions in such a way as to appeal directly to the perceptions of others. Since human experience begins in the personal and inward perceptions of individual lifeworlds, phenomenology investigates and unearths, and then re-presents and describes, those perceptions, those lifeworlds. To communicate what is primary within the experience of individuals, phenomenologists seek to appeal directly to others with the best possible examples and in as pure or original a way as possible. Metaphorical communication allows for a straightforward expression of primary experience through a creative medium and "lies at the heart of phenomenological inquiry itself and is among the most basic of curricular tasks" (Willis,

1991, p. 182). Phenomenology, then, is a poeticizing activity, a heedful, mindful wondering about the project of life, of living, of what it means to be human (van Manen, 1990, p. 12).

Reflexivity. Furthermore, to better understand the experiences of others, I do as Max van Manen (1990) advises and suspend my own biases and beliefs in the reality of the natural world in order to study "the essential structures of the world." This process is accomplished through the use of the *reduction*, a phenomenological device in which one overcomes subjective or private feelings, preferences, inclinations, or expectations and strips away theories, scientific conceptions and thematizations to clear away what overlays the phenomena and prevents one from fully seeing the experience as it is lived through. I embrace this form of research because it reflects my fundamental beliefs about how to "be" in the world. My understanding of being-in-the-world reflects Heidegger's beliefs about how to "be" in the world, which, as Lukenchuk explains, "is not about the way we know the world, but the way we *are*... the question of being, thus, acquires ontological priority over all other questions" (Lukenchuk, 2013, p. 25). To "be" in this sense means being open to, attentive to, and involved in human affairs in an authentic and fundamental way.

Hermeneutic. This study follows many of the conventions of hermeneutics. The word comes from the Greek *hermeneuein* and means "to interpret" (Lukenchuk, 2013, p. 24). The term is linked to the Greek god Hermes, messenger of the gods and mediator to humanity. Hermes was also a trickster and a troublemaker. Whereas Apollo was venerated for his glory, Hermes was infamous for his impudence. His role as the deliverer of messages for the gods sheds light on why the field of hermeneutics bears his name, but his devious and mischievous personality is just as apt. After all, hermeneutics mediates and clarifies meaning, but it also it also challenges convention, perception, and authority. Hermeneutics engages in the activity of interpreting our

words, our texts, our lives, and all the world around us. As a mode of inquiry it is ubiquitous, powerful, creative and generative. Slattery (2013) calls hermeneutics a "very delicate and controversial art and science of interpretation" (Slattery, 2013, e-glossary).

Hermeneutics begins with the premise that the full truth of things can never be the conscious property of any one person or group and can never be settled once and for all. All interpretations are contingent, emerging, and relative. Moreover, rather than seeing human understanding as a linear, sequential, evolutionary progression, hermeneutics pictures our understanding more like a complex, clustered rhizome, with occasional bursts of illumination, not along a plane and not in any patterned direction. "Interpretation is never final," Lukenchuk (2013) writes, "and the process of understanding does not result in finite and objective truth" (Lukenchuk, 2013, p. 26).

The Hermeneutic Imagination. Edmund Short (1991) identifies characteristics of hermeneutic writing, although, he notes, it is impossible to establish a single best method since *what* is being investigated holds part of the answer to *how* it should be explored. Good interpretative research is marked not by how closely a specific method is adhered to, but in the degree it can open up what is being investigated. As Slattery (2013) notes, hermeneutic interpretation is "more a case of playing or dancing or ruminating... than the application of methods" (Slattery, 2013, p 137). Nonetheless, Short presents four requirements of the hermeneutic imagination that prove fruitful as a means to find new lines of research and a means to explore the human life world. First, it requires a deep attentiveness to language, words, their use and meaning. Second, it requires a deepening of one's sense of the basic interpretability of life itself; deconstructing what is going on; searching for alternative, creative ways of thinking and acting; and shaking loose our own dogmatic, culturally predetermined ways of

understanding our daily experience. Third, it requires a willingness to forget oneself to find oneself, an ability to situate oneself in the midst of the story in which one exists and read that story from inside and out, an interest in the question of human meaning and of how we might make sense of our lives in such a way that life can go on. Fourth, hermeneutic inquiry requires creating meaning, not merely reporting on it, and making proposals about the world with the aim of deepening our collective understanding of it. Hermeneutics ultimately opens up possibilities for ourselves and our shared future.

Due to its engagement with language, its focus on interpretation, its creative and generative impulses, hermeneutics is a natural fit for the style and spirit of my research since I aim to challenge conventional thinking and to provoke change in the status quo. Hermeneutics is the right tool for accomplishing that kind of task. Besides, it is a kind of thinking I strive to practice and a kind of writing I enjoy.

Hermeneutic Phenomenology: the Best Fit. In strict terms, phenomenology limits itself to a pure description of lived experience, the goal being to let something show itself. However, the aim of hermeneutics is to interpret experience by analysis through - and as if it were - "text" (van Manen, 1990, p.25). In other words, phenomenology points *to*, it names, but hermeneutics points *out*, it mediates. The result of this distinction is that one could argue that hermeneutics conceptually falls outside the bounds of phenomenology. The practice of hermeneutic phenomenology, however, argues that the act of describing is already a form of mediating, a form of explaining, and that a phenomenological text, by its nature as text, is an interpretation (Willis, 1991; van Manen, 1990). In the research I conduct, I follow the lead of other hermeneutic phenomenologists and augment the descriptive drive of phenomenology (to let the thing show itself) with the interpretative power of hermeneutics (to mediate meaning) with the

aim of better understanding the essence of the lived experience. In the text of this study, I include the interpretive function of hermeneutics in my use of the term phenomenology, and rely on it to more fully interpret the life experience by treating it as text and presenting it through text, linguistic symbol, metaphor, anecdote, and other literary, poetic and linguistic devices.

Personal Importance of the Research Method

In this section, part elaboration and part summary, I describe how the method of the research reflects something of my *ontology* (my understanding of the nature of my existence, my understanding of my very being) and something of my *epistemology* (my ways of seeing, knowing, perceiving; my ways of understanding the world around me), both of which developed in surprising ways.

Teaching English for over twenty-five years has proven to be immensely rewarding and immensely challenging. My goal is to excite, entice and engage students through literature. My hope is to expose them to great literature so as to enrich their lives, their experience, their being. Literature is a way of knowing, a way of encountering the world, a way of living. But it is not easy to "teach" a poem or story or novel to students if what you are aiming for is a visceral response, an appreciative response, a response of the heart. And when we talk of poems and stories and novels, how can we not talk of the heart? There is an intellectual aspect to art, of course, but art moves us in a way that mathematics or science often do not. Art speaks in metaphor - which is not an inferior language to linear, logical, mathematical language; indeed, one can argue that metaphor underlies all thinking, as a bedrock underlies any firm foundation. Thinking in metaphor precedes and underpins thinking in mathematical, logical terms. William Doll (1980) put it this way:

> There is another, complementary mode of thought to the logical, analytic, scientific - this is the metaphorical, narrative, hermeneutical... Metaphors are generative; they help us see what we don't see. Metaphors are open, heuristic, dialogue-engendering. Logic is definitional; it helps us see more clearly what we already see. (p. 169)

George Lakoff (1980) puts it this way: "Metaphor is pervasive in everyday life, not just in language but in thought and action. Our ordinary conceptual system, in terms of which we both think and act, is fundamentally metaphoric in nature" (Lakoff, 1980, p. 3). Since our conceptual systems are central to defining our everyday realities, and since our conceptual systems are metaphorically structured, it is of immense significance to acknowledge that metaphor is far more than just a matter of language.

Phenomenology acknowledges and accepts, indeed relies on, just this sort of language as part of the research method. George Willis (1991) states that "phenomenological inquiry is at heart an artistic process" (Willis, 1991, p. 178), and Max van Manen (1990) explains that the goal of research in the form of a phenomenological reflective text is not to present findings, but "to do a reading (as a poet would) of a text that shows what it teaches" (van Manen, 1990, p. 153). Furthermore, he explains that phenomenologists often use literary sources (poetry, novels, stories, plays, etc) as case material and as textual resources for phenomenological writing, as well as art (painting, sculpture, music, movies, etc) and other visual, tactile, auditory and kinetic texts (van Manen, 1990, p. 74). And why not? Numbers express a perspective of reality, a certain kind of truth, and so does art. Art expresses truth, captures it, transfigures it. Art reveals reality too. In this study, phenomenology allows me to explore and express perspectives on life and truth and reality. The tools of the phenomenologist allow me to wrestle, to struggle, to grapple with the research question I confront: what is the student experience of beauty in school?

Phenomenology places the focus of exploration on experience. The phenomenologist seeks to discover memories, stories, anecdotes, associations, to discover the essence (*eidos*) of an idea, concept, or experience - in a word - the phenomenon. This focus, this orientation on others, is one of the reasons this method best suits my question and my nature. I am curious to know how teachers experience beauty, but even more so, I want to better understand how students experience beauty, what it means to them, what role it plays in their lives at school. To return to a theme stated early, I have struggled to teach English. The struggle, the challenge, comes down significantly to a fundamental concept: the notion of Beauty. Beauty is a radical notion. Radical, from the Latin *radix*, means root or source. I wonder if it is a struggle to intrigue, excite and captivate students with artistic works in school because of the fundamental nature of Beauty. It is elusive, personal, and ephemeral. It is individual, idiosyncratic, and variable.

An example will help explain the struggle. Today I discussed Washington Irving's "Rip van Winkle" (1820) with my students. I marvel at Irving's prose. I savor a sentence such as this one, in which Irving describes the majesty and mystery of the Catskill Mountains:

> When the weather is fair and settled, they are clothed in blue and purple, and print their bold outlines on the clear evening sky, but, sometimes, when the rest of the landscape is cloudless, they will gather a hood of gray vapors about their summits, which, in the last rays of the setting sun, will glow and light up like a crown of glory.

I encounter these lines with awe and wonder. They are beautiful - to me. Do the students read with the same pace, posture, and attitude as I? Do they attend to the text with the same care? Their eyes roll over the words, the sentence is lost in the fog of the rest of the text, a sea of words that they sail over in a rush to be "done." Our stances differ, and so to does what we see.

I will provide another example, and present this one in the form of a narrative. A teacher sits in the back of a darkened classroom. A film version of *Julius Caesar* is projected on the front wall in full-color and stereo. Having read this particular scene in-class together, and having discussed the nuances and subtleties of the language, and having explored various ways to interpret and stage the text, and having examined some of the profound ideas being explored, the students and teacher watch the spectacle before them. The teacher's eyes fill with tears and his heart, literally, aches a bit with the intensity and beauty of the words and images. The students, however, sit as if dazed, cow-eyed, insensate, unmoved, and bored. His heart aches; it aches with empathy for the characters, it aches in awe of the art, and it aches in cathartic rapture. It also aches because the students do not share his experience, do not respond the same way, do not see the Beauty.

Are seeds being planted? Will the students grow into an appreciation of Shakespeare's plays years from now? Did the teacher fail to create an environment conducive to appreciation of the art of Irving's short stories? Did the teacher neglect to frame these experiences so that the students would apprehend the Beauty? Did the art fail to move the students because they have been conditioned by school not to think in terms of Beauty? Have their skills of appreciation been dulled over years of neglect? Has school stifled their innate drive to appreciate Beauty? Have they learned over the years that that kind of thinking doesn't happen here, in this place, in school?

Research Question and Goals

Having provided an explanation of the context for the research, discussed the rationale for the study, provided personal background, and previewed the methodology and the methods at

the center of the work, in this section I outline the specific focus of the research I conducted, the exact questions I sought to answer, and the precise goals I hoped to achieve.

The goals for this study are to explore the perceptions and attitudes that students have regarding school as a place to appreciate beauty, to understand the needs of students regarding school as a place that develops their aesthetic sensibilities, and to examine the essence of beauty in the lived experience of students in school. To accomplish these goals, the questions guiding the study are:

Research Question.

- What is the student experience of beauty in school?

Subquestions.

- What meaning do high school students ascribe to beauty?
- What experiences come to mind when students think of beauty?
- What expectations do students have of school as a place to experience beauty?
- How does school foster or inhibit the development of aesthetic sensibilities, such as appreciating beauty, being attuned to art, and being open to moments of transformation or convergence?

What I Hope for as a Result of Conducting this Research.

In this section I express an imaginative hopefulness tempered by a sober understanding of reality regarding what the results of the research project could be.

I believe that I may really be onto something here. Is Beauty a radical notion? An essential concept? Perhaps our neglect of explicitly including Beauty (appreciation of, understanding of) in the curriculum is a fundamental flaw we need to address. The work certainly seems relevant and timely. In an age of unprecedented standardization and

measurement, an age in which results need to be quantified and evidence of student achievement presented in tangible, numerical, objectively verifiable ways, a concern with Beauty seems not only out of place, I have no doubt that to many it seems downright farcical at best and heretical at worst. But to many others, I am sure research in this area will be welcome, reassuring, long-overdue, and invigorating. Many teachers crave a profession, a calling, that allows them to reach students on an emotional and a visceral level that transcends and supersedes what much of their professional directives compel them to do. Teachers' time is filled with meeting objectives and assessing students in ways that have little to do with reaching the kind of realms that I assert are directly within, or a neighborly distance to, the realm of Beauty.

I fully expect my research to serve as a platform, as groundwork, for me to conduct further research. I want to write, to publish, to spread the word, and I think campaigning for, advertising the importance of, spreading the good news about, bringing beauty into the curriculum is a message that I can endorse with my mind, my heart, and my soul. I believe there is a need for this message. Conversations about curriculum are dominated by discussions of relatively narrow goals; I believe many teachers, students, and parents would welcome more attention paid to such domains as creativity, autobiography, imagination, and speculation. In a word: beauty.

The kind of educational experiences I am arguing for would run counter to popular notions and expectations in education today. I imagine a classroom in which there is more room for students to breathe, to experience art as art, beauty as beauty, truth as truth - in effect, an aesthetic rather than an analytic orientation. To illustrate the contrast between these two orientations, let us juxtapose Ulysses from Shakespeare's (1602) play *Troilus and Cressida* , with the speaker from Walt Whitman's (1865) poem "When I Heard the Learn'd Astronomer".

Ulysses delivers a monologue to the other Greek commanders in which he describes the necessity of following degrees of authority in the social world and the military ranks. He offers as evidence the very laws of nature in which degree brings and maintains order to an otherwise chaotic and inchoate universe:

> The heavens themselves, the planets and this centre
>
> Observe degree, priority and place,
>
> Insisture, course, proportion, season, form,
>
> Office and custom, in all line of order. (1.3)

These thoughts reflect the outlook of one who seeks to measure and to quantify. And there is, no doubt, a time and place for such degree. But such an outlook is not always the best perspective to take - it certainly is not the only one. For example, the speaker in Whitman's poem describes that, after attending a lecture on astronomy in which proofs and figures are arranged in columns and he is shown charts and diagrams to add, divide and measure the heavens, he becomes tired and sick...

> Till rising and gliding out I wander'd off by myself,
>
> In the mystical moist night-air, and from time to time,
>
> Look'd up in perfect stillness at the stars. (6-8)

The astronomer is of a like-mind with Ulysses, but the speaker of the poem basks in the presence, the beauty, of nature. The former experience is analytic; he seeks to quantify, but the latter experience is ineffable, magical, transcendent. His experience is an aesthetic one.

In "Self-Reliance," Ralph Waldo Emerson (1841) wonders "What is the nature and power of that science-baffling star, without parallax, without calculable element, which shoots a ray of beauty even into trivial and impure actions, if the least mark of independence appear?"

(Emerson, 1841, p. 140). He ponders the nature of beauty as such that, if allowed just a bit of independence, it elevates the trivial and impure. What would be required of a curriculum built on his premise that beauty flourishes in independence? Has the existing curriculum in many schools become trivial as a result of aiming for mere performance on standardized tests? If the existing curriculum stifles teachers from teaching creatively and students from exhibiting their creativity, then allowing students and teachers more freedom from standards and assessments that use quantitative means to measure growth and achievement is an example of allowing for a ray of independence.

My feelings about my research are a lot like Kurt Vonnegut's feelings about his book *Slaughterhouse Five* (1969). Vonnegut tells the reader in chapter one that, just as an anti-glacier book will not stop glaciers, his book is an anti-war book; he will write it, but the wars will keep coming (Vonnegut, 1969, p. 3). That is the mood I am in as I conduct this research; it is an anti-teach-only-what-one-can-quantify-and-measure study. I realize that the forces urging quantification and measurement above all else will hardly be slowed by my work - but I embrace the effort to try.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

Introduction - Crossing the Threshold

In this section I take the reader on a journey and survey the landscape surrounding the topic of the research. Generally following a chronological path, I focus on the evolution of the concepts "beauty," "aesthetics," and "the experience of beauty" to show how my research fits in with the existing philosophical, historical and curricular milieu. The section culminates with an explanation of what I learned about beauty, the gap in the literature that the research fills, and why research about the appreciation of beauty in school is worth doing.

Whenever I thought about exploring the historical and philosophical evolution of the concepts "beauty," "aesthetics," and "the experience of beauty," an image kept recurring to me. Try as I might, I could not help feeling like the traveler in Robert Frost's poem (1923) who stops by a wood on a snowy evening and momentarily watches it fill up with snow. "The woods are lovely, dark and deep," the intrepid rider tells us, "but I have promises to keep and miles to go before I sleep" (Frost, 1923). Reviewing the literature for this study was an enormous task, and like that traveler, I was hesitant to pause, to listen, to appreciate the surroundings. Not only did I too have places to go, but the task was daunting. Nonetheless, I took the plunge, resolved to "cross the first threshold" as Joseph Campbell (1949) would say, and explored the lovely and deep literature that informs much of our current understanding of beauty, aesthetics, and the experience of beauty.

Cutting across political, philosophical, cultural and curricular boundaries, discussions of "beauty," "aesthetics," and "the experience of beauty" have filled volumes over the years, sometimes focusing on the form of the art object and its characteristics, sometimes focusing on

the unique sensibilities of the observer or the impact of the art on the observer, other times focusing on a coherent system of universal criteria by which to make judgements of art and beauty. Philosophically, questions of beauty occupy a place among the classical trinity of virtues, namely, beauty (aesthetics), goodness (ethics), and truth (epistemology), and as such were considered fundamental to understanding reality and navigating our way through life. Artistically, the term aesthetics originally arose to rather narrowly refer to the tasteful appreciation of beauty in art, but has since expanded to reflect a way of perceiving the ordinary events and the everydayness of life. Educationally, the importance of cultivating the aesthetic sensibilities of students through encounters with art and through educational experiences that nurtured a sense of wonder was clearly articulated by John Dewey and championed by Maxine Greene and Louise Rosenblatt. Politically, questions of beauty and the formation of aesthetic perception are understood as powerful tools that can challenge or support dominant ideologies. Biologically, the drive to create and appreciate and experience beauty is hardwired into our human make-up; it is the result of evolutionary adaptation. All of this reveals to me that aesthetics has a role to play in schools as much as it has had a role to play in our development as humans and has a role to play in our identity as human beings.

We begin our journey in the 4th century BCE with Plato's remarks about beauty, trace the evolution of dominant themes relevant to our research through the years, and come to rest summarizing some of the studies exploring aesthetic experiences in 21st century classrooms.

Beauty Absolute - Plato

Our journey begins with Plato, who in *The Symposium* (circa 385-370 BCE) writes of a dialogue between Socrates and Diotima, the wise woman from Mantineia. Her definition of the good intertwines with and weaves together love, wisdom, and beauty. She describes a kind of

education in which youth are in the right spirit when they are first helped to appreciate beauty in one form, then another, until he recognizes beauty in every form as the same, and then he will love beauty in all forms and appreciate the beauty of the mind as more admirable than the beauty of outward forms, and then he will see the beauty of institutions, laws and science, since the beauty of them all is one family. Eventually "he will create many fair and noble thoughts and notions in boundless love of wisdom." Diotima concludes her monologue saying, "This, my dear Socrates, is that life above all others which man should live, in the contemplation of beauty absolute."

F. C. White (1989) comments that "Diotima's speech makes it plain that when it comes to Beauty itself, this is not just any object, but the ultimate object of love.... Beauty is Love's ultimate aim" (p. 151-152). Plato grounds truth and wisdom and love as the ultimate aim of life, and he portrays life as a journey in search of beauty that leads us, compels us, to the realm of truth, understanding, and reality. Romantic writers, like Percy Bysshe Shelley, would even find inspiration in Plato for conceptualizing artists and poets as imbued with an inner vision and access to divine truth, as intermediaries between mankind and the eternal forms (Herman, 2013). In *A Defence of Poetry* (1821), Shelley wrote, "A poet participates in the Eternal, the Infinite, and the One... [his works are] the very image of life expressed in its eternal truth." Shelley's celebration of the transformative power of the imagination arose from his reading of Plato's *Ion*.

And yet Plato's views are more complicated and complex than that. The dialogues presented in *The Symposium* (circa 385-370 BCE) and *Ion* (circa 380 BCE) are problematized by the dialogues presented in *The Republic* (circa 380 BCE). In the latter text, Plato shares his conception of the world in which he positions the world and the things in it as shadows or pale reflections of existing external forms from which we derive absolute values of justice, truth and

beauty (Kul-Want & Piero, 2012). These forms exist in an underlying, transcendent aspect of the universe. The search for meaning and understanding of life begins with a venturing out of the darkness of the things of this world and into the light of the forms. He explores this paradigm in "the analogy of the cave" in *The Republic*, the same text in which he describes the ideal state (*polis*). Plato's conception of the ideal state has no room, no tolerance, for artists and poets and their ilk; they would be banned from his republic (O'Leary, 2005).

As Plato sees it, art and poetry are simply *mimetic*, merely imitative. Reality as we encounter it is one step removed from the truth (the real reality) of the forms. Art, then, rather than drawing us closer to understanding, of cutting through the darkness, adds another layer between our understanding and the truth itself that we seek since it merely copies and reproduces the things of the world, which are already merely a copy (Chatterjee, 2015). Philosophy, on the other hand, tries to pull aside the veil, to penetrate the darkness. Plato has similar concerns about rhetoric, which, he feared, was used by sophists to deceive and manipulate others, rather than to reveal truth, lead to self-improvement or arrive at understanding (Alexander, 2014). Rhetoric and art, by playing upon people's emotions, served to distract and seduce people rather than enlighten them.

This tension is reflected in a fundamental bifurcation or dichotomy involving our understanding of beauty and the role it ought to play in our lives and the place it ought to have in the curriculum. On the one hand, to remove or neglect beauty in our efforts to construct meaningful curriculum is to set aside a notion essential to our growth as humans. But on the other hand, pursuing questions of beauty, seeking to understand it, experience it, or interrogate it, only lead us away from more substantive issues, productive pursuits, or meaningful concepts;

beauty ends up opposed to knowledge, rather than being either knowledge itself or an essential form of knowing.

One can illustrate the divide by juxtaposing the comments of Sheryle Bergmann (1993) with those of John Jagodzinski (1981). Bergmann argues that the understanding gained from experiencing *how* the content of a work of art is expressed is "a more basic and richer form of knowledge than the knowledge typically associated with scientific rationality" (Bergmann, 1993, p. 107-108). Jagodzinski, however, argues that education in aesthetics should *not* focus on increasing the student's capacity for aesthetic experience since the endeavor frequently results in little more than "an exercise in psychic massage" (Jagodzinski, 1981, p. 29). He argues that the foundation for aesthetics in school should focus on the history of man's artistic achievement. Fortunately, the two viewpoints do not result in an either/or choice. The fear expressed by Jagodzinski that pursuing the aesthetic development of students may result in a watered-down curriculum should serve as a reminder to construct activities and provide students with opportunities that lead to meaningful experiences. After all, profundity is not inherent or guaranteed whenever a teacher tries to incorporate aesthetic experiences into the curriculum. However, neither is banality or artificiality. Although striving for aesthetic experiences that are relevant and constructive entail the risk of falling short of that mark, so do all educational endeavors. Rather than shun the aesthetic in education in the name of rigor or substance, the aesthetic should be embraced for its potential meaning and authenticity.

Poetic Power -Aristotle

Aristotle looked at art and poetry and rhetoric and came to very different epistemological conclusions than Plato. Plato had said *mimesis* was art's biggest sin, but Aristotle made it art's greatest virtue (Herman, 2014). Writing in *The Poetics* (335 BCE), Aristotle offered a riposte to

Plato's condemnation of art and laid the foundations for modern aesthetics (Kul-Want and Piero, 2010). Aristotle claimed art's ability to imitate life was both natural and a source of pleasure and instruction. Aristotle accepted that art is mimetic, but he departed from Plato by distinguishing between art as falsehood and art as fictional, and by rejecting the idea that art distorts or betrays our understanding. Rather, Aristotle claimed that art's ability to engender emotion, especially of pleasure or pain, was important, helpful, and instructive. He called the power of art to engage our emotions *catharsis.* The value of catharsis, furthermore, gives art an ethical quality - it reveals our mutual vulnerabilities and reveals how vulnerability is relevant to our lives and relationships to each other (Kul-Want and Piero, 2010).

Aristotle explored the role of beauty in our lives by focusing on the interaction of pleasure, understanding and emotion in the experience of works of art (rather than the art object itself). He drew attention to the experience of the participant with the art object. This seminal distinction resurfaces frequently in discussions of curriculum; some focus on defining exactly what an art object is, while others focus on the participant's encounter or experience with artistic objects

Sensitive Cognition - Alexander Baumgarten

Having touched on Plato (385 BCE) and Aristotle (335 BCE) and their ideas about beauty from the Classical Age to provide historical context for my study, we now turn to Alexander Baumgarten and his contributions to ideas about beauty and aesthetics from the Age of Enlightenment.

The term "aesthetics" refers, among other things, to the principles and concepts concerned with the nature of beauty, with taste, and with appreciating beauty in art, nature and life. The word aesthetics is derived from the Greek words *aesthetika* (things perceivable through

the senses) and *aisthanesthai* (to perceive or to feel). The word was first used by Baumgarten in *Reflections on Certain Matters Relating to Poetry* (1735) and later he used it as the title for his unfinished treatise *Aesthetica* (1750) (Morris, 2016; Kul-Want & Piero, 2012). *Aesthetica* marks the beginning of modern aesthetics since it linked inquiry concerned with perception and sensory experience with the appreciation of beauty, which Baumgarten called "sensitive cognition" (Chatterjee, 2015, p. 117).

Although Baumgarten's use of the term and his attention to taste as the arbiter of beauty led to a separation of art from the everyday world (Morris, 2016, p. 12), today the term aesthetics is generally accepted as referring to the experience of perceiving art or the things of everyday life through the senses, imagination, and emotions (Heid, 2005, p. 49). Comparing aesthetics to its opposite, *anesthetic* (something that suppresses or deadens our senses), helps to clarify the positive drive of aesthetics, as well as situate aesthetics as a somatic and sensual endeavor. So, speaking in very general terms, although at first associated with theories of beauty, the term *aesthetic* came to express a kind of trendy belief in good taste or a set of conventional standards, and, more recently, to focus on the participant's response when encountering art in formal or everyday settings (Heid, 2005, p. 49).

Aesthetic Judgment - Immanuel Kant

One of the earliest uses of the term *aesthetics* following Baumgarten occurs in Immanuel Kant's (1790) "Judgements about the Beautiful" in The Critique of Judgment (Goldblatt, 2005, p. 443). Kant's exploration of the concept of beauty and his description of the aesthetic experience have had a profound impact on subsequent analyses of either term.

Subjective and Universal. Kant acknowledged the individualized, *subjective* nature of an observer's response to a work of art, concentrating on beauty as the way in which we respond

to objects rather than beauty as something intrinsic to the properties of the objects themselves. For instance, what matters is not the picture I see, rather, it is the pleasing effect of the picture on me. However, Kant also claimed the response, if it were to be aesthetic, was also necessarily *universal*, thereby claiming that judgments of taste, if they are to be aesthetic, are based on both a subjective principle and a universal validity. This appears to be a form of doublethink, or a principle resting soundly on an oxymoron, but put simply, this universal judgement, on which the validity of the aesthetic judgment relies, depends on the sheer formal workings of capacities we, as engaged participants (the *sensus communis*), all have in common (Kul-Want & Piero, 2012). Thus, the aesthetic value is not a mere function of individual or personal taste: "Many things may for him possess charm and agreeableness - no one cares about that," Kant asserts, "but when he puts a thing on a pedestal and calls it beautiful, he demands the same delight from others" (Greenblatt, 2005, p. 455). So, the aesthetic judgment promotes a unity between individuals on the basis of their subjectivity (Eagleton, 1990, p. 96). The idea that everyone has his own taste, or beauty is in the eye of the beholder, is distinct from, and even inhibit, aesthetic judgment. To judge aesthetically is to say that my subjective response is the kind that every individual would also experience and would agree with.

> If the subject transcends its ephemeral needs and desires, then a truly subjective judgment disregards all the accidents which divide one individual from another and strikes an immediate chord in them all. Aesthetic judgments are thus, as it were, 'impersonally personal' [and have] a 'universal subjectivity.' (Eagleton, 1990, p. 93)

Saying an object is beautiful because it is beautiful *to me* cannot be justification for an aesthetic judgment. "If it merely pleases *him*," Kant writes, "he must not call it *beautiful*" (Greenblatt, 2005, p. 455).

Disinterestedness and Free Play. Kant introduced the concept of *disinterestedness* as a crucial component of the aesthetic response. For instance, what matters is that I am pleased by a painting just for what it is, apart from anything I may get out of it, or how much the picture is worth, or how I could use it, consume it, own it. I am not even concerned with who created it. This notion of disinterred interest could be recast as liking without wanting (Chatterjee, 2015). In addition to disinterestedness (or indifference or impartiality), Kant also emphasized that the *free play* of the imagination and the understanding (the powers of cognition) set the judgment of taste apart from other judgments (such as judgments of usefulness, "this is a good hammer"; morality, "he is a good man"; or agreeableness, "this ice cream is good") and make it aesthetic. The idea of free play is central to Kant's aesthetic theory. The imagination and understanding freely harmonize in free play, the imagination unconstrained by understanding and cognition. Aesthetic pleasure comes from this free play between the imagination and understanding when perceiving an object. The aesthetic is in no way cognitive, but it has the form and structure of the rational, uniting our judgments with the force of law, but at a more effective and intuitive level (Morris, 2016; Eagleton, 1990).

Aesthetic judgment is a kind of freewheeling of our faculties occurring in a kind of transcendent, imaginary dimension. Since imagination and the understanding do not play their usual cognitive roles in aesthetic experience, the goal is not to engage in the usual cognitive pursuits (such as categorizing or identifying or even arriving at a single truth or perspective); the point of aesthetic experience is to suspend cognitive pursuits and to explore alternative ways of seeing and knowing (Carroll, 2015). (Carroll gives the example of cloud gazing; in an aesthetic experience, we turn off the truth-tracking or knowledge-seeking vocation of mind and do not try

to categorize the cloud formation an example of cumulus nimbus; rather we see it this way and that way, as horses or faces, but not in a diagnostic way.)

Purposiveness. Form is also central to Kant's thinking about the aesthetic. The aesthetic response to beauty, such as pleasure, is prompted by form, such as design, composition, order, harmony and delicacy (while the aesthetic response to the sublime, such as awe, is prompted by the infinite, overwhelming, and formless.) This emphasis on form allowed Kant to advance his notion of *purposiveness* - the form of the art is organized with a final purpose in mind, even if it is not possible to say what that purpose is.

Free beauty and dependent beauty. Kant explored the notion of purposiveness further by explaining the distinction between *free beauty* and *dependent beauty*. Free beauty, or self-substitution beauty (*pulchritudo vaga*), refers to objects about which we presuppose no concepts of what it should be. Of these kinds of things we have no expectations pertaining to their end, their aim or function, for "but please freely and on their own account" (Greenblatt, 2005, p. 455). Examples include flowers, birds or others beauties of nature, but also things like wallpaper featuring foliage or some styles of music, since these things have no intrinsic meaning, theme or definite concept, and represent nothing. Dependent beauty, or conditioned beauty (*pulchritudo adhaerens*), refers to the beauty of man, of horses, of buildings, since they presuppose a concept of the end that defines what the thing has to be. These are things about which we have a concept of perfection, things whose outward form we contemplate with the freedom of our imagination, things about which we have a concept of the end that defines what the thing has to be. Free beauty presupposes no concept of what the object should be; dependent beauty does presuppose what it should be, or what it should be like. Of the former we really can't talk of having expectations, such as perfection, but of the latter, we can and do. "A beauty of nature is a

beautiful thing," Kant states, "beauty of art is a beautiful representation of a thing" (Greenblatt, 2005, p. 458).

Modern theories of aesthetics and discussions of beauty owe a huge debt to the inspiration and force of Kant's ideas. His conclusions regarding form, free play, purposiveness and disinterestedness permeate the field of aesthetics. However, focusing less on defining standards of taste, or identifying common characteristics of art, or creating universal standards for critiquing art, many modern theorists pay more attention to the observer's interaction with, or experience of, art. Nonetheless, Kant's understanding of the aesthetic remains relevant to discussions of the role of aesthetics in education today. Eagleton (1990) argues that Kant, writing in the midst of the Enlightenment, admits, through his understanding of the aesthetic, a mode of religious transcendence in a rationalistic age. The aesthetic for Kant was the wan hope, in an increasingly rationalized, secularized, demythologized environment, that ultimate purpose and meaning may not be entirely lost. The need for the aesthetic is as great today as it was in the 18th century.

Kant's conception of the subjective-universal union and his conception of the free play of reason and feeling are echoed by Sheryle Bergmann (1998) in her advocation for aesthetics in the curriculum based on epistemological grounds (rather than on "art for art's sake" grounds - the position of an aesthete). Bergmann argues that the traditional dichotomy between reason and feeling is a false one since feelings and reason relate to each other by working together in the act of sensuous understanding. By way of example, consider King Lear, who, having lost his title and having been rebuked by his daughters, wanders without shelter in a violent storm.

Poor naked wretches, whereso'er you are,

That bide the pelting of this pitiless storm,

How shall your houseless heads and unfed sides,

Your loop'd and window'd raggedness, defend you

From seasons such as these? O, I have ta'en

Too little care of this! (3.4)

It is through feeling that Lear begins to understand the plight of the poor, even telling himself to "Expose thyself to feel what wretches feel." It is through his feelings, then, that Lear gains insight, that meaning dawns on him, that he arrives at a new understanding, that he adopts new perspective. Having shown how reason and feeling work together in sensuous understanding (thus showing the epistemological value of aesthetic experience), Bergmann moves on to use this passage to show how the particular and the general conflate for the participant in encounters with art. It is through one's encounter with a particular work (such as *King Lear*) exploring a particular situation (the plight of the poor without shelter), that one connects with, that one gains insight into, conceptions of a more general and communal nature (the plight of the unfortunate and the homeless).

These two concepts, the interplay between reason and feeling (or cognition and emotion) leading to a richer sort of understanding, and the discovery of the general in the particular (or, put another way, the universal in the subjective), are concepts in the forefront of conversations about the aesthetic experience today. These concepts belong in the forefront of conversations about curriculum too. "To deny students access to the arts," Bergmann states, "is to deny them access to a more comprehensive, richer way of knowing than is possible within the limitations of 'scientific rationality'" (Bergmann, 1998, p.112). Put another way, aesthetic experiences need to be an integral part of the educational curriculum because an educational system that denies

students the development of their reasoning and their feelings is a system that denies students their full potential as humans.

The Sublime - Edmund Burke

Edmund Burke (1757) explored the difference between the beautiful and the sublime. His work is noteworthy because he was the first philosopher to make a distinction between the two, and his treatise brought philosophy and psychology together to explore the issue (Morris, 2016). Burke asserts that whatever excites ideas of pain, danger or terror is a source of the sublime, and such emotions are stronger and "much more powerful than those which enter on the part of pleasure" (Burke, 1757). By way of example, one can imagine our feelings of powerlessness and anxiety in the midst of a thunderstorm - rain crashing, wind howling, lightning crashing - with our feelings of belonging and contentment at the beach - blue skies above, golden sand beneath, cool waters lapping the shore. A sublime object could be described with adjectives such as vast, great, rugged, negligent, obscure, dark, gloomy, solid, massive, and loving the right line (but when it deviates, it does so greatly); by contrast, a beautiful object could be described with adjectives such as small, smooth, polished, light, delicate, and shunning the right line (and when it deviates it does so insensibly). In Burke's view, although the sublime and the beautiful can exist in combination, united in the same object or work of art, when we consider the power of an object to move us, the effect is more uniform and perfect if the properties of the object are of the same nature and design. In Kant's view, the quality of the sublime to attract and repel the mind simultaneously involves not so much positive pleasure (such as delight) but a negative pleasure (something like admiration or respect).

The distinction Burke draws between the beautiful and sublime is relevant to our exploration of aesthetics in the curriculum. Although most discussions of aesthetics in school

focus on the positive aspects of the aesthetic experience, it clearly can be perceived in a negative light. As provoking a sense of wonder, for instance, beauty functions positively. But insofar as it can produce feelings of anxiety, dread and awe, it has a negative dimension. Indeed, many artists draw upon art as a means to respond to the aspects of life that induce feelings of being overwhelmed or a loss of control, and, of course, art can be a response to the horrific and come from a place of pain and fear. Nonetheless, the curriculum tends to focus on the beautiful rather than the terrible or "awe-ful" (Morris, 2016). Rather than dwell on the sublime, curriculum tends to focus on the aesthetic experience as prayerful, contemplative, or meditative.

Although the questions I posed in this study focused on "the experience of beauty," and although I expected students to recall their experiences prompted by the beautiful and the creative rather than those prompted by the terrible and the destructive, the nature of the questions were broad and flexible enough that students could, and were welcome to, recount aesthetic experiences prompted by the beautiful *or* the sublime. Moreover, in the definition of aesthetic experience that I provided above as a framework to my study, I included these descriptors: "experiences that elicited awe" and "experiences that aroused a new perspective of an unsettling nature." Since the questions were meant to prompt reflection of *any* experiences provoking a strong emotional response, students could recall times they felt serenity or contemplation *or* times they felt dread or fear.

Aesthetic Experience - John Dewey

Of most interest to me and of most relevance to my research question (What is the student experience of beauty in school?) are the definitions of aesthetics put forth by John Dewey (1934) and Maxine Greene (2001). Their definitions will be touchstones for my research.

John Dewey, of course, began his exploration of education at the most basic level of "the experience," the interaction between a living creature and its environment. From there, from this primal fact inherent to the very process of living, all else flows. Beginning here allows Dewey to eventually assert that education is not preparation for life, it is life itself because throughout our lives, by the fact we are alive and interacting with our environment, we grow. However, in *Art as Experience* (1934), Dewey concentrates on the idea that some experiences transcend others, or rather, are transcendent in nature. Some experiences are not merely cessations, upon which we can reflect and grow, but they are consummations, events that are so rounded out we are fulfilled (Stroud, 2014). Where should we look to find experiences like that? "Not to ledger-entries nor yet to a treatise on economics or sociology or personnel-psychology, but to drama or fiction" (Dewey, 1934, p. 44). Art can express the nature and import of life; art can express the unity of experience as experience. "Whatever path the work of art pursues, it, just because it is a full and intense experience, keeps alive the power to experience the common world in its fullness" (Dewey, 1934, p. 138). Art does not lead to an experience; art constitutes one.

In an aesthetic experience, the factors determining an experience are lifted high above the threshold of perception and are made manifest for their own sake. Echoing the quality of disinterestedness we saw in Kant, Dewey explains that the medium is the end desired, and not a mere means to an external end (Stroud, 2014). In addition, in aesthetic experiences we are carried out beyond ourselves to find ourselves. However, and this is essential, such encounters with art, or artistic things, or anything that prompts an aesthetic experience, should not be confined to a realm of fine art or separated from the everyday by a gulf or wall (Jagodzinski, 1981; Stroud, 2014). Rather, aesthetic experiences abound, they surround us, they emancipate us

- if we attune to them, if we attend to them. Our stance needs to be active because the aesthetic experience is a synthesis of perception and creation (Greene, 1973, p. 95).

This characteristic ability of the aesthetic to carry us out beyond ourselves is echoed by Elizabeth Valance (1991). Focusing on the observer's response to art in her understanding of the term aesthetics, Valance explains that the aesthetic response provides a moment of repose, a break from our normal practical way of valuing our environment, a chance to be impressed or amused by seeing things in a new way. There is often an "aha' quality to the aesthetic response, a quality of delighted and unexpected insight that is its own reward. Moreover, the aesthetic response provides us with a store of memorable moments that tacitly shape our future responses. Aesthetic responses at their most natural are "spontaneous, unplanned, usually enjoyable, and they invariably offer us new perspective on something we already know" (Valance, 1991, p. 159).

Dewey explored this theme of the power of aesthetics to shift our perception and the power of art to broaden the scope of our inquiry. Dewey (1934) wrote "art is a mode of prediction not found in charts and statistics, and it insinuates possibilities of human relations not to be found in rule and precept, admonition and administration" (p. 363). I wonder to what extent school welcomes, fosters and promotes this mode of prediction. As an educator, I'd like to create an environment like this in which students learn and practitioners teach. As a researcher, I'd like to investigate the question of the student experience of Beauty in school, but I also want to get others pondering it too. "Philosophy is said to begin in wonder and end in understanding," Dewey wrote. "Art departs from what has been understood and ends in wonder" (p. 281). I want to arrive at understanding, sure, but I also want to dwell in wonder; hermeneutic-phenomenology allows me to do just that.

Aesthetic Perception - Maxine Greene

Nurturing an appreciation for a sense of wonder permeates Maxine Greene's philosophy of education. If we scour her writings for a definition of aesthetics, we only come close, we only approach one. For instance, in *Variations on a Blue Guitar* (2001), we read that *aesthetic* "is an adjective used to describe or single out the mode of experience brought into being by encounters with works of art" (Greene, 2001, p. 5). But one will search in vain for a precise, rigid, fixed, delimiting definition. It is as if by definition that a term like "definition" runs counter to the aesthetic project. Greene describes aesthetic experiences many times and in many ways, but she places the emphasis on the nature of aesthetics as defying easy categorization. That's part of the point. It taps into something that transcends the very act of definition; it is always something more than, something beyond, the label we attach to it. "There is no final, authoritative definition of either," Greene says of art and the aesthetic; you generate your own enthusiasm for them and arrive at your own understanding of them and you make it contagious (Greene, 2001, p. 179). Unfortunately, one of the reasons that concepts like aesthetics, or art, or beauty, are often found on the fringe of education, if at all, is due to this very lack of definition. Writers like Greene celebrate the mysterious nature of art, encounters with beauty, and aesthetic experience, but to measure, to test, to attach standards, the aesthetic would need to be commodified, demystified, tamed.

Nonetheless, the power of aesthetic experience lies in its ability to bring us in touch with something transcendent, something universal, something that moves us to aspire, to strain upwards, beyond ourselves. As a result, rather than being shunned, aesthetic experiences should be integral to schools. Greene says schools are morally obligated to attend to these kinds of values. Greene describes aesthetic education as a process of initiating students into "faithful

perceiving" (Greene, 2001, p. 45), a means of empowering them to come to their own unique understandings accomplished from their own standpoints and against the background of their own individual awareness. Indeed, when teaching to inspire aesthetic appreciation, the teacher resists the norms compelling her to control what the student discovers as meaningful. A space needs to be created in which control over already constituted reason is released, and a willingness to feel and to imagine, to open windows and go in search of, is embraced. This all runs counter to trends in education today - the process and product, the means and the end, all vary greatly, when often what is wanted is predictability, standardization, and uniformity. Or, as Harry S. Broudy (1977) writes, the curriculum of the school does not reflect the importance of the aesthetic experience and "the development of the imagination is left to chance, as if it were a wayward divertissement in the life of the mind" (Broudy, 1977, p. 139).

Aesthetic Stance - Louise Rosenblatt

Like Greene, Louise Rosenblatt sought to redress the neglect of the aesthetic approach in the curriculum. Rosenblatt described the experience of readers encountering texts as *transactional* and emphasized the essentiality of both the reader and the text (not the determinacy of one over the other). The transaction involves the reader and the text in a to-and-fro, spiraling, nonlinear, continuously reciprocal influence of one on the other in the making of meaning (Rosenblatt, 1995, p.xvi). Meaning emerges from this interplay between the reader and the text; the word transaction delineates a synthesis of reader and text that elude words like reaction or interaction. Rosenblatt's contribution to the teaching of reading in schools is profound due in larger part to her conception of this transaction as a continuum whereon the reading event falls somewhere between the predominantly *efferent* and the predominantly *aesthetic* (1988, p.5). On the one hand, when reading from an efferent stance, the reader centers on what is to be carried

away *after* the reading event. The meaning results from abstracting-out the ideas from the text so as to act or use them after the reading event. The reader's focus is on the public referents of the verbal signs. Typical examples would be reading a newspaper, a textbook or a legal brief. On the other hand, when reading from an aesthetic stance, the reader adopts an attitude of readiness to focus attention on what is being lived through *during* the reading event. The reader's awareness rests on the sensations, feelings, images and ideas that are the residue of past psychological events evoked by the words and their referents. This evocation, not the text exclusively, is the object of the reader's response during and after the reading experience. This stance lends itself easily to reading poems, stories or plays.

Rosenblatt's brilliance, and her profound impact on the teaching of reading in school, was articulating this difference so clearly and pointing out the importance of nurturing the aesthetic stance. Rosenblatt cautioned teachers of literature not to reduce reading experiences to the efferent stance. Teachers indoctrinate readers to adopting the efferent stance and neglect to nurture the aesthetic stance when they, for instance, only ask students to read so that they can discern the author's intent, or to identify facts about character and plot, or to prepare for a test. On the contrary, she advocated exposing students to the aesthetic stance by allowing them, attuning them, to savor the rhythm of sentences, the images brought to consciousness, the past linguistic and life experiences triggered by the text. Rosenblatt knew that interpretation of texts is far from binary or linear. Her understanding of the polysemous character of texts, that there is no one absolutely 'correct' meaning of a text, encouraged teachers to nurture - intentionally and deliberately - reading from an aesthetic stance.

Aesthetic Moment - Patrick Slattery

Whereas Rosenblatt focused her attention on the aesthetic stance in relation to the experience of reading, Patrick Slattery has a wider focus. Slattery asserts that aesthetic experiences involve ways of knowing and learning that create "synthetical" or "proleptic" explorations. Such moments trigger a reconstruction of the self and involve an experience of solidarity in the intellect, body, spirit and cosmos in which one feels an intrinsic coherence of time, place, and meaning. Furthermore, there is an aspect of contemporaneousness, an event in which a convergence of events and things come together and form a passage for making connections on the journey of life. We feel meaning-full and awe-full moments that are integral to postmodern curriculum. Aesthetic experiences release the imagination and prompt "eclectic, ironic, and kaleidoscopic experiences that affirm uniqueness, creativity, and the contemporaneousness of time and place" (Slattery, 2013, p. 245). Aesthetic experiences may be dramatic, artistic, nonrational, and intuitive. Frequently improvisational and spontaneous, aesthetic experiences involve moments of revelation and transformation. "A Sunset, a storm, a song, a passionate relationship, a word of praise, or even a dramatic tragedy may spark understanding and engender a synthetical experience" (Slattery, 2013, p. 246).

Virtue and Aesthetics - Howard Gardner

Howard Gardner (2011) makes three observations relevant to our exploration of aesthetics in his book *Truth, Beauty, and Goodness Reframed*: he grounds aesthetics in the classical triad of virtues (truth, beauty, goodness), he advances an incisive definition of beauty and the aesthetic experience, and he articulates a rationale for the importance of aesthetics in life and curriculum.

By way of definition, Gardner explains that an experience deemed beautiful must be interesting to behold, have a memorable form, and invite revisiting. These three aesthetic criteria, if met, will lead the participant to a fourth quality: a pleasurable tingle - the signal of beauty. In his definition, Gardner echoes Dewey, Greene and Slattery by focusing on the participant's response; he then goes on to assert the unique educational quality of beauty and aesthetic experience. Aesthetic experience allows us to know the world in ways that are legitimate and yet fundamentally different from the scholarly disciplines. Whereas truth is a property of statements, beauty reveals itself in the course of an experience with an object that captures or conveys an aspect of life in a powerful, evocative manner.

Gardner adds to our exploration of aesthetics thus far a rationale and defense for making space for aesthetics in the curriculum. Only those who are exposed to a range of works of art and who encounter thoughtful discussion of issues of craft and taste are likely "to develop an aesthetic sense that goes beyond schlock or transcends what happens to be most popular among peers at the moment" (Gardner, 2011, p. 135). Gardner regrets the suspension, banishment, and exorcism of talk of beauty in the curriculum due to powerful trends in education and proposes the acquisition of aesthetic preferences as a goal of the curriculum. The need is especially urgent, he says, since students live in a world with immediate access to countless works of art reflecting myriad styles, topics, formats, and values; the psyche of any "connected" child is besieged by a virtual barrage of truths, beauties and moral precepts. Developing aesthetic sensibility can help students navigate their world.

Gardner goes on to explain what such an education would involve and aim for. The range of works of art students encounter should span artistic domains, time periods, geographic regions and cultural traditions. The goal is the development of personal preference and a well-considered

judgment and heightened sense of individual beauty since genuine education occurs in those spaces where students explore their preferences and consider what is beautiful and why through discussion, argument and reflection. Moreover, unlike other virtues and disciplines, there is no desire to lead the student to specific conclusions, since "when it comes to beauty, or to the arts more generally, let innumerable flowers bloom, let ten thousand tastes emerge" (Gardner, 2011, p. 143).

Politics and Aesthetics - Terry Eagleton

At this point in our journey, we take a slight detour. Having explored myriad interpretations of beauty and charted a course that traces the evolving understanding of the aesthetic experience in a roughly chronological and historical manner, we now turn to consider aesthetics as an ideology. The aim of this digression is to broaden the conceptual complexity of aesthetics (as we have explored it so far) and to outline a more complete and robust picture of the concept. Furthermore, analyzing aesthetics as a political concept and from an ideological perspective is another way to appreciate the power of aesthetics, thereby adding credence to the argument that discussion of aesthetics deserves recognition in the curriculum.

Widely known as a literary theorist, intellectual, Marxist and critic of postmodernism, Terry Eagleton (1990) traces the impact of the aesthetic on history from Baumgarten to Habermas. Eagleton argues that the aesthetic is a powerful force, a weapon, that functions, usually covertly but occasionally manipulated overtly, to challenge or support dominant ideological forms. Whether as rhetoric or poetics in the Classic Age, with the emergence of a middle class in the Enlightenment, or right now in Modern art and Postmodern literature, aesthetic concepts play, however tacitly, "an unusually central, intensive part in the constitution of a dominant ideology" (Eagleton, 1990, p. 4). The aesthetic is often the language of human

solidarity, setting its face against all divisive elitism and privilege (Eagleton, 1990). For instance, during the Enlightenment, Kant's notion of the aesthetic, coinciding with the rise of the middle class and possessive individualism that challenged traditional feudal power structures, could be interpreted as challenging the notion of absolutism through its celebration of the power and freedom of the individual's subjective, autonomous reaction. Seen another way, aesthetics can be used to unite people and harmonize society by fostering universal standards within individuals. And yet, equating aesthetics with a cultural elitism or connoisseurship reserved for the privileged few fashions aesthetics into a social wedge that divides classes and supports a dominant hegemony. In this way, aesthetics can be used to reinforce and buttress the dominance of one group over another. Moreover, the concept of the aesthetic, by offering a fruitful ideological model of harmony, unity, and solidarity for individuals in society, could reinforce the status quo, but this same vision, by offering a measure that when applied to society reveals it to be sorely lacking, could prompt strife, struggle and revolution.

This brief exploration of the political dimension of aesthetics, and looking at it through an ideological lens, is meant to demonstrate that the meanings and values embedded in the tradition of the aesthetic are powerful, active, and of vital importance. Many philosophers who work in aesthetics skip over the intersection of art and politics and focus on traditional notions of beauty, but the arts are an issue of class, race, and gender (Beyer, 2000, p. 9; Morris, 2016, p. 49). Moreover, since the aesthetic is a highly contradictory concept (for instance, it compels us to question but also to conform), it is best understood through dialectical thought. Unfortunately, at the present time, much cultural theory has rejected that dialectical habit. Eagleton's warning is that the neglect and loss of understanding traditional concepts like the aesthetic places us on a

perilous path and could result in leaving us "powerless before the arrogance of power" (Eagleton, 1990, p. 415).

Eagleton's survey of the impact of the aesthetic on ideology includes many notable and intriguing figures, including Freud, Marx, and Nietzsche. Nietzsche's comments seem most relevant to our discussion here. Nietzsche describes the aesthetic in soaring terms as the formless productive energies of life that we must embrace and embody, and he proclaims that the supermen (*Ubermensch*) attain the highest aesthetic condition of all - self-hegemony - and become "poets of their own lives" (Eagleton, 1990, p. 253). It is my contention that even if including the development of the aesthetic within students falls short of turning them into supermen, based on the historical record, it promises to help keep them free by empowering them to question, to imagine, to wonder.

Neuroscience and Aesthetics - Anjan Chatterjee

Current research in neuroscience and evolutionary psychology has enhanced our understanding of aesthetics. Neuroaesthetics, the application of science to aesthetics, begins with two central ideas: all human behavior at the individual level has a neural counterpart, and evolutionary forces have sculpted our brains and behavior (Chatterjee, 2015, p. xi). The goal of neuroaesthetics is to use neuroscience to understand the "how" of aesthetics and to use evolutionary psychology to understand the "why" of aesthetics. In terms of method, neuroaesthetics relies on demanding scientific standards of *objective* analysis to investigate the deeply *subjective* reality of losing oneself in magical moments when we lose our sense of self, space and time.

Even though one may expect the scientific and the philosophic approaches to be worlds apart, their findings often echo each other. Consider Kant's assertion that aesthetic experience is

simultaneously both *subjective* and *universal*. Chatterjee asserts that although beauty is found in our heads, and experiences of beauty come from our individual interactions between our minds and the world, our brains evolved to find some objects universally beautiful. "By universal, I mean that humans share this sense of beauty" (Chatterjee, 2015, p.64). Though experiences of beauty are shared universally, cultural influences and contexts affect these experiences and build on these universal biases, interacting with and enhancing their effects. Moreover, seeming to echo Kant's notion of *disinterestedness*, Chatterjee explains that aesthetic pleasure stretches beyond our appetites by tapping into neural systems and "activating our liking systems without activating the wanting systems" (Chatterjee, 2015, p. 181). And, seeming to echo Kant's notion of the aesthetic as a mechanism allowing for the *free play* of our understanding and emotions via the imagination (and perhaps echoing the general emphasis of Enlightenment thinkers concerning the primacy of the rational and cognitive over other ways of knowing), Chatterjee explains that our aesthetic pleasures are influenced profoundly by our cognitive systems (Chatterjee, 2015, p. 112). Moreover, current findings in neuroaesthetics make it clear that we do not have an art instinct, but we do have instincts that trigger art-like behavior. In other words, our experience of beauty is the result of a loose ensemble of evolutionary adaptations. Furthermore, there is no art module in the brain (unlike, for instance, reasoning in the frontal lobe, movement in the parietal lobe, visual processing in the occipital lobe, etc). Our subjective aesthetic experiences arise from, are cobbled together from, bits and pieces of the brain that are used to do other things. "Some combination of the activity in neurons that code sensations, meaning, and emotions is the neural manifestation of an aesthetic experience" (Chatterjee, 2015, p. 138). These findings of the workings of the brain are reminiscent of Kant's description of the mind (our

understanding/cognition and our emotions/imagination) playing freely during an aesthetic experience.

Sounding like Dewey, Chatterjee broadens the scope of the aesthetic from merely considerations of art objects to considerations of beauty in *everyday life* as lived. And sounding like Gardner, he addresses *pleasure* as a signal element of the aesthetic experience and claims that the promiscuity of aesthetic pleasure can attach itself to any object or situation (Chatterjee, 2015, p. 110-111).

Since we seem hardwired to make and enjoy art, since it seems fundamental to our nature, it would follow that such a drive is an instinct inserted by evolution. Evolutionary psychology is currently exploring the question by asking what is the relation between the impact of the adaptive function of evolution on our behavior and the existence of a seemingly universal aesthetic impulse. Two positions to this question have emerged: art-as-by-product and art-as-instinct. Chatterjee's position is dialectical in so far as he synthesizes these binaries and arrives at the position that "behavior can have adaptive roots and then evolve when selective pressures on the adaption are relaxed" (p. 178). In other words, the aesthetic instinct may have evolved *to serve a purpose* (such as the organism's impulse to recognize favorable conditions in the environment and settle there, or the organism's attraction to physical characteristics of healthy mates for survival, etc) but then mutated unpredictably and blossomed into something that exists *for its own sake*. The aesthetic, therefore, is both an expression of an instinct (art-as-instinct) and a relaxation from this instinct (art-as-by-product). In other words, according to Chatterjee, the relaxation of instinctual constraints on behavior is precisely what allows art to evolve flexibly and to be so wonderfully surprising. Since the aesthetic grants human nature an expression of resistance to instinct, prescription, or rule, since it rests on the varied and the unpredictable, on

the diverse, local and serendipitous, it signals our freedom. Sounding like Nietzsche, Chatterjee explains that when we are free, we relax into art and are better off for it.

Conclusions being drawn in evolutionary psychology further support the assertion that aesthetics is necessary to life in the world in general as well as to life in schools in particular. The way our brains function during aesthetic experiences reveal them to be essential, not incidental, way of knowing. In her explanation of the evolutionary development of the aesthetic, Gianluca Consoli (2014) describes the adaptive function of our aesthetic sensibilities and confirms the essential role of the aesthetic imagination. After explaining that "with the emergence of aesthetic experience [in our early ancestors] a new epistemic goal is realized in the brain" (p. 40), she states that the self-organizing process employed by the brain improved the proficiency of its facilities to the level of advanced cognition.

I present these findings from scientists to broaden the scope of the research from which I am drawing to reinforce more completely the assertion that aesthetics deserves a place in the curriculum since it has epistemological value (in other words, that it is a legitimate way of knowing) and since it is an integral aspect of our human nature.

Aesthetics in the Curriculum - Marla Morris

At this point in our journey in which we have been exploring the context for the research I conducted, we stop to survey aesthetics and its relation to curriculum studies. This summary draws heavily upon the work of Marla Morris (2016). In addition to questioning the implicit bias of aesthetics as manifested in the curriculum to favor the beautiful and neglect the sublime (which we explored briefly above in the section covering Burke), Morris surveys current teaching practices that incorporate aesthetics. Morris's premise is that aesthetics, which traditionally has been about the study of beauty, has become highly problematic, especially in

our post-9/11 world. She identifies six instructional methods that allow for experiencing the world aesthetically: the teacher's use of dance, reader's theatre, collage, imagery, hybridization, and drama.

Dance. Teaching through dance allows students to understand the world through movement. The choreographer encounters the world motionally, temporally and spatially. Teachers prompt their students to wonder about issues of time and space. They seek to answer questions such as how can we be cognizant on moving in time and space in our everyday lives? How can we be more mindful through how we move?

Reader's Theatre. Helping students encounter a text by having them reading scripts (not memorize lines) to interact with a text. The activity can be compared to a musician playing from a score. The performer fully engages in the text, and the audience is drawn to more fully listen, feel, and think. The device can be pushed even further by asking students to regard a person as a character in a story, or even to conceive of their life in terms of a story being told. In these ways, we bring aesthetic perception into classroom. However, Morris points out that it's interesting to note that playwright Arthur Miller said, "No human being feels he's a character in a play... No human being I ever heard of. He's just living his life" (Morris, 2016, p. 20). Even if he's right, that's not a reason to reject the strategy; our aim in teaching aesthetically is to promote habits of "wide-awakeness" (as Greene would say) and not lapse into "just living our lives."

Collage. Collage and montage are forms of fragmentary thought. Walter Benjamin and Nietzsche wrote in the style of collage (Morris, 2016, p. 38). Such writing is not conventional, tradition, or academic. In collage, the discourse is manifested by scraps, each of which has emotional or geographical or temporal significance and the whole beseeches interpretation or decipherment. Collage imitates life because, after all, what is life besides scraps of this and that,

our experiences like notes jotted on napkins, dog-eared pages in a book, or patches of a quilt? Collage combines and arranges fragments into related wholes; as a heuristic it provides one with a means to work towards a coherent picture from varying perspectives. Allowing students to express themselves, investigate questions or pursue understanding through collage, reflects a postmodern orientation if one concedes that one can never actually ever arrive at a coherent whole, an ultimate truth. Our understanding is always thus a stitching together of fragments that grows ever larger. Clearly collage as a method runs counter to traditional curriculum, but, just as clearly, in many ways it captures the spirit of the aesthetic.

Imagery. Photography and comics appeal to our visual processing; using them in the classroom expands ways of knowing in aesthetic ways. Visual images draw learners in when used to present information, but they can also activate learners when used as means of expression. Teachers can use photographs and graphic novels as alternative ways to present information to students, but they can also use them as alternative assignments for students to demonstrate their understanding. Asking students to take pictures or create drawings is a way to allow for students to express themselves creatively, emotionally, and aesthetically.

Hybridization. Like collage, hybridization is a mixture, but it differs in that it refers to a mixture of genres and media. Not just postmodern in orientation, hybridization is posthuman; artists seek to densely pack worlds and to condense meaning. Working in the space "in between," hybrid texts do not fit easily in one category or another - weaved sculpture, collaged photos and paintings, and other mixed media art-texts. The posthuman is the mixing up of everything, machine, nonhuman animal, human animal, as well as genres, realities, and perceptions. Consider the ways musicians talk about the color of sounds, or sound taking up space in our heads. Artists, as part of the act of creation, are able to mix up senses and break

through the deadness of the everyday. Or consider visual arts and digital media such as video, graffiti, and meme, pushing the definition and boundaries of art. The definition of text, too, has expanded far beyond referring merely to a written text; text can be anything. Hybridization and the posthuman confuse categories and include art that creatively blends things together. On the one hand, this kind of hybridization poses many challenges for traditional teaching methods and would require many teachers to reevaluate fundamental perceptions of curriculum, but on the other hand, the kinds of thinking required for - and kind of activity described as - hybridized and posthuman draws upon the abilities to analyze, synthesize, and create. These skills are higher-order thinking skills, at the top of Bloom's taxonomy, right where teachers want their students to be - and the aesthetic can help get them there.

This brief survey, of course, does not cover the full scope of ways the aesthetic is visible in the curriculum, consider, for example, drama and music, but it does reveal some of the ways aesthetic teaching methods appear in the curriculum. However, more important than a list of aesthetic teaching methods (that may or may not be used by teachers to enhance the aesthetic sensibilities of students depending upon how they are implemented) is understanding that teaching aesthetically is a stance, an attitude, a way of being. To teach aesthetically, to learn aesthetically, to live aesthetically requires realizing that anything can be experienced more aesthetically if we are open to it. As a result, teachers can expand the scope of the curriculum and enhance their array of teaching methods, students can be exposed to a wider range of learning options and means of expressions, and life can take on a richer, deeper, more complex texture.

I have reviewed these trends in curriculum to further explore the context of the research I conduct, and to expand the value of the findings to a larger audience by drawing explicit connections to the classroom. However, I want to clarify that I approach the research oriented

toward learning more about the student's experiences in the classroom, not the teacher's choice of instructional strategy. Understanding the student experience, not advising teachers, is the primary aim. Furthermore, as I analyze the data gathered from students, I am not concerned about sorting their experiences into the categories reviewed in this section of the literature review focusing on curriculum. The study is inductive in nature, not deductive as such an approach would require.

Recent Studies

At this point, having reached the end of the journey, I pause to look around and to survey recent studies conducted in the area of aesthetic experiences in school, particularly those using a phenomenological method. The landscape has apparently changed significantly since 1977 when Jack Hobbs wrote, "a recent study showed that 'aesthetic behavior' was by far the most popular topic for dissertations between 1970 and 1974" (Hobbs, 1977, p. 30). Based upon the small number of studies I was able to find in the current research literature, my search revealed a need for more studies, particularly those of a phenomenological nature, exploring the aesthetic experiences of students in school. Having pursued studies with keywords such as aesthetics, phenomenology and beauty, I review here eleven studies indicative of the work being done in this area. The eleven studies reveal the need for hermeneutic-phenomenological studies of the student experience of beauty.

Narrow Disciplinary Focus. Jacqueline Ward (2002) conducted a case study of three students to explore the intersection of aesthetics and mathematics. Using interviews and questionnaires, she probed how the relationship could be characterized. The questionnaire included the question "Please draw a picture in response to this question: 'What is mathematics" Her findings indicated a belief on the part of students in the aesthetic value of mathematics but

the need for direct incorporation of aesthetics into mathematics classrooms. Leslie Dietiker (2016) analyzed the impact of sequencing on the aesthetic experience of learning math for first grade students. She asserts that the paper contributes to a growing number of articles regarding what it means to experience mathematical beauty (fit, balance, completion, symmetry). The study I conducted shares the approach of focusing on the experience of students; it departs insofar as the participants will be high school students, the method will be phenomenology, and the focus of inquiry is not as narrow. Dietiker approached the inquiry asking about sequencing in math; I approach the inquiry with a much wider, looser set of parameters regarding the findings, not bound to a particular discipline. The same pattern can be seen in the study by Mark Girod and David Wong (2002) who explored science learning and its relationship to aesthetic experience. They conducted case studies of three fourth-graders, exposing them to three different approaches to teaching science. They compared the student responses and reflections to glean which approach proved most effective in helping them learn. Studies in this category used case study as their method and focused on a particular discipline, sometimes even a specific teaching strategy. The study I conducted was more open-ended, used phenomenology, and was not focused on a particular discipline.

Focus on Adults. Andrea Palega (2011) used a phenomenological method to study the everyday aesthetic experience of ten participants. Through in-depth interviews, she explored the daily encounters of adults in New York City to gauge their aesthetic meaning. Her approach shows the power of phenomenology to explore aesthetic experience, but her study is not focused on schools. This is similar to Lisa Schumacher's (2010) phenomenological study of the lived experience of leisure for caregivers of parents with dementia. Although the study addresses the nuances of everyday experience of the caregivers and shows a holistic picture of their lifeworld,

its focus lies outside school. Krista Fogel (2008) followed a similar path in her hermeneutic phenomenological study of four scientists. She touched on the implications for the integration of the arts and sciences in education, but she focused on the experiences of four adult scientists who engaged in the arts recreationally, rather than focusing directly on education and the experiences of students.

Also focusing on adults rather than students, R. Scott Webster and Melissa Wolfe (2013) conducted a study of how aesthetic experiences can enhance learning. She identified four teachers for the case study based on criteria that determined they were effective teachers. She then explored the beliefs and intentions of these exemplary teachers that led them to provide aesthetic experiences for their students. She sought to understand how they encouraged engagement and deep understanding via aesthetic experience. The focus of Wolfe's study on how aesthetics manifests itself in the curriculum is consistent with the direction of my study, but rather than focus on teachers and what they do, my study will focus on the experience of students and what they experience.

Using a quantitative approach, a study conducted by Roger Beaty, Kirill Fayn, Emily Nusbaum and Paul Silvia (2015) involved 103 adults taking part in a 2-phase study that examined the role of openness to experience in two domains - nature and music. In the first phase, people viewed 14 images of the sky and space and rated their experience of each on items related to awe and wonder. In the second phase, people listened to a song and rated their experience. The results were correlated and measured with other personality factors. The study sought to show that openness to experience was an essentially aesthetic trait; their findings indicate that "states like awe can be productively manipulated in controlled environments, but only at lower intensities" (Beaty, 2015, p. 382). The study I conducted is similar to this study in

that the focus is on what the student experiences, but it differs in that the participants are adults and the process is quantitative rather than qualitative.

Aesthetics as Method or Means. A pattern that emerges in the research is using aesthetics as a research tool or as a means to evaluate, perceive or critique. For instance, a study by Janinka Greenwood (2012) examined the kinds of questions arts-based research might seek to answer. Acknowledging "the value of the less definable and often holistic kinds of knowing" (Greenwood, 2012, p. 1) that result from using art tools and aesthetic analysis, the study examines the relationship between arts-based research and learning. The participants were members of clearly marked cultural groups - indigenous New Zealander teachers, second immigration Roma (gypsy) adolescents, and Bangladeshi students. The method was drama-based and used applied theatre to enable the participants to share and explore their unique cultures and identities. A study by David Dees and Jeff Heinfeldt (2007) involved the use of aesthetic tools to analyze the quality of the experience of video-conferencing. The goal of the aesthetic assignment was to challenge the professor and students to view the video-conferenced classroom from an artistic perspective. Questions addressed the feel of the environment, the body in space, and the spirit of the teaching event. Responses were recorded in journals. Both of these studies used aesthetics as a means to an end, as research tools, in this case to gather information. In the study I conducted the focus was more directly on the aesthetic experience itself. In other words, in the study I conducted aesthetics is not the *means* of the study to explore something else; rather it *is* the topic of the study.

Arts Only. The study conducted by Carole Warburton (2007) is representative of aesthetics being applied narrowly to the teaching of art. Her study focused on the creation of a curriculum devoted to the teaching of aesthetics and the production and display of art. The

philosophical understanding of aesthetics underlying the study I conducted, and the research interest of the study I conducted, both reject the confining of aesthetics to a specialized, compartmentalized area of study within the curriculum, especially when it is treated as a bonus or luxury rather than as a necessity.

Conclusion - Boons, Insights, and Gaps

Like all rewarding travels, a boon was taken home as a consequence of this journey: the knowledge that beauty is real and appreciating it is necessary. In other words, as a result of reviewing the literature, I gained the following insights. In terms of what it means to be human, we have evolved genetically and biologically to have the capacity and desire to appreciate beauty. Additionally, the appreciation of beauty elevates and expands our existential experience with a spiritual dimension. In terms of our shared identity as humans, the appreciation of beauty defines our cultural achievements, marks our social fabric and binds us together. Beauty is not something superfluous to our humanity; it is essential to it. Furthermore, exploring the literature in the field enabled me to delineate characteristics of an experience of beauty; these traits could also be used to promote providing students with experiences of beauty in school. These traits could be used to define such experiences and thereby help teachers to design and to create learning experiences involving the appreciation of beauty and aesthetic experiences across the curriculum. These qualities are -

1. An experience that involved an encounter of, or interaction with, an "art object" (artifact, object, scene, poem, text, song, etc).
2. An experience that elicited one, some or all of the following reactions:
    g. evoked empathy,
    b. prompted reflection,

h. triggered the imagination,

i. provoked an emotional response,

j. elicited curiosity, awe or a sense of wonder,

k. sparked insight (into the inner world of the self or the world "out there"), or

l. aroused a new understanding or perspective of a profound, empowering or an unsettling nature.

This brief survey of current research involving phenomenology, aesthetics and beauty was intended to show the patterns and trends in the literature and to reveal gaps or omissions that should be addressed by further research. In relation to the stated goals of the study, the main themes one can draw from the texts reviewed in this chapter include these: viewed epistemologically, aesthetics is a way of knowing, just as powerful and necessary as more narrowly logico-rational ways of thinking (such as the scientific and mathematical); viewed through a neurological or a philosophical lens, aesthetics is an essential aspect of our human nature; viewed through a political lens, aesthetics is part of any communal ideological context; viewed through a curricular lens, aesthetics has the potential to allow students to thrive by nurturing creativity, growing empathy and developing imagination.

Although this survey revealed that prior research has explored aesthetics outside and inside of schools, has concentrated on teachers and students, and has involved an array of disciplines, little is known about the holistic aesthetic experience of high school students as gleaned from their perspective. Therefore, in this phenomenological study, I explore the experiences of high school students to understand their perception of, and exposure to, beauty. The goals of the study are to examine the essence of beauty in the lived experience of students in school, to explore the perceptions of students regarding school as a place to appreciate beauty,

and to understand the needs of students in relation to school as a place that develops their aesthetic sensibilities.

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

Introduction

Having explained the topic of the research I am undertaking, the purpose of doing so, and how the research fits into a larger picture, in this section I explain exactly what phenomenology is in more detail and define the term with more precision since phenomenology, a methodology that describes how one orients to lived experience, performs an essential function in this study by guiding and structuring the collection of the data and interpreting it.

The Things Themselves

Phenomenology literally means the study of appearances (Lukenchuk, 2013, p. 23). A phenomenon refers to our understanding (in our minds) of something out there (in the world). Phenomenology refers to our attempts to understand and perceive the things of the world through the use of our senses and our reason; however, phenomenologists concede that we cannot understand or know the actual things themselves. Kant (1790) coined the term "noumenon" to refer to "the thing itself," by which he meant the thing we perceive or interpret but that we can actually only ever *infer* because of the structure and limitations of the human mind (van Manen, 2014, p. 51). So, through phenomenology one studies appearances that are structured or interpreted by our consciousness (Lukenchuk, 2013, p. 23) and one aims to uncover or reveal the meaningful structures that are taken for granted in everyday experience, which Husserl referred to as the "lifeworld," the *Lebenswelt* (Lukenchuk, 2013, p. 24). The task of phenomenology is to describe phenomena as they appear to our perception and explore them for meaning. In other words, phenomenology seeks to describe how an aspect of the world is experienced. To be clear, the purpose is not just to *describe* phenomena, but to understand what *lies behind* them from our

subjective perspective. Phenomenology relies on perception and reflection to return experience to the lived (rather than the conceptual) world. The phenomenologist challenges us to understand and express what is experienced in that moment before we reflect on it, conceptualize it, or name it (van Manen, 1990, p. 9).

I share the concern that Yvonna Lincoln (2013) describes when she states that "Phenomenologists are themselves increasingly alarmed by the abstractions represented by the scientific, technological, and instrumental approaches to curriculum" (cited by Patrick Slattery, 2013, e-glossary). Just as curriculum is more than a mere set of concepts, ideas, and facts to be mastered, pedagogy is a form of interactive relationship and more than a bag of teaching tricks. Therefore, phenomenology is a powerful and natural method to use for a study such as this one since phenomenology focuses on "human perceptions, particularly on the aesthetic qualities of human experience" (Willis, 1991, p 173).

Phenomenology includes scanning one's own lifeworld and empirical, naturalistic gathering of evidence about the lifeworlds of others to bring us in more direct contact with the world (van Manen, 1990, p. 9). The search is for exclusively singular aspects (themes, patterns, structures or essences) of a phenomenon. The search is for the very nature of a phenomenon, for "that which makes a some-'thing' what it *is*" (van Manen, 1990, p. 10). Since individual phenomenologies are unique, they are often best represented to other people through metaphor or anecdote.

Steps of the Method

Although Willis (1991) asserts that there is no single best methodology for conducting phenomenological inquiry, he outlines three important, specific movements: gathering material from one's own and other's lifeworlds, discerning the underlying structures in these materials,

and formulating recommendations and orientations to practical action (Willis, 1991, p. 181). He claims that we need to better understand how to describe what we discern metaphorically and how to blend our descriptions "with hermeneutic and practical concerns for a variety of curricular uses which promote rather than constrain autonomy" (Willis, 1991, p. 184-85). Willis expresses the need for more and varied basic descriptions of primary phenomenological states, and the need for more intuitive inquiries probing a few individual phenomenologies deeply. The point of my study was precisely that - an intuitive inquiry probing a single individual phenomenon deeply. To conduct the inquiry, I relied primarily on the guidance of Max van Manen.

Van Manen wrote Researching Lived Experience: Human Science for an Action Sensitive Pedagogy (1990) and Phenomenology of Practice: Meaning-Giving Methods in Phenomenological Research and Writing (2014). In the latter work, van Manen explains that the former work provides the reader with a workable outline of pointers, principles, and practices to conduct a phenomenological research project. I find the former to be more accessible, more straight-forward, closer to a user's guide, and the latter to be more comprehensive, wonder-ful, and moving. Both texts serve me well as I seek to better understand the student experience of beauty in school.

The method allows for me to conduct interviews and engage in conversation with students. It allows me to use anecdote and metaphor to (re)present the experience I am seeking to understand. The goal of the research is to understand the essence of the phenomena, in this case, the experience of beauty in school. The challenge is to make use of language in such a way "as to make present to us what is inherently pre-linguistic" (van Manen, 1990, p. 50). That charge is

both challenging and enticing. Van Manen's two books present the reader, the novice-researcher, the acolyte-phenomenologist, with a straightforward, accessible plan to follow.

A Method for Questioning and Wondering

The 2014 text emphasizes more emphatically than the 1990 text that phenomenology is not a procedural, technical, repeatable method. It is "always a matter of attempts, bids, and hopeful risks" (van Manen, 2014, p. 29). There is an emphasis on the method as dwelling in wonder. Since what we seek to express and capture and understand is beyond or before language, we are free to use literary, artistic, less scientific means of expression to convey or express a thing that is so elusive. This thing is a phenomenon that van Manen defines as "an event or a lived-through experience as it shows itself or as it gives itself when it makes an appearance in our awareness" (van Manen, 2014, p. 65). The challenge for the phenomenologist is to study the world as we experience it before we become conscious of it, before we conceptualize or theorize it. This text also provides the reader with an outline to follow or the contours of a model to imitate, but it situates the reader in, and challenges the reader with, a method that is much more philosophical, contingent, dependent, and malleable.

Phenomenology provides me with a structure and the tools I need to explore the question I am pondering in a way that allows me not only to arrive at a better understanding of beauty, but to do so using a means and a research method that aligns with my disposition and interests.

The Steps I Followed in the Research

In some ways, doing phenomenology is attempting the impossible since on the one hand we attempt to construct a full interpretative description and explanation of an aspect of the lifeworld, while on the other hand we acknowledge that lived life is always more complex than any explication of meaning can reveal (van Manen, 1990, p. 18). Furthermore, the approach is

presuppositionless; we do not begin with a predetermined set of fixed procedures, rigid techniques and hard and fast concepts that define the method. Phenomenologists such as Martin Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty warn against reducing phenomenology to a set of standard strategies or techniques. They assert that the method has to be invented anew and is more a way of thinking and feeling, more a matter of attitude and disposition, than a formulaic method (van Manen, 2014, 41). Nonetheless, researchers such as van Manen (1990, 2014), Moustakas (1994) and Creswell (2013) have identified salient features and activities that illustrate the method of phenomenology which I present in Table 1 below (and expand upon in more detail following the presentation of the chart). The activities outlined in Table 1 served as a guide for the phenomenological study I conducted.

Table 1

Important Features of a Phenomenological Study

Activity	Description	Key Moves
Step One: Pose the Question	The researcher articulates a single abiding concern or concept that focuses on an aspect of lived experience. (chapter 1 and chapter 2)	The researcher wonders and ponders.
Step Two: Suspend Beliefs	The researcher describes his/her personal experiences with the phenomenon - not to take himself/herself completely out of the study but (ideally) to set them aside and focus on the experiences of the participants. (chapter 1)	The researcher steps aside and cultivates curiosity.
Step Three: Gather the Data	The researcher works with participants to gather pre-reflective experiential accounts of individuals through, for instance, one-on-one interviews, group interviews and written reflections. (chapter 3)	The researcher explores and collects.
Step Four: Describe the Data.	The researcher organizes the data and mediates meaning, looking for patterns and identifying themes. (chapter 4)	The researcher analyzes and synthesizes.

Step Five: Describe the Phenomenon	The researcher creates a descriptive passage that analyzes the essence of the experience, exploring "what" they have experienced and "how" they experienced it. (chapter 5)	The researcher interprets and reflects.

Notes. 1. Gleaned from van Manen (1990, 2014), Moustakas (1994) and Creswell (2013). 2. These features are not steps to follow in a strictly linear and sequential manner; they are elements to include or principles to respect most probably in a recursive, back and forth, or rhizomatic way. As a result, some of the features occur throughout the entire process and are returned to time and again (for instance, bracketing) while others occur only at a specific time in the process (such as interpreting the data). In other words, phenomenology can be characterized as a dynamic interplay among these research activities. 3. "Chapters" in the description column denotes the correspondence between the movements of the method and the chapters of this study.

Pose the Question

In this movement, the researcher articulates a single abiding concern or concept that focuses on an aspect of lived experience. The researcher wonders and ponders.

Goals.

- To explore the perceptions and attitudes that students have regarding school as a place to appreciate beauty.
- To understand the needs of students regarding school as a place that develops their aesthetic sensibilities.
- To examine the essence of beauty in the lived experience of students in school

Research Question.

- What is the student experience of beauty in school?

Subquestions.

- What meaning do high school students ascribe to beauty?
- What experiences come to mind when students think of beauty?
- What expectations do students have of school as a place to experience beauty?
- How does school foster or inhibit the development of aesthetic sensibilities, such as appreciating beauty, being attuned to art, and being open to moments of transformation or convergence?

Suspend Beliefs

In this movement, the researcher describes his/her personal experiences with the phenomenon - not to take himself/herself completely out of the study but (ideally) to set them aside and focus on the experiences of the participants. The researcher steps aside and cultivates curiosity.

In the course of this study, I practiced reflexivity by sharing my own personal connections to the topic of the research. By making them explicit, I hoped to achieve a higher level of validity in the procedure, to more effectively bracket my own experiences, and to position myself clearly in relation to the topic. However, phenomenological inquiry demands an even higher level of self-awareness.

As the researcher conducts a phenomenological study to break through the taken-for-grantedness of life and get to the meaning structures of our experiences, he or she relies on two key actions: the *epoche* (bracketing) and the reduction. These are the two central components of the phenomenological method. In the *epoche* we prepare, open up, free ourselves; in the reduction we engage, we attend, we address the uniqueness of the phenomenon.

In the first move (the *epoche*), the researcher suspends or removes any beliefs or assumptions that may obstruct his or her access to the phenomenon. This is an act of suspension or abstention (indeed, *epoche* means abstention). The *epoche* includes bracketing, or putting into brackets (parenthesizing) assumptions that might stand in the way of opening access to the originary or the living meaning of the phenomenon (van Manen, 2014, p. 215). Thus, the purpose of the *epoche* is to open oneself to experience as lived by abstaining from theoretical, suppositional or emotional intoxications, to free ourselves from presuppositions. Bracketing is important because, to come to grips with the significance of the phenomenon, to take hold of it, we need to place the phenomenon outside of our knowledge of it. Maura Dowling (2005) explains that the reduction, a key epistemological strategy of phenomenology, is necessary to hold subjective perspectives and theoretical constructs in abeyance and facilitate the essence of the phenomena to emerge. The act is not one of forgetting what has been experienced, but rather of brushing it away to see more clearly.

In the second move (the reduction, derived from *re-ducere* meaning to lead back), the researcher reachieves a direct and primitive contact with the world as he or she experiences it or as it shows itself (rather than as we conceptualize it). In other words, the researcher engages in the reduction in order to let that which gives itself show itself. The underlying idea of the reduction is to gain access (via the *epoche*) to the world of prereflective experiences-as-lived in order to mine its meaning. The purpose of the reduction is to turn to the world in an attentive and open state of mind (affected by the epoche). Dowling (2005) describes the epoche as refraining from judgment and staying away from the everyday, commonplace way of perceiving things, and the reduction as reducing the world as it is considered in the natural attitude to a world of pure phenomena (Dowling, 2005, p. 132).

These are the two central components of the phenomenological method. The epoche gives a researcher an open state of mind, and the reduction allows him or her to turn attentively to the world. These movements are meant to allow the phenomenologist to see and to describe the phenomenon freely and without prejudice.

In this study, I practiced the kind of reflexivity expressed through the *epoche* by concentrating on the experiences of students. The design of the study keeps their experiences at the heart and center of the study. Rather than focus on teachers and their methods or intentions, or rather than treating the students as subjects of things that school does to them, I bracketed all that away and focused on their perspectives, their words, their lifeworlds. The goal is always to get closer to understanding the nature of the student experience of beauty. Furthermore, rather than project what I hoped to see, or rather than anticipate certain results, I entered the conversations with students hoping to bring the mystery of their experience more fully into presence. The *epoche* helped me focus on the experience of students by forcing me to bracket out my own perceptions as a teacher with 28 years of experience and immersed in the liberal arts throughout my life; consequently, in the reduction, I was better able to avoid trying to translate or reduce their experiences to clearly defined concepts, to dispel the mystery, or to make them fit my perceptions and expectations.

Taking oneself "out" of a study is challenging, but also liberating. One technique helpful to me was to distinguish between questions that asked students their opinion of the phenomenon and questions that asked students to describe their experiences. In example of the difference is to juxtapose a question such as this "How could school do a better job of helping students experience beauty?" with this "What emotions did you feel during the experience?" The former

rushes ahead to considering conclusions we can draw or points we can make, but the latter allows us to explore more fully the experience we are seeking to understand.

Another technique that helped me prevent my own ideas, opinions and baggage from interfering with focusing on and probing what the students were describing was to fall back on the interview guide. The questions, especially those I gleaned from van Manen (2014, 1990), helped me push the students to recall and describe (Where were you? What did you say? Who else was there?), and helped me keep myself in check. I was not "locked on" to the questions nor intent on following them rigidly; after all, I conducted a semi-structured interview and the goal was to facilitate a conversation. The questions were there to spark that conversation. I listened carefully to responses to formulate good follow-up questions and to stay attuned to the student's experience. However, the questions on the interview guide reminded me of the kinds of questions to ask and helped me keep my attention focused on how the students experienced the phenomenon.

Another technique I found helpful was to re-interpret what the students described hermeneutically. As van Manen (1990 said, "hermeneutics describes how one interprets the 'texts' of life" (p. 4). By treating the text of their remarks as I would treat a poem, I focused on the themes of what they were saying. I am used to avoiding the mistake of "over-reading" into a text, or projecting myself into a text and over-interpreting it. My ability to recognize these interpretative dangers helped me when I explored the transcripts from the interviews. Moreover, as part of the data analysis, after distilling the students' perceptions to their thematic essence, I explored their connections to poems with similar themes. Not only did this move help me interpret the data with evocativeness, intensity, and tone, but, in this way, I held myself back from rushing to connect the text of the interviews to my concerns and my perspective. This move

allowed me to more fully interpret and appreciate the data, to linger in what the students were actually saying, and helped me quarantine the urge to impose my own analysis.

In the data analysis portion of this study I tried to adhere to an inductive method and let the themes I identified arise naturally and organically from the text of the interviews. However, in the conclusion portion of this study I utilized a more deductive approach to draw conclusions, make connections to concepts outlined in the literature review, and to consider implications for the field.

Gather the Data

In this movement, the researcher works with participants to gather pre-reflective experiential accounts of individuals through, for instance, one-on-one interviews, group interviews and written reflections. The researcher explores and collects. The researcher works with a group of people, often just three or four individuals that constitute a heterogeneous sample. The researcher gathers pre-reflective experiential accounts of individuals through, for instance (as I have) one-on-one interviews, group interviews and written reflections. (To insure no one was harmed as a result of the way the research was conducted, I followed the guidelines of the International Research Review Board throughout the study and completed IRRB training on 5/19/16.)

Participants. In this study, I worked with four students. I selected these students because they have experienced the phenomenon, making this a criterion sample. I also selected them based upon my impressions of their interests and experiences to arrive at a heterogeneous sample. The group is a purposeful sample since I chose them because they could purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon in the study (Creswell, 2013; Efron & Ravid, 2013). They also constitute a convenience sample since I had easy access

to communicating with them and working with them (Creswell, 2013; Efron & Ravid, 2013).

The four participants are in their senior year of high school and were students of mine for English as juniors. I invited six students to participate in the study. These four students responded with enthusiasm (the other two did not reply). After I met with each participant individually to explain the research topic and the structure of the study, each participant granted their informed consent (see Appendix A) and completed a questionnaire (see Appendix B). These initial interviews lasted between 25 and 35 minutes. Part One of the questionnaire asked students to provide demographic information. Here is a summary of that information. (To respect privacy and follow IRRB guidelines, all names have been changed.)

Lily. Lily feels successful in English and German class. She really likes the creative electives, and she also enjoys the social aspect of school. She dislikes how strict due dates are. She is not involved with any clubs at school; however, she has been on the varsity volleyball team for four years. She enjoys being outdoors anytime of the year, so she usually spends her summers on backpacking trips or expeditions. At least once a week she goes to a forest preserve with her dog. She also enjoys reading and writing during her spare time.

Martin. Martin feels successful in English, science, art, Spanish, and history. He is involved in a STEAM competition called Destination Imagination. He likes the opportunity to learn new information with other people who share the same interests at school. He also likes that school challenges him because that forces him to apply what he has learned in more interesting ways. "If school wasn't around," Martin said, "I wouldn't get to learn as cohesively about physics for example." He dislikes how much time is wasted and how much busywork is done. This year there is less of that, but in general he would rather learn about the interesting and useful aspects of a topic than just complete assignments in order to get a specific grade. He

enjoys spending time drawing, painting, building things, reading books and playing games.

Amy. Amy feels successful in her work ethic and her ability to communicate with others. She always give 110% and doesn't stop until the task at hand is completed. She knows what her goals are in life, and she is aware of the steps that she needs to take to achieve them. She is very involved in extracurriculars at school. She is a member of the dance team, Orchesis, NHS, Life of a Wildcat (a student leadership club), and a mentor of the bridge group. She has also participated in yearbook, student council, and soccer. She likes being able to see all her friends everyday at school and she feels that school gives her opportunities to get involved in the local community. She dislikes the load of homework and stress that school causes. "Being on a varsity sport, in AP classes, and having other outside commitments is a lot to juggle," Amy said. "It causes lots of late nights and lots of cups of coffee!!" Some of her favorite activities outside of school include hanging out with her family and friends. She is very close to her two brothers; they enjoy going out to eat together or watching their favorite TV shows and sports teams. During the summer she loves to waterski at her lakehouse. A personal interest of hers includes giving back. In January 2016, Amy was diagnosed with lymphoma, a disease that afflicted her brother too, but as of September 2016, she is cancer-free! Recently she has reached out to various childhood cancer campaigns to see how she could get involved. This cause means a lot to her, and she is interested in volunteering for nonprofit organizations such as Make-A-Wish.

Nancy. Some of the ways Nancy feels successful include time management, finishing her responsibilities, studying, asking teachers for help, asking questions, and making and maintaining strong relationships with teachers and friends. "I've gotten grades I'm proud of in my classes," Nancy said, "because I put in the hard work." She is the captain of the debate team and participates in Topcats (a tutoring and mentoring program connecting high school students

with elementary schools in underserved areas). She likes being able to socialize at school with peers and teachers, learning how to do something for the first time and being able to apply it later, and learning the "why" behind something. Overall, she likes learning useful things. She dislikes how competitive school is. She doesn't like how arbitrary and subjective the grading system can be, and most of the time she feels the grade doesn't reflect one's strong work ethic or understanding of the material. She feels grades merely show "how well you were able to take a test, minimize point reduction, cram and purge, etc." She hates the apathy that exists, where each teacher assigns students an hour or so of homework, but then students have that for five or six classes in addition to extracurriculars, sports, family time, hobbies, friends, sleep, college applications, etc. "And then that teacher doesn't understand why her whole class is stressed out and not paying attention," she said. Nancy feels school instills in students early on that "intelligence is measured numerically and can be easily quantified which messes up a lot of student's self esteem." Her interests include art and reading which "have always been my most passionate hobbies."

Table 2

The Participants in the Study - Summary

Trait	Martin	Amy	Nancy	Lily
Areas of school at which you feel successful	English, science, art, Spanish, history	Work ethic, goal-setting, and ability to communicate.	Time management, asking questions, getting help, relationships.	English and German.
Involvement in extracurriculars	Destination Imagination (STEAM club)	Dance team, Orchesis, NHS, leadership, mentoring.	Debate team (captain), tutoring and mentoring program.	Volleyball (three of four on varsity).

Personal interests and activities	Drawing, painting, building things, reading books, playing games.	Family, friends, watching TV and sports, waterskiing, and volunteering.	Art and reading.	The outdoors, backpacking, walking in the forest with the dog, reading and writing.
Like about school	The opportunity to learn new information with others, applying what is learned in interesting ways.	Seeing friends everyday, and opportunities to get involved in the local community.	Socializing, learning useful things such as how to do something or the "why" behind something.	Creative electives and the social aspect.
Dislike about school	Wasted time, busywork, and completing assignments merely to get a specific grade.	The homework and the stress.	Arbitrary nature of grading, emphasis on reducing learning to numbers, onerous homework load.	The strictness of due dates.

Sample size. The four students constituted a group small enough that I could collect extensive detail about each individual. Since the intent in qualitative research generally, and phenomenology specifically, is not to generalize the information but to elucidate the particular and the specific (Creswell, 2013; van Manen 1990, 2014; Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011), I felt comfortable that a group of three to four students would allow me to go in-depth, into the particular, rather than to try to cover more breadth with a larger sample.

The Site. The site of the research is the suburban high school where I work as a teacher and department supervisor. The high school has an enrollment of 2022, an average class size of 22, a 94% graduation rate, and a student population of which 5% are low income and 82% are

white (ISBE, 2014-15). The interviews took place at school in a conference room. Of course, there are advantages and disadvantages to using one's workplace as the site of a study. On the one hand, as Efron and Ravid (2013) note, "Practitioners have grown to recognize the distinctiveness and validity of their knowledge and have realized that there is no substitute for their familiarity with the particular setting" (Efron & Ravid, 2013, p. 4). On the other hand, researchers such as Creswell (2013) express concerns regarding doing research in one's own backyard, including imbalances of power between the researcher and the participants, and the difficulty of sharing findings that potentially jeopardize one's job or negatively impacts an organization. In the case of this study, the participants were not current students and their participation was entirely voluntary (see informed consent letter, Appendix A). Moreover, the findings were unlikely to jeopardize jobs or negatively impact the organization since the sample size was small and the methodology by definition created findings not meant to be generalized. Nonetheless, multiple strategies of validation were employed to ensure the data were collected, and the life-experiences were interpreted, responsibly, accurately and insightfully.

Validation Strategies. The validation strategies employed in this study are consistent with the recommendations by Creswell (2013), Efron & Ravid (2013) and Hesse-Biber & Leavy (2011). To insure the trustworthiness of the study, validation strategies include *prolonged engagement* (three face-to-face meetings were conducted with each participant over a six-week period); *triangulation* (evidence was gathered from four different sources for a variety of perspectives and using three different techniques, namely, questionnaire, interview, and focus group); *peer review* (a colleague who has an EdD in Curriculum agreed to review the data collection and analysis as it progressed and to play devil's advocate and ask hard questions); *clarification of researcher bias* (I positioned myself in relation to the study and shared explicitly

my past experiences related to, and feelings about, the topic of the study); *member checking* (in the exit interview, the participants were provided copies of transcripts to check for accuracy, and the findings and interpretations were shared for comment); and *rich, thick descriptions* (employed in data analysis through the use of vivid detail and strong, salient quotes).

Data Collection Tools. The data was collected using a questionnaire (Appendix B), a focus group (see interview guide, Appendix C), and an exit interview (see interview guide, Appendix D).

I met with Martin individually for a one-on-one interview. This interview served as a pilot for the focus group discussion that took place the following week. For the focus group discussion, I met with Nancy, Amy and Lily.

The questionnaire (a form in Google Classroom) was completed by each participant during our initial meeting. Participants completed the form and returned it to me electronically. I was nearby in case they had questions or needed help. The tool was used to gather basic demographic data and to initiate thinking about, and reflecting on, the topic of the study. In the first part of the questionnaire, students provided information about their general experiences in, and attitudes about, school. In the second part of the questionnaire, students articulated their understanding of beauty and experiences of beauty. Their responses were primarily linguistic (written responses) but they could also respond non-linguistically (drawing a picture to illustrate their ideas). The third part of the questionnaire merely asked students to think about times they have experienced beauty in school and that we would discuss these memories when next we met for a group discussion.

The focus group and the exit interview were semi-structured and the questions geared to go beyond the subjective experiences of the participants regarding the phenomenon, beyond their

reflection on it, opinions, thoughts or ideas regarding it, and to get at their actual *experience* of it. This is what sets phenomenology apart from other forms of qualitative research. The goal is to gather "raw" lived experience descriptions, not perceptions, views, beliefs, or interpretations (van Manen, 1990, p 62). Therefore, the questions are not phrased as "What are your thoughts about the place of beauty in school?" Rather, they are phrased as "When you think about times in high school when you had an experience that involved beauty, what comes to mind?"

The questionnaire and focus group focused on gathering data, the raw lived experience. The questions were meant to prompt the participants into a deeper reflection on the experience. I crafted the questions using van Manen's (1990, 2014) categories of existential inquiry as a guide to the reflective inquiry process. I intended for the questions to press the participants, or rather open doors for the participants to, more deeply recall and explore their experiences of beauty by thinking in terms of five existential components of the lived world: lived space (spatiality), lived body (corporeality), lived time (temporality), lived self-other (relationality or communality), and lived things (materiality).

In the focus group interview, I invited the participants to share their individual experiences by describing the specific experience as it was lived through, from the inside, including vivid details but excluding opinion or interpretation. Then, in an essential and hermeneutic move, I turned to the participants, treating them as collaborators in the study rather than subjects of the research, and asked them to help interpret the data (the lived experience material), to reflect on it, explore it, converse about it, analyze it for patterns and themes. Again, the focus of the interview was on the experience as lived, not on interpretation or opinion or recommendations. Therefore, I asked questions such as "Based on what has been shared, what seems to be the *essential* characteristics of what it is like to experience beauty?" but not

questions such as "How could schools do a better job exposing students to experiences of beauty?" or "Should experiences of beauty be included in the curriculum?"

In the exit interview, I relied on member checking as a validation strategy to insure the trustworthiness of the study by asking students to review my interpretation and analysis of the interviews and to critique my conclusions. Also, I asked them to review the transcripts for accuracy. In addition, I took these steps to respect the dignity of the participants so that rather than feeling like the subjects of an experiment they would feel like contributors to the study. For instance, I said, "Here are my conclusions," and asked, "What do you think: Is this what it means to experience beauty? Is this what the experience of beauty looks like?" I also asked questions in an attempt to put closure on the process. For instance, I asked, "Do you have any questions or concerns about the study, or do you have any last thoughts or ideas you'd like to share?"

In this chapter, I attempted to explain the activities associated with phenomenology given that the method is more a way of thinking and feeling than a formulaic model. I explained how I posed the question, suspended my beliefs, gathered the data, and described the participants, the sample size, the site of the research, the validation strategies, and the data collection tools. In the next chapter, I analyze and interpret the data – the conversations with the students about their experiences of beauty – by looking for patterns and identifying themes.

CHAPTER FOUR

Data Analysis

Describe the Data

In this movement - or rather, keeping in mind that phenomenology is more a way of thinking and feeling than a formulaic method, the activities associated with this part of the method - the researcher organizes the data and mediates meaning, looking for patterns and identifying themes; analyzes and synthesizes; employs "thick" description to capture the participants' lived experience; highlights significant statements or quotes in order to develop clusters of meanings into themes, patterns or structures; balances parts to the whole and explores the subjective, particular experiences of individuals regarding the phenomenon, as well as the objective, general experience that the group has in common with each other (Creswell, 2013; Hesse-Biber, 2011).

I gathered the data by recording the interviews in audio and video format. Then I transcribed the audio. I analyzed the data in the transcripts to discover patterns and identify recurring themes. I coded everything in the transcripts with the name of the theme to which it corresponded. To organize these patterns visually, I created a chart. In the left column of the chart I wrote the name of the category (the theme), and across the top row of the chart I wrote the name of each student in its own column. Then I populated the chart with the words spoken by each student that matched each category by working from the top to the bottom of each column, and moving from student to student.

Having coded the data to note themes that emerged and having represented this data in a chart, I then read each row of the chart across from left to right to note the frequency with which the category was touched upon by each speaker. In other words, I analyzed the data for the

occurrence of each theme. Although each category was populated by comments from all four of the students, much of what the students described about their experiences of beauty differed from the ideas about beauty I described in the literature review and reflected perceptions that I did not anticipate. Some of the categories and themes that emerged echoed the aesthetic experiences described in the literature review and shared connections with my own perceptions, but much of what the students shared about their experiences of beauty did not align with the ideas outlined in the literature review and was new to me. The data I gathered proved to be rich and interesting, and the task of distilling it down to its essence was challenging. Nonetheless, Table 3 shows the themes that emerged as a result of my interpretation and analysis of the data when students described their experiences of beauty in school.

Table 3

Student Perceptions of Experiences of Beauty - Salient Characteristics

Theme or Category	Description
Social interaction	The participation of others, teamwork
Resolution	Overcoming a challenge, achievement after working hard, culmination of a struggle
Self-awareness	Realization of growth, of having acquired a skill, gained new understanding, or insight into one's identity
Positive feelings	Happiness, satisfaction, or confidence
Voluntarily participation	Participation without coercion, and the freedom to make choices, to find one's own way
Intrinsic value	Self-fulfillment, as opposed to external reward or benefit, such as points in a gradebook or to please someone else

Having presented themes or categories that arose from having coded the data and developing clusters of meaning based on my own "insight, intuition and impression" (Creswell,

2013, p. 182), I will now highlight significant statements and quotes that describe how the participants experienced the phenomenon, or more precisely, how the students experienced beauty at school. I will present the statements using the themes presented in Table 3 to organize this section. Table 4 summarizes the kinds of experiences that the students described when they thought of beauty in school. Each example will be explored in detail throughout this chapter.

Table 4

Experiences of Beauty the Participants Described

	Martin	Amy	Nancy	Lily
Illustration (Drawing or Metaphor)	Bees fly toward a flower; the "good stuff" (friendships, clubs, learning) is surrounded by clusters of "superficial things" (homework, grades, waking up early).	"Beauty in school is like seeing the finish line during a journey or race."	Two smiling stick figures hold hands.	A smiling girl holds a "Map of Choices" sign beneath a thought balloon showing a plethora of courses.
Experiences	After trial and error, constructing a robotic machine that functioned as required; Creating a painting using a new technique; Appreciating the artwork of peers; Realizing why something learned earlier was important to learn.	Not wearing her wig; Working hard to make the cuts in dance; Making friends.	Developing relationships; Overcoming the fear of public speaking; Developing confidence through personal growth.	Climbing a mountainside covered in scree; Working hard to develop her volleyball skills.

Social Interaction. When describing the experience of beauty, the participants frequently mentioned the involvement of friends, teammates or allies as being part of the experience. When asked to draw a picture to illustrate what came to mind when she thought of beauty in school, Nancy drew a simple representation of two stick figures holding hands (Figure 1).

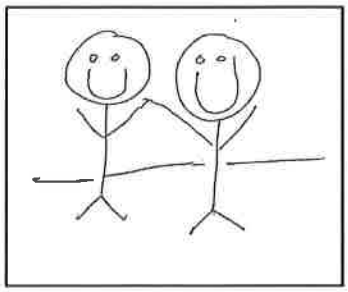

Figure 1. Nancy's illustration of the relationship between beauty and school.

When asked to explain the picture, she said, "[Beauty is] the relationships you make with people over the course of your four years of high school, whether that is with teachers or with your peers and all aspects of school." Her picture illustrated that a central component of experiencing beauty in school was "the people that you meet and the relationships that you take with you." Additionally, Nancy felt that one of the most important things to learn in school is how to get along with people and interact and make new friends. Nancy described her relationships with teammates on the debate team as integral to her idea of beauty, as well as forming a relationship with a teacher with whom she met with each morning at 5:30am before the start of the school day for extra help mastering chemistry. What made the experience beautiful was "that relationship that I built with [the teacher], not necessarily the material or understanding the material, but the bond that I made with her was so important to me." Nancy went on to say, "I think that having goals is really important and school is not as important. You learn stuff in school, but I think some of the most important things is to learn how to balance and get along with people, and interactions, so kind of just a connection between others, just in making new friends and people, but then also getting to the end. School is just crazy."

Martin also mentioned the involvement of friends and teammates as integral to the experience of beauty. "You share an experience of beauty with other people," he said. In his

drawing (Figure 2), he explained that "at first glance, school doesn't seem like something that is particularly beautiful," so he put "all the superficial things, like having to wear heart monitors in gym or struggling on tests, having lots of homework, having to wake up early" in the picture, but that "the one good thing... that all of these go toward... the good stuff is actually learning new things and making new friends, joining clubs and sports and other beautiful things that are good about school."

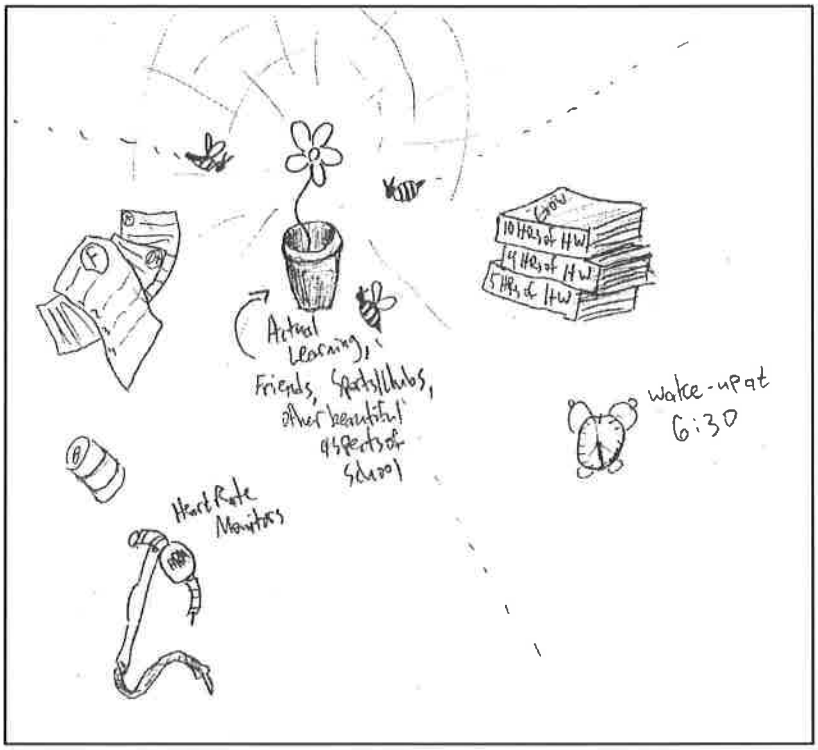

Figure 2. Martin's illustration of the relationship between beauty and school.

In his description of a specific experience of beauty, Martin described an engineering project his team worked on to create a machine that would move forward and backward, retrieve an object, and perform other movements as part of a competition. After many frustrating failed attempts, one of the machines finally worked. Although the feeling of having accomplished a difficult task was part of the experience of beauty for Martin, integral to defining the experience was the

involvement of others. "It would have been one thing if I had just made a cool project by myself... [but] the fact that we all worked towards it together is what made the experience of it actually beautiful... Everyone was gathered around it, watching what was going to happen, [which] sort of hyped it up a bit, made it more anticipatorial. We had gathered around all the prototypes and bad machines before and just watched them fall over and not work. It was 'here we go again,' and it was the togetherness and the ready." Martin went on to say that getting the machine to work was part of the reward, but so was seeing everyone come together. "Before that [machine] worked, we were a little fractured as a team. Some people were working on one part of something and other people were trying other ideas. We all got behind this idea and got it to work, so I think it kind of brought us together a bit."

Lily described two experiences of beauty, one of which involved school, and one of which did not. Her outside of school experience of beauty involved the outdoors and the support and encouragement of others. She described the challenge of climbing a mountain, the slope of which was covered in scree (small, loose stones), and she explained that "I could not have done that by myself." Walking on scree is like walking on pieces of glass, and every time you take a step, the scree falls. To walk up, you have to plant your foot, create a step, and move quickly because everything falls once you move. Lily said that everyone knew she was not very confident walking up the mountainside. "Easily I could have fallen down," Lily said. "It was terrifying. We all walked in a line, and I was second to last, so I could follow what people were doing. They all helped me get there." Lily explained that at the beginning of the adventure, everything was fine, "everybody is talking, laughing... but at the end, no talking. You were very focused. Then we got to the top and it was really exciting." In recalling the experience, Lily

emphasizes that the experience pushed her to her physical and mental limits as an individual, but she also emphasizes the role that the involvement of others played in her success.

Like Lily, Amy also described two experiences of beauty. One directly involved building relationships with others in a way that echoes the experiences of Nancy, Martin, and Lily. Amy recalled being a freshman and feeling estranged a bit right off the bat. Of a freshman class of 500 students, 300 students come from one middle school, 100 from another, and the rest from an assortment of small public and private schools throughout the surrounding area. Amy came from one of those smaller schools. "I didn't have many people coming over with me. My whole friend group went to [the neighboring private high school], so I knew people but none of my closest friends." Amy then described the embarrassment of having to find a table of students to sit with at lunch time. "My freshman year I had seventh [period] lunch, which is kind of bad luck to begin with because not many people have seventh lunch to start with. I knew nobody going in the first day. I was, 'Well, I'll just go.' I walked in the cafeteria, didn't know a soul, and just sat at a random table. I sat there for pretty much a year, and we are still friends now, so I feel like the relationships I've made are really… my whole friend group now." For Amy, the experience of being forced to meet new people and find new friends is what it means to experience beauty in school.

Although all four participants mentioned the involvement of others in their descriptions of experiences of beauty, the nature of the involvement varied. For instance, in Lily's case, others offered support and encouragement to help her overcome a challenge. In Martin's case, others helped him accomplish a difficult task. And in the cases of Nancy and Amy, the act of developing relationships with others, creating that connection, was the experience of beauty.

Resolution. When describing the experience of beauty, the participants often recounted overcoming a challenge, feeling a sense of achievement after working hard, or feeling a sense of culmination after a period of struggle. For Nancy, the experience of beauty involved overcoming her fear of public speaking. Nancy's English teacher freshman year required students to present in front of the class. "Freshman year I had really bad social anxiety, speaking out in front of class. Mr. Smith, we had speeches or whatever, and I would go to present them in front of people but I came to class, had a panic attack and couldn't do it." So, to overcome this deficit, she joined the debate team. "I basically forced myself to get these skills like public speaking because I just know that no matter what I do, it would be necessary." She describes her experience of beauty as four years of hard work, attending tournaments, practicing, videotaping herself, and eliminating crutch words such as *like* and *um*. "This one time, or, um, this one time freshman year when we were practicing for state, I said 'um' 149 times within a four-minute speech. Now I just realize that I don't need those crutch words anymore. When I don't have anything to say, it is okay to just not say anything and take a powerful pause, think about what you want to say, and then say it." Experiencing beauty for Nancy was moving from being "deathly afraid of [public speaking] freshman year" to not having a problem "speaking out in front of class. I have to present to forty kids after school for debate. I have to speak out in front of random people at tournaments. It has just become something. I like public speaking now." Nancy said, "It is pretty beautiful just to realize if you work hard toward something and you make it a priority and a goal... you can become more confident."

Martin also described his experience of beauty in terms of achievement and accomplishment, the culmination of hard work, the realization of a goal. "I did this club called Destination Imagination outside of school, sort of like engineering and art meeting each other.

Last year we had spent probably six months trying to build a hovercraft and get that to work. It wouldn't float, and it wouldn't float, and we eventually decided, 'Alright, we don't have enough time. We have to give up on this idea.' So we made a second thing, which was this pneumatic powered lopping animal car that you can drive around on. When that one worked, that was just a beautiful experience because I felt really excited that all of the hard work finally came into something good. Even though the thing itself was kind of ugly, what it stood for was kind of beautiful... It worked, so that moment was a beautiful moment."

Martin also described the experience of creating a painting of a crocodile in art class as an experience of beauty. However, it was not the thing itself, the artwork, that made the experience beautiful, but the act of creation itself, or rather, the completion of the act of creation. "When it was complete it was a beautiful thing to have experienced. It was obviously a pretty painting... but the fact that I had learned how to do a new style of painting and gotten good enough at it until I actually produced something, and just taking a step back out of it - that was sort of beautiful."

Martin said that both examples involved an experience of "completeness, a culmination of something," seeing the finished product and seeing it "in its fullness." Martin also described a moment of beauty in which he suddenly understood that the math he had learned in earlier grades was helpful now. "After you have learned all that math, you realize why you were learning it... I finally figured out in physics that calculus had a reason to exist. I finally saw why we had been learning math for the last couple of years. That was a beautiful experience." In all these experiences, Martin described feeling a moment of realization, culmination, or resolution. "Maybe it is something there is about completeness in beauty... things fitting together in unison... something about harmony."

In her description of experiencing beauty, Lily described the moment she had to climb a mountain pass as part of a 45-day backpacking expedition in Alaska. She was terrified, but the beauty arose from meeting the challenge, from overcoming the obstacles inside (her fear and doubt) and outside (her physical limitations and the scree). "I was terrified of climbing this one pass. The pass is you have a mountain and a mountain and the pass is kind of like a little tip between the two pieces. It was completely scree and I was terrified to walk up it because it was vertical and you have to walk switchback." Although the beauty arose during the experience, from "seeing everything that you did and then what you are going to do... seeing it, doing it, just so many aspects, breathing it..." it also arose from the sense of accomplishment and achievement experienced after the fact: "It took us three hours to get upside and fifteen minutes to get down the other. Then we had to hike for another two miles. I took some caffeine, like 5-hour energy… Now I think about it when I am trying to accomplish goals, 'If I can climb that, I can do anything.'"

Amy illustrated the feeling that a sense of accomplishment or resolution was an important aspect of experiencing beauty in her metaphoric representation of beauty. Rather than draw a picture, Amy chose to represent the experience of beauty metaphorically. She wrote, "Beauty in school is like seeing the finish line during a journey or race." Later she said that something beautiful involves being given a challenge, conquering it with confidence, and then crossing the finish line, and "being able to look back and be happy with what you did." She explains that in school there are a lot of challenges and that it is difficult to juggle extracurriculars and academics, but she experiences beauty in the act of struggling to overcome these challenges. "I find beauty in people pushing forward and keep going and 'I'm going to graduate.'" Echoing the

theme of endurance and perseverance expressed by Nancy, Martin and Lily, Amy said that beauty is found in "your will to push forward and keep going."

Amy included this feeling in her description of going to school without a wig. Amy had experienced hair loss as a result of being treated for lymphoma, and the decision to shave her head and leave the wig at home was the experience she described as beautiful. It was a personal experience, a moment when she had to overcome fears of how others would react. "I feel like the first time I decided not to wear it in school, I don't know, that moment was just kind of a beautiful moment. I was contemplating not doing it for a while. It was, this is getting annoying, because there are so many more things you have to worry about with it. It is itchy. It is hot. You have to readjust it in the morning. It was really annoying. 'Oh gosh, when do you make the move?' I don't know, because some of my teachers and allies, I don't know if they know. Some of my classmates now know and how are they going to look at me? How are they going to perceive me if I just randomly show up with a bald head?" Tired of her hair falling out and dealing with the itchy, annoying wig that needed constant readjustment, she made a difficult decision one morning – and never looked back. "It was my personal decision. One morning I just woke up and [said], 'Mom, we are doing it. I'm going to shave it.' I thought myself, I, was beautiful in that moment because I had the confidence to just go for it... It was a beautiful experience for me because [I showed the world] 'this is who I am.'" Amy explains that her experience of beauty was not a moment exactly but more of a progression, a movement from shaving her head (that was the first part), to adapting to a new life without hair, "and then there is the moment 'I am not going to wear a wig anymore; I am just going to go without it.'" The culmination, the moment of realization, the end of the struggle, was following through on that decision. "I felt like I reached it, like a start point and an end point."

Amy also included the experience of hard work and struggle in her description of finding beauty in being a member of the dance team. "Freshman year I made the JV tam and was really proud of that. I wasn't really sure if I was even going to make the team because… I was the only girl from my middle school trying out… My middle school didn't have a feeder team so I was really nervous coming in. 'Geez, I don't have any experience in this,' and then finding out I made the team was awesome. Then sophomore year I was in JV again and I was captain. Then coming into junior year on poms, it was this really weird thing… There has never been a junior on JV. So they do this thing that they call Sophomore Suicide… When you try out [for varsity] as a junior… it is kind of scary because [if] they don't think I'm good enough, then that is it. I'm caught… So kind of going through that experience was really scary. I thought I made the team [but] I was actually an alternate during the summer of my junior year." However, the beauty of the experience was that "I worked really hard and worked myself up to a permanent member and I was the only alternative that moved up. Then we placed at state, which was really incredible, and now being a senior, being on the top of the team, there is so much responsibility." Amy appreciates the beauty of her struggle, sees the beauty in it, and enjoys "looking at the journey of everything and looking back."

Self-awareness. When describing the experience of beauty, the participants often described moments of realization involving self-awareness of their growth or identity. In the experience Nancy described of becoming a better speaker, she explained that part of the beauty was "overcoming a struggle of some sort and seeing how that impacted your character and analyzing the change and the development and growth that you had." She added, "I think the most beautiful part is seeing how you have changed over the years... seeing the overall personal growth." One of the things that makes experiences in extracurricular activities like debate

beautiful is that "it is pretty much the only time you can just see yourself grow. Otherwise, [school is only about] how well I've learned information [not] how much I have grown as a person." Experiences of beauty for Nancy include moments in which growth is nurtured, and that happens "outside of school, when you have the time to do that, [because] school doesn't nurture that a lot of the time."

Nancy described the experience of having to give a speech that was exactly four minutes long. She traces her development from freshman year to senior year. "I just could never get it to four minutes. It would always be 2:30, 3:30, and getting to four minutes is so crucial... I would always run out of things to say, because I wasn't analyzing arguments as in depth and I wasn't attacking them the way I should... At state... the judge just loved me... It was really, really exciting getting to four minutes. It doesn't sound like a lot, but when you have to go up there and have to attack their entire case and you have to use all the evidence you found... I'd done research for months, and learning how to use that and come up with a speech, it was really exciting. And then the judge loved it." Nancy also credits debate with helping her build confidence and helping her develop as a leader. Her realization of her development and growth is integral to defining her experiences in debate as beautiful.

Martin, like Nancy, mentioned learning something new, such as acquiring a skill or gaining a new understanding, in his description of experiencing beauty. In explaining his picture of beauty (Figure 2), Martin said that "the good stuff [about school] is learning new things." When he related his experience of creating a picture of a crocodile using a technique new to him ("I did it with a palette instead of a paint brush; I scooped the paint on and mixed it around that way"), he said, "the fact that I had learned how to do a new style of painting, and gotten good enough at it until I actually produced something... that was sort of beautiful."

Lily also included self-awareness of one's growth in her description of experiencing beauty. "When you see yourself before and then you do something that just changes you, and then you see who you are after that, that is beautiful." Lily also noted her development of self-confidence as integral to her experience of beauty. Recounting her experiences playing volleyball, Lily said, "I had zero confidence and it was really scary. I didn't really get that when I was a freshman. I was kind of challenged but nothing really higher level. I don't know. Eventually working up and now being the captain and being a starter and all-around player, it is just the change, it just changed. This is the same team. I was on the same team when I was a freshman. I was on the varsity team. But now I am a senior and I'm on varsity and my role has changed completely. It is cool to see that." The ability to return year after year contributed to her ability to develop and grow. The ability to move up, to return year after year and to note her growth and development is something Amy feels happens frequently in aspects of school such as clubs and sports, but rarely in the courses that constitute the curriculum. "In school you can up levels, but you don't do one thing unless it is a club or a sport and you can't move up… Having the same position… being in the same place with the same coaches, you can't really do that in school. I think it is really beautiful to establish leadership throughout the years. There isn't really that much leadership in school. I think you don't really learn leadership in school that much, and I think that is really important."

Nancy and Lily described an awareness of their own growth and development as part of the experience of beauty, and so did Amy. She said, "Based on sports, I was thinking about I have [participated in] poms for four years, poms and the dance team. It is kind of cool to look back at me now, and then freshman Amy on poms. It is kind of cool to see and beautiful to see the highs and lows and looking back at where you started from and where you are at now."

Regarding her experience of not wearing a wig to school, she said, "It's great being able to recognize that this was me before and this is me now... It was just a beautiful experience for me because 'this is who I am'." This sense of a greater self-awareness permeates the experiences of the participants.

Positive Feelings. When describing the experience of beauty, the participants often described positive feelings, such as happiness or satisfaction. Nancy recounted feeling more confident due to her growth as a speaker, and Amy recounted feeling more confident due to her courage to just be herself regardless of what others thought. Martin mentioned feeling relief and satisfaction after working hard on his project. Furthermore, he described experiencing a calmness or serenity during encounters with beauty. "Other times in art, walking around the art room and seeing, 'Oh, wow, that person's work is really good.' For a moment it takes you out of what you are worrying about in the day." Lily echoed these feelings of peacefulness when she described standing atop the mountain she had climbed. "When I got to the top, it was just the most beautiful moment ever... You didn't see any cars, no planes, no people. You didn't see anything that humans had created or done. It was just so rare to see. It was really beautiful."

Lily went on to say, "I think the word beauty has so many different definitions, and it is not black and white. It is a blanket term and it is kind of like the word love, where there are so many different loves. I love coffee but I also love my mom, very different. I think there are different levels of beauty. You can look at someone, and be, 'Oh, you are so beautiful.' You can also look at a mountain and say 'You are beautiful.' There are so many things. When I think of beauty, you just get this feeling of just happy. I feel like beauty and happy are correlated. I don't know, you could talk about that with a three-hour question."

Voluntary Participation. When describing the experience of beauty, the participants often described the importance of coming to that moment, or the activity that brought about the moment, voluntarily, on one's own, as a result of one's own choosing. In describing her commitment to debate, an extracurricular activity, Nancy said that in school you do many things because you are told to do so. She said, "I almost feel in school you are doing it because you are told to do so. The teacher hands you a worksheet and you just do the worksheet. Your parents send you to school and you do school, whereas outside of school and extra curriculars, it is up to you. 'Do I want to excel in this? Do I not want to excel in this? I am not being forced to participate in this.' It is just my free will, if that makes sense." Nancy described coursework as mandatory. You have to follow guidelines to get your grade. It is very hard to see growth because "you usually don't step outside" the prescribed path. In the course catalog, there are dotted lines and the dashed lines; you pick one and follow it. However, one chooses the extracurriculars one wants to pursue, and there are opportunities available and levels of commitment to decide - and those things make a huge difference. Extracurriculars involve "more questioning yourself and more growth that is not exactly tied down to the curriculum. That was never really the priority."

Martin spoke about the "superficial things" that constitute school (such as wearing heart monitors, doing homework, and waking up early) but that point the way to the "good stuff" (such as learning new things, making new friends, and joining clubs and sports). The good stuff has a more voluntary nature to it than the superficial things that have a more compulsory tone.

Lily's picture (Figure 3) captures the importance of choice to her as a component of experiencing beauty. "I think the beauty of school is the choices that you get. Mostly I was

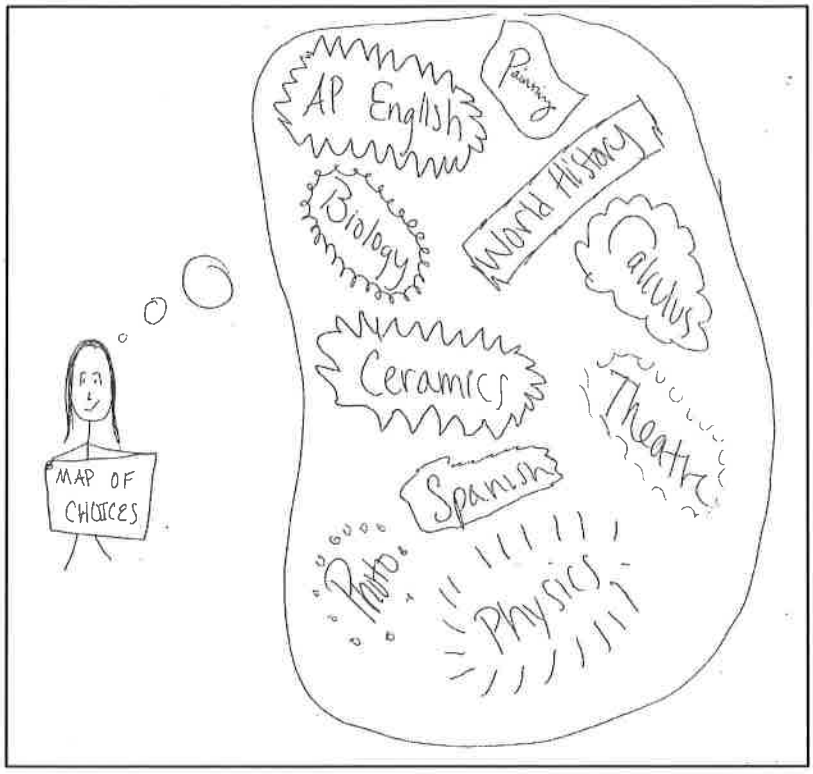

Figure 3. Lily's illustration of the relationship between beauty and school.

thinking electives. I would have never guessed that I would enjoy graphics and then I took it and it was so cool and I made some beautiful artwork. I think it is awesome that people can come [to school] and find what they love." Lily explains that beauty can be experienced in many different places and in many different ways. "Some of my friends are really into physics. Not my thing, but they discovered their love for math and science. I think that is a beautiful thing when you can open up all the doors... and discover what your interests are." Beauty for Lily is found at the center of a map of choices. "There isn't that much choice involved in classes to take. I haven't really been a school person. I'm not into school. I'm not into waking up early and coming in and doing work that usually I don't care about or put time into. However, this year, very different. I am taking regular classes and actually that is the first time I've ever taken regular classes, and I am way more involved. I care a lot ore and that is kind of cool."

Central to two of Amy's experiences - choosing whom to sit with at lunch when she was all alone and choosing to leave her wig at home when she felt ready - the beauty of the moment resided squarely in the power of her choices. She needed the courage to act, but the opportunity was there. Amy, like the other three participants, characterized the freedom to choose as integral to experiences of beauty.

Intrinsic Value. When describing the experience of beauty, the participants related experiences in which the hard work or sense of achievement was its own reward. Engaging in the activity produced feelings of self-fulfillment. The reward or benefit was internal, not something external such as grades or pleasing someone else. Even in examples where a competition was involved, what mattered most was a sense of achievement due to accomplishing a difficult task, or realizing personal growth and development through the exertion of effort, not actually winning.

Nancy described her growth throughout four years of debate, moving from a timid speaker with anxiety about public speaking to a person comfortable to speaking in a wide variety of venues. When contrasting the beauty found in courses she takes for school and the beauty in extracurricular activities she participates in, Nancy said, "[Coursework] is how can you get points? How do I get all these points, points, points, points. You don't get a grade at the end of the extracurricular. You get self-satisfaction... and it is a good feeling." She explained that personal growth is the source of the self-satisfaction. "That's where I get self-satisfaction, seeing progression and seeing me better myself. In school I don't really get that feeling, because I feel like I am just going for grades." Nancy explained that in her classes she is focused on determining "What do I need to do to get what I want?" Furthermore, because classes have to cover "so much curriculum in such a short amount of time... leadership and real-world

applications get sidetracked for the purpose of getting all the information you need to take that test at the end of the year… You go through the motions. 'Okay, I have this test, and I just need to come up with this acronym really fast to remember the five things or whatever because I'll forget it tomorrow." Nancy explained that academic classes seek to "reduce you to a number" and "the grading system skews our perception on how we view ourselves," but people aren't "quantified so easily in school." She added, "With extracurriculars it is more qualifiable, more qualitative. You are looking at your growth and that provides more satisfaction."

Martin expressed the theme that beautiful experiences are those that have value in themselves, intrinsically, and not due to external rewards or gain when he described his picture illustrating beauty in school. The bees (the students) have to navigate their way through the "superficial things," the source of external reward, like earning grades on papers and achieving target scores on heart rate monitors, to arrive at the "good stuff" and the "beautiful things about school," those things with internal value, such as actual learning, making friends and joining clubs and sports. Martin also described the beauty of creating a machine with peers that performed as it should; the beauty was found in the achievement of a difficult task. Even though this machine was created for a competition, what mattered to Martin, the source of the beauty, was the pride and relief of successfully accomplishing a difficult task with friends and teammates - not actually winning the competition.

Lily described her experience of beauty as culminating in making it to the top of the mountainside covered in scree. The reward came from proving to herself that she could do it. When she described overcoming her feelings of terror, she said, "You have your comfort zone, your challenge zone, and your panic zone. I was almost in my panic zone. I was this far from the panic zone so just overcoming that with [the others] was really cool."

The theme of the intrinsic value of the experiences that students associated with beauty was expressed by Amy when she said that when she thinks of beauty, she thinks of "beauty in a person," and being given a challenge and then "being able to look back and be happy with what you did... with how you did something." When she described coming to school without her wig, and for the first time revealing her baldness to her peers, she said, "It was just a beautiful experience for me because 'This is who I am.'" She did not need the encouragement of her peers beforehand nor their validation afterward. The satisfaction derived from her sense of self-confidence that rose from her self-acceptance.

Looking back on the experiences the students described, and looking back at the themes that emerged from my analysis of what they said, I feel ready to take the next step and to tease out the essential characteristics of the phenomena as described by the participants. I make this move in the next chapter, but first I re-immerse myself in the data, view it from a poetic lens, and reconsider the student experiences in a creative and generative way.

CHAPTER FIVE

Synthesis and Findings

Describe the Phenomenon

In the previous chapter, I described the themes that emerged as I analyzed how the participants experienced the phenomenon. In this chapter, I develop these themes into a culminating, composite description that interprets and reflects on the essence, the underlying structure, of the student experience of beauty in school (insofar as this is possible).

To capture the essence of the phenomena as described by the students, I interpret their experiences through a poetic lens. This approach serves two purposes. First, it helps me suspend or remove my own assumptions and beliefs, thereby helping me more fully engage in the *epoche*. Second, it helps me return to and attend to the uniqueness of the phenomenon for each student, thereby helping me more fully engage in the *reduction*. This kind of bracketing or taking oneself out of the study is a fundamental procedure in the methodology of phenomenology since it allows one to more completely focus on the experiences of the participants. In addition, this hermeneutic move allows for a more complete, dynamic, and robust exploration of the essence of the phenomenon. By encountering the text of the students' descriptions of their experiences of beauty as if I were encountering poems, I engage in a creative and generative act (Slattery, 2013), opening up the analysis to reflect a more complex, clustered, and rhizomatic understanding of interpretation (Lukenchuk, 2013). Consider this kind of analysis, this kind of wonder-ful rumination, as bordering on playing or dancing (Lukenchuk, 2013; Slattery, 2013).

Playing? Dancing? Yes! In this portion of the study I embrace the poetic energy that guides and inspires the creative soul and the imaginative impulse. One of the experiences I had as I wrote this study was encountering a tension between writing to fit the genre expectations of

academic writing while also seeking to explore ideas in literary, poetic, and imaginative ways. Honoring the conventions intrinsic to both styles at times presented a challenge that stifled my ability to say anything at all, but at other times provided the structure, the mechanism, the path to be able to proceed in new directions, to express conclusions, to make connections, to enter the debate, and to interpret the findings. At times I felt obligated to demonstrate scholarly competence; at these times, I reminded myself to trust in the conventions of the discipline to guide my inquiry. Sometimes this felt like being handed tools with which to work and resulted in the revelation of connections and conclusions, but at other times it felt like my ability to express myself or fully embrace the material was constrained. Genre expectations and stylistic restrictions can aid and liberate, but they can also hinder and confine. Fortunately, in this chapter I navigate both styles, bridge the bifurcation, merge them, and infuse the academic and the personal, the phenomenological and the hermeneutic, the qualitative and the poetic. Granting myself permission to unleash my imagination feels like an indulgence because it is purely fun. I feel at home in familiar surroundings – I experience flow, I am in my element, and I am grooving. However, it also helps me to better explore the conversations I had participated in with the students, to more fully attune to their words and more fully attend to the meaning inherent in what they shared.

In this chapter I juxtapose each of the student's experiences with a poem. The pairings arose from the patterns and themes expressed by each student. As I reflected on what each student said, I was reminded of lines from poems by Emily Dickinson (1924, 1878). Like unexpected gifts, her words emerged from the depths of my memory and offered themselves to me, so I decided to pair the sentiments expressed by each student with a poem by Dickinson, thereby opening up the analysis of the data from something rather formal and cerebral to

something more expansive and unique. To illustrate this point, consider this paraphrase of one of her poems: the brain is wider than the sky and deeper than the sea since one the other will include with ease (Dickinson, 1924). The power of the observation about our minds lies in paradox and metaphor. In much the same way, in analyzing the data, art freed me; the simple act of juxtaposing the data with the poems expanded my vision, opened up the analysis, and enriched the findings.

Nancy's experience of her growth and development as a speaker, her story of evolving and improving, echoed the sentiment of the speaker of Emily Dickinson's poem (1924) "My Cocoon Tightens, Color Tease."

My cocoon tightens, colors tease,
I'm feeling for the air;
A dim capacity for wings
Demeans the dress I wear.
A power of butterfly must be
The aptitude to fly,
Meadows of majesty implies
And easy sweeps of sky.
So I must baffle at the hint
And cipher at the sign,
And make much blunder, if at last
I take the clew divine.

Like the speaker, Nancy's expression of beauty depicts evolving, stretching, improving. The speaker in Dickinson's poem describes the process by which a pupa transforms into a butterfly.

That journey of metamorphosis is a difficult but rewarding one. The speaker anticipates moving from a world of darkness and a state of confinement to a world of color and a state of flight. Nancy expressed this same sort of transformation. Her experience of beauty included the same kinds of feelings of confinement and paralysis giving way to feelings of empowerment and growth. As a freshman she was frightened of public speaking and trapped by her fears, but as a senior she is confident and articulate. In her description of an experience of beauty, I am reminded of the speaker of this poem who feels "for the air" and feels "a dim capacity for wings." When Nancy describes moments when she experienced beauty, she describes moments when she too felt for the air or felt a capacity for wings. "I basically forced myself to get these skills because I just know that no matter what I do, it would be necessary" Nancy said. "Debate has shaped me into the confident person I am today." One of the defining characteristics of Nancy's experience of beauty is *transformation.*

Martin's experience of overcoming a challenge echoed the sentiment of the speaker of Dickinson's poem (1878) "Success is Counted Sweetest."

Success is counted sweetest -
By those who ne'er succeed.
To comprehend a nectar
Requires sorest need.
Not one of all the purple Host
Who took the Flag today
Can tell the definition
So clear of Victory.
As he defeated - dying -

On whose forbidden ear

The distant strains of triumph

Burst agonized and clear!

Like the speaker, Martin's expression of beauty depicts overcoming a challenge and achieving a goal. The speaker in Dickinson's poem tells us that "Success is counted sweetest by those who ne'er succeed" and that "To comprehend a nectar requires sorest need." In the last stanza of the poem, the speaker presents the reader with the image of a soldier who hears the "distant strains of triumph" as he falls, defeated and dying. Dickinson shows us that it is they who give everything they have, the last full measure to a cause, who appreciate success most fully. Martin expressed this same sort of yearning. Beauty for him was in the doing, the fighting, the striving. Success for the speaker of Dickinson's poem burst agonized and clear when his host took the flag in victory; success for Martin burst agonized and clear when the machine his team created successfully performed its assigned task. One of the defining characteristics of Martin's experience of beauty is *achievement.*

Lily's experiences of beauty are characterized by the exercise of her ability to choose. She chose to dedicate herself to volleyball, to stick with it, and she chose to scale a mountain covered in scree. Central to her experiences of beauty is the willing choice to participate, the freedom to decide for oneself. Her concerns are mirrored by the speaker of Dickinson's poem (1890) "The Soul Selects Her Own Society."

The Soul selects her own Society -

Then - shuts the Door -

To her divine Majority -

Present no more -

Unmoved - she notes the Chariots - pausing -

At her low Gate -

Unmoved - an Emperor be kneeling

Upon her Mat-

I've known her - from an ample nation -

Choose One -

Then - close the Valves of her attention -

Like Stone -

The soul as characterized in the poem makes a choice, and then resolutely focuses its attention on what was chosen. The soul personified in this poem makes a selection that is unmovable as stone. Lily described beauty in similar terms. Lily's expression of beauty depicted the freedom to select how to spend her time, with whom, and doing what. One can't be compelled or mandated to experience beauty; the experience begins with one's active and voluntary decision to engage. One of the defining characteristics of Lily's experience of beauty is *freedom.*

Amy's attitude of acting in a way that reflects who she truly is echoes the attitude of the speaker of Emily Dickinson's poem (1891) "I'm Nobody! Who are you?"

I'm Nobody! Who are you?

Are you - Nobody - Too?

Then there's a pair of us!

Don't tell! they'd advertise - you know!

How dreary - to be - Somebody!

How public - like a Frog -

To tell one's name - the livelong June -

To an admiring Bog!

The speaker of the poem laments how dreary it would be to be "somebody" and to have to please "an admiring bog." The speaker prefers to be a "nobody." When describing her experience of beauty, Amy described this same attitude - she chose to reject the premise of having to gain acceptance or admiration from the bog, the crowd, her peers. She chose to be true to herself, to embrace who she is, and let the bog react as it may. The speaker of the poem expresses the aversion to seeking the approval of others, to trying to fit someone else's definition of being "somebody." Amy expressed this same sentiment. Beauty for her is self-awareness, self-appreciation, and *self-discovery*.

The essence of the phenomenon. Looking back on everything the students shared, here's what I learned about the student experience of beauty in school for these participants of the study. The essence of the phenomenon for these students included the active involvement and participation of friends or teammates; the sense of achievement that follows hard work and requires perseverance; and the development of a skill or the realization of an insight. Essential byproducts of experiences of beauty are positive feelings of happiness, satisfaction or confidence, and feelings of support and camaraderie that arise from building relationships. One essential condition for experiencing beauty is having the choice to participate willingly and having the freedom to pursue one's own path. Another essential condition is that the goal is pursued primarily for one's own self-fulfillment, or as a result of one's innate drive or passion; pursuit of a goal primarily for external reward or benefit robs an experience of beauty, or negates other essential characteristics of experiencing beauty. I learned that these students yearn for growth and transformation, they enjoy learning about their world, developing new skills, and discovering who they are. They thrive when given freedom and choices. They tolerate everything

about school, such as having to be measured by grades, that interferes with these kinds of beautiful experiences. The underlying structure of the student experience of beauty for these participants consisted of moments of transformation and growth, feelings of achievement and success, the freedom to act and choose, and a heightened understanding of self-awareness and self-discovery. Ultimately, as noted in Table 3, the essential characteristics of the experience of beauty in school for these participants are social interaction, resolution, self-awareness, positive feelings, voluntary participation, and intrinsic value.

Having identified themes that emerged from my analysis of the data and interpretation of the descriptions of experiences of beauty that the students shared, and having tried to identify the essence and underlying structure of those experiences, I turn, in the next chapter, to drawing conclusions, making connections to concepts outlined in the literature review, and considering implications for the field. But first, I'd like to take a step back and compare my ideas about experiencing beauty to those of the students, and to raise questions to explore in the conclusion.

Turning the focus of this study to myself at this point, I feel inspired and distressed by much of what the students shared. In some ways, their expectation of beauty is far richer than my own. They see beauty readily in the everyday. They see beauty in interacting with friends through teamwork and fun. They are attuned to see beauty in what they do and achieve. But I look for beauty in texts – pictures, images, or words. Especially words. It is the power of the word that electrifies me. It is in words that I experience beauty and am attuned to the beauty in the world. Words transport me; words elevate the ordinary and transcend the everyday – but little mention was made of art by any of the students and none mentioned reading or writing. Beauty as I experience it is cerebral, introspective, alone, and quiet. I see beauty in words; I reflect, look back, and contemplate. They see beauty all around; they do, act, and move. So the

gulf distresses me, worries me, confounds me. The gulf tempts me to withdraw from the world like a hermit to a hovel or a monk to a cell where the words on the page can illuminate my understanding in serene contemplation. But the gulf also inspires me. It energizes me. As van Manen (1990) explains, human science research, and phenomenology in particular, aims to help educators "act tactfully in pedagogic situations on the basis of a carefully edified thoughtfulness" (p. 8). So when I look at what the students had to say about experiencing beauty, it makes me wonder how I can create learning experiences in the curriculum that have the characteristics of beauty that the students expressed. I wonder how I can build on the qualities of experiencing beauty that they crave in the classroom experiences I design. I wonder if keeping the concept of *disinterestedness* in mind can help me create a classroom that pursues learning for authentic, self-actualizing benefits, and avoids the external rewards and compulsions associated with grading and awarding points. Ultimately the conversations with the students has caused me to move from wondering "What do I need to put in place to push the students closer to appreciating beauty?" to wondering "What do I need to move out of the way of the students to nurture their innate desire for beauty and for meaningful interactions with their world?"

CHAPTER SIX

Conclusion

In the previous chapters, I described the themes that emerged as I analyzed how the participants experienced the phenomena, and I developed those themes into a culminating, composite description that interpreted the essence and underlying structure of the student experience of beauty in school. In this chapter I draw conclusions, make connections to concepts outlined in the literature review, and consider implications for the field.

The most striking observation is that none of the students associated experiences of beauty with classwork or courses associated with the core curriculum, such as English, science, math, or social studies. (An exception, however, could be Martin, who related experiences on the periphery of the core curriculum. Martin did mention a moment of reflection triggered by creating a painting in art class, and another moment of reflection triggered by observing the work of peers in art class, but he did not mention interactions with famous or iconic works of art as inspiring experiences of beauty. Furthermore, he did mention an experience of culmination prompted by math class - he suddenly understood in physics class why he had learned calculus - but it was not the beauty of mathematics itself that prompted his reflection.) Of course, the students did state quite clearly that they encountered beauty in school - in extracurricular activities such as sports and clubs. So on the one hand, educators could rest assured schools are meeting the aesthetic needs of students. However, on the other hand, there is a profound message here for educators that we need to inject characteristics of experiences of beauty as outlined in this study into core classes. In other words, we need to provide students with experiences in the core curriculum that reflect the experiences students have in extracurricular activities. We need to reconsider how we structure the courses of the core curriculum.

What would such a restructuring of the curriculum entail? Designing classes so that students experience social interaction, a feeling of resolution or culmination, a greater sense of self-awareness or self-understanding, positive feelings (such as confidence and satisfaction), voluntary participation (perhaps through options or choices), and a sense of the worthwhileness, the intrinsic value, of the experience (beyond, or without, an evaluative measure such as a grade or an external motivation such as points). Of course, the toughest hurdle may be that last one. But from my conversations with the participants and my analysis of their descriptions of their experiences of beauty, grading (ranking, sorting, awarding points) is antithetical to meaningful, rewarding, authentic experiences of beauty.

The need moving forward, the implication of this study on the field, lies in pointing out the need for a reorientation reminiscent of John Dewey's (1934) call to follow a middle way between slack ends, indulgence, and aimlessness on the one side, and rigidity, coerced submission and convention on the other side. The enemies of the aesthetic, Dewey wrote, are neither the practical nor the intellectual, but the humdrum. The participants in the study clearly perceived the core curriculum as an engagement in the humdrum, not the experience of beauty. Martin captured this sentiment when he said you have to find your way through all the superficial things in school (grades, among other things) to get to the good stuff (actual learning, among other things). The students were not averse to hard work or tackling a challenge, on the contrary, they seek out these things in experiences of beauty; on the contrary, it was the convention, the flatness, the pro forma nature of endeavors at school that generated reactions of disappointment or apathy. Finding a middle way, finding a way to make classwork and courses as engaging and exciting and fulfilling and beauty-ful as extracurricular activities is one of the implications of this study.

One of the surprises arising from the study was the profound relevance of the concept of disinterestedness advanced by Immanuel Kant (1790). Disinterestedness, a defining characteristic of an aesthetic experience according to Kant, is the concept that a participant's interaction with an art object is not one of acquisition, rather, he or she appreciate something without having to own it or control it. One appreciates something without considering its monetary worth or the use to which it could be put. Disinterestedness is liking without wanting. It is detachment or indifference. I was reminded of this concept as I analyzed the students' descriptions of their experiences of beauty in school. Their experiences in class work or academic courses are predicated upon gain. Their thinking runs like this: I need to do well, I need to do X, because I want to get a good grade, I need that "A." They view the experience as an "interested" one. But when they recount beautiful experiences that arise from their extracurricular activities, they are completely "disinterested," finding value and satisfaction innately in the engagement, not gain, or profit or external benefit. Once those factors enter, we are no longer in the realm of the aesthetic (as Kant would say), or the beautiful (as Martin, Nancy, Amy or Lily would say). Taking the discussion one step further, the role of the teacher is also an "interested" one. Grading is ingrained in the entire educational process so deeply that changing grading practices is a monumental undertaking. Reconsidering grading practices is equated with surrendering control for many educators - and that can easily provoke uncertainty, fear, and resistance. And yet the implications of this study lead me to conclude that exploring the potential impact of disinterestedness on grading practices is an area ripe for further research.

A limitation of the study was the framing of the question posed to the students. Although not a problem or hindrance, it was a decision that led to a tension between the understanding of beauty as asserted by the philosophers in the literature review and the understanding expressed

by the students from their life experiences. Although I was not surprised that students did not articulate layered and philosophically-informed definitions of aesthetic experience, a kind of gap revealed itself. The philosophers cited in the literature review of this study generally expressed their ideas about beauty in terms quite different from the students. In hindsight, I could have structured this study around a narrow definition of the term "beauty" or the concept "experience of beauty" and asked students to compare their experiences to these definitions. However, I deliberately chose to open the investigation to discover how students defined and perceived these terms and concepts. So rather than ask students a question such as "when have you experienced moments of beauty, defining beauty as [X]?" I asked questions closer to "what is your understanding of beauty?" Framing the question this way resulted in a healthy tension, a richer exploration of the concept. Admittedly, I was a bit nervous about what the study would reveal: would the students, for instance, merely discuss putting on make-up between class periods when they thought of experiences of beauty in school? But I took the risk, posed the broader, looser question and followed where the results led.

At the same time, some of the discoveries I made when I analyzed the data aligned with the definition of experiences of beauty I asserted in chapter one and some of the concepts I explored in chapter two. For instance, students included reflection, curiosity, wonder, insight, or new understanding in their descriptions of experiences of beauty. Some of what they said loosely echoed parts of my definition, such as empathy, imagination, and emotions. However, hardly mentioned at all was interaction with an art object. I was surprised and saddened that at no point did a student mention reading a book or poem, writing a story or paper, watching a play or movie, listening to a concert or song, or any other form of interaction with the kinds of things that prompt the sort of aesthetic experiences described by Greene (2001), Rosenblatt (1999) or

Slattery (2013). As stated previously, I was not surprised that students did not articulate layered and philosophically-informed definitions of aesthetic experience, but I was surprised that among experiences with beauty, books or poems or art did not come to mind. My own orientation to beauty, I conclude, is more introspective than the students. When they think of experiences of beauty, they think of engaging with others, whereas I think of an internal emotional state. Nonetheless, given that language arts teachers are traders and traffickers in beauty but the students didn't mention a single experience from a language arts class, an implication of this study points to acknowledging and bridging this divide. The language arts classroom should be a place where an appreciation of beauty is nurtured; to recognize the fact that the language arts classroom did not come to mind - at all - when these four students described encountering beauty is both disappointing and disconcerting.

In addition to the absence of any mention of an experience involving a language arts class, nothing was mentioned of the imagination, much less the free play of the imagination and understanding set apart from cognitive or rational judgment. However, students did relate descriptions reminiscent of Poe's (1846) elevation of the soul and Gardner's (2011) pleasure tingle - just not in relation to art. The participants of the study found examples of experiences of beauty in everyday life far more than they looked to museums or the classroom. This is consistent with observations made by Dewey (1934) and Chatterjee (2015) that speak to the fact that aesthetic experiences permeate our everyday lives and are not relegated to museums or classrooms or other formal venues. Dewey described art as experience and noted that beauty can be found in everyday life, in any well-performed action or graceful movement.

Other observations I made earlier in this study were borne out by the descriptions of experiences of beauty that the participants shared. For instance, the participants described their

experiences as culminations or consummations, which echoes Dewey's (1934) description of an aesthetic experience as a consummation, not a mere cessation, of experience. Also, students described an essential characteristic of an experience of beauty as involving growth or personal development, which echoes the trait identified earlier that aesthetic experiences nurture aspiration. Also, the students' descriptions revealed the importance of social interaction to their experiences of beauty, which aligns with the power of the aesthetic mentioned earlier to break down walls that divide and bring people together. Also, Robinson's (2009) observation that schools should aim to allow students to thrive by being more focused on personalizing the curriculum than on standardizing it echoes the emphasis that emerged in the student's descriptions of their experiences as being rooted in pursuits that had intrinsic value for them personally. Moreover, Chatterjee identified pleasure as the signal element of aesthetic experience, and pleasure emerged in all the accounts students shared. And finally Pink's (2006) observation that schools should nurture R-directed thinking echoes the theme of freedom and choice and being able to find one's own way described by the students.

A final parallel prompted by comparing observations made earlier in this study to the observations of students in their descriptions of beauty involves ultimate aims. Plato (385 BC) claimed that love's ultimate aim is beauty, while Martin depicted beauty as the ultimate aim of school and Amy described experiencing beauty as reaching the finish line. This study supports the claim that nurturing the aesthetic sensibility of students and providing them with opportunities to experience beauty is of vital importance. If we accept this goal as a priority, this study poses a challenge that future research could explore: how do we get there?

The importance of finding a way to incorporate the aesthetic into the curriculum was reflected recently in remarks made by US Secretary of Education John King Jr. Speaking at an

arts-based school in Las Vegas, he described the kind of experiences his daughters were having studying music, dance and theater.

> I don't know if either of them will become a concert pianist or a famous guitarist or a professional ballerina. But I do know that they are developing a kind of aesthetic appreciation that will bring them joy and widen their world for the rest of their lives. And really, that's what this is about: that inextricable intersection between what our kids learn and who they become.

The words with which he chose to conclude his speech mirror my sentiments as I conclude this study: "Let's work together to make it possible."

References

Adorno, T. W. (1984). The essay as form (B. Hullot-Kentor & F. Will, Trans.). *New German Critique, 32*, 151-171.

Alexander, J., Cannon, K., Cannon, Z., & Losh, E. (2014). *Understanding rhetoric: A graphic guide to writing*. New York: Bedford/St. Martins.

Arendt, H. (1968). Introduction. In H. Arendt (Ed.), H. Zohn (Trans.), W. Benjamin *Illuminations.* (pp. 50-51). NY: Schocken Books, Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, Inc.

Baldwin, J. (1968). *Notes of a native son.* Boston: Beacon Press.

Bergmann, S. (1993). An epistemological justification for aesthetic experience. *Journal of Aesthetic Education, 27*(2), 107-112.

Beaty, R., Fayn, K., Nusbaum, E. & Silvia, P. (2015). Openness to experience and awe in response to nature and music: Personality and profound aesthetic experiences. *Psychology of Aesthetics, Creativity, and the Arts, 9*(4), 376-384.

Beyer, L. (2000). *The arts, popular culture, and social change*. NY: Peter Lang.

Broudy, H. S. (1977). How basic is aesthetic education? or is 'rt the fourth r? *Educational Leadership*, November, 134-142.

Brown, E. (2015, April 14). Not just reading and math: Education Secretary to call for return to a 'well-rounded education.' The Washington Post. Retrieved from https://www.washingtonpost.com.

Burke, E. (1757). The sublime and the beautiful compared. *On the sublime and the beautiful, Part 3, section 27.* In *Harvard Classics, A Philosophical Inquiry into the Origins of Our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful with Several Other Editions, vol. 24, part 2.* Retrieved from www.bartleby.com/24/2.

Campbell, J. (1949). *The hero with a thousand faces*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

Carroll, N. (2015). Defending the content approach to aesthetic experience. *Metaphilosophy, 46*(2), 171-188.

Chatterjee, A. (2015). *The aesthetic brain: How we evolved to desire beauty and enjoy art.* Oxford: Oxford Press.

Consoli, G. (2014). The emergence of the modern mind: An evolutionary perspective on aesthetic experience. *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism, 72*(1), 37-55.

Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches*. LA: Sage.

Dees, D. M. & Heinfeldt, J. (2007). An aesthetic analysis of an educational, videoconferencing experience. *Journal of College Teaching and Learning, 4*(2), 37-46.

Dewey, J. (1934). *Art as experience.* NY: Penguin Group.

Dewey, J. (1930). What I believe. In Hickman, L. A, and Alexander, T. M. (Eds.), *The essential Dewey: Pragmatism, education, democracy, vol. 1*. (pp. 22-28). Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Dewey, J. (1927). Pragmatic America. In Hickman, L. A, and Alexander, T. M. (Eds.), *The essential Dewey: Pragmatism, education, democracy, vol. 1*. (pp. 29-32). Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Dickinson, E. (1924). My cocoon tightens. Colors tease. In *The Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson.* Retrieved from www.bartleby.com/113/4006.

Dickinson, E. (1924). The brain is wider than the sky. In *The Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson.* Retrieved from www.bartleby.com/113/1126.

Dickinson, E. (1891). I'm nobody! Who are you? In Conarroe, J. (Ed.), *Six American poets: An anthology*. (p. 80). NY: Vintage Books.

Dickinson, E. (1890). The soul selects her own society. In Conarroe, J (Ed.), *Six American poets: An anthology*. (p. 80). NY: Vintage Books.

Dickinson, E. (1878). Success is counted sweetest. In Conarroe, J (Ed.), *Six American poets: An anthology*. (p. 77). NY: Vintage Books.

Dietiker, L. (2016). The role of sequence in the experience of mathematical beauty. *Journal of Humanistic Mathematics, 6*(1), 152-173. Doi: 10.5642/jhummath.201601.10.

Doll, W. (1993). *A post-modern perspective on curriculum*. NY: Teacher's College Press, Columbia University.

Dowling, M. (2005). From Husserl to van Manen: A review of different phenomenological approaches. *International Journal of Nursing Studies, 44*, 131-142.

Efron, S. E. & Ravid, R. (2013). *Action research in education: A practical guide*. NY: Guilford Press.

Eisner, E. (1967). Educational objectives: Help or hindrance? *The School Review, 75*, 250-260. Reprinted in *American Journal of Education, 91*(4), 549-560.

Emerson, R. W. (1841). Self-reliance. In Bode, C (Ed.) *The portable Emerson*. (pp. 138-164). NY: Penguin Books.

Fogel, K. (2008). *The experience of doing science with an artistic spirit* (Master's Thesis). The University of British Columbia.

Frost, R. (1923). *Stopping by woods on a snowy evening*. Retrieved from www.poetryfoundation.org

Gardner, H. (2011). *Truth, beauty, and goodness reframed*. NY: Basic Books.

Girod, M. & Wong, D. (2002). An aesthetic (Deweyan) perspective on science learning: Case studies of three fourth graders. *The Elementary School Journal, 102*(3), 199-224.

Goldblatt, D. and Lee, B. B. (Eds.) (2005). *Aesthetics: A reader in philosophy of the arts*. New Jersey: Pearson.

Gray, E. (2015). Bubble trouble for standardized testing. *TIME, 186*(14), 44-49.

Greene, M. (2001). *Variations on a blue guitar: The lincoln center institute lectures on aesthetic education*. NY: Teachers College Press.

Greene, M. (1995). Art and imagination. *Releasing the imagination: Essays on education, the arts, and social change*. (pp. 122-133). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Greene, M. (1973). *Teacher as stranger: Educational philosophy for the modern age.* Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Co.

Greenwood, J. (2012). Arts-based research: Weaving magic and meaning. *International Journal of Education and the Arts, 13*(1), 1-20.

Heid, K. (2005). Aesthetic development: A cognitive experience. *Art Education, 58*(5), 48-53.

Herman, A. (2014). *The cave and the light: Plato versus Aristotle and the struggle for the soul of western civilization*. New York: Random House.

Hesse-Biber, S. N. & Leavy, P. (2011). *The practice of qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Hobbs, J. (1977). Is aesthetic education possible? *Art Education*, 30(1), 30-32.

Homer. (700 BC). *The odyssey.* Retrieved from www.gutenberg.org.

Illinois State Board of Education. (2015) *Illinois report card 2014-15*. Retrieved from www.illinoisreportcard.com.

Irving, W. (1819). *Rip Van Winkle.* Retrieved from www.gutenberg.org.

Jackson, P. W. (1998). *John Dewey and the lessons of art*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Jagodzinski, J. (1981). Aesthetic education reconsidered, or please don't have an aesthetic experience. *Art Education, 34*(3), 26-29.

Johnson, M. H. (1998). Phenomenological method, aesthetic experience, and aesthetic education. *Journal of Aesthetic Education, 32*(1), 31-41.

Kant, I. (1790). Judgments about the beautiful, from *The critique of judgement*. In Goldblatt, D. and Lee, B. B. (Eds.) *Aesthetics: A reader in philosophy of the arts*. (pp. 454-459). New Jersey: Pearson.

Keats, John. (1820). *Ode on a Grecian urn.* Retrieved from http://www.poetryfoundation.org.

Kul-Want, C., & Piero. (2010). *Introducing aesthetics: A graphic guide*. London: Icon Books.

Ladson-Billings, G. (2016). And then there is this thing called curriculum: Organization, imagination, and mind. *Education Researcher, 45*(2), 100-104.

Lakoff, G. and Johnson, M. J. (1980). *Metaphors we live by*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Lopate, P. (2013, Feb 16). The essay, an exercise in doubt. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com.

Luca-Marshall, J. B. (1980). What's wrong with 'aesthetic education.' *Art Education, 33*(3), 11-16.

Lukenchuk, A. (Ed.). (2013). *Paradigms of research for the 21st century: Perspectives and examples from practice.* NY: Lang.

Montaigne, M. (1580). *The essays*. Retrieved from https://www.gutenberg.org.

Morris, M. (2016). Aesthetic curriculum concepts. *Curriculum studies guidebooks: Concepts and theoretical frameworks, vol. 2*. NY: Peter Lang.

Moustakas, C. (1994). *Phenomenological research methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Nehring, J. (2015, August 26). To measure, or to *assess*, learning? Human judgment is not the problem, it's the solution. *Education Week*, pp. 19-20.

Nussbaum, M. (1995). *Poetic justice: The literary imagination and public life*. Boston: Beacon Press.

O'Leary, T. (2005). Foucault, Dewey, and the experience of literature. *New Literary History, 36*(4), 543-557.

Palega, A. K. (2011). *Everyday aesthetic experiences* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest. (3481782)

Pink, D. (2006). *A whole new mind: Why right-brainers will rule the world*. NY: Riverhead Books.

Plato. (385 BC). *The symposium*. Retrieved from https://www.gutenberg.org.

Poe, E. A, (1846). The philosophy of composition. *Graham's Magazine, vol. 28, no. 4*. Retrived from www.eapoe.org/works/essays/philcomp.

Robinson, K. (2009). *The element: How finding your passion changes everything*. NY: Penguin Books.

Rosenblatt, L. M. (1995). *Literature as exploration*. NY: Modern Language Association.

Rosenblatt, L. M. (1988). *Writing and reading: The transactional theory*. Technical Report No. 416. The Center for the Study of Reading, University of Illinois, Champaign-Urbana.

Schubert, W. H. (1991). Philosophical inquiry: The speculative essay. In Short, E. C. (Ed.) *Forms of curriculum inquiry*. (pp. 61-76). NY: SUNY.

Schumacher, L. A. (2010). *The caregiver's journey: A phenomenological study of the lived experience of leisure for caregivers in the sandwich generation who care for a parent with dementia* (Master's Thesis). University of Iowa, http://ir.uiowa.edu/etd/599.

Shakespeare, W. (1606). The tragedy of king Lear. In Evans, B. E. (Ed.) *The Riverside Shakespeare*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co.

Shakespeare, W. (1602). The history of Troilus and Cressida. In Evans, B. E. (Ed.) *The Riverside Shakespeare*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co.

Shelley, P. B. (1821). *A defence of poetry*. Retrieved from http://www.poetryfoundation.org.

Short, E. (Ed.). (1991). *Forms of curriculum inquiry*. NY: SUNY.

Slattery, P. S. (2013). *Curriculum development in the postmodern era: Teaching and learning in an age of accountability.* NY: Routledge.

Slattery, P. S. (2013). Hermeneutics. *Companion Website for... Slattery. Glossary.* Retrieved from http://routledgetextbooks.com/textbooks/_author/slattery/

Smith, D. G. (1991). Hermeneutic inquiry: The hermeneutic imagination and the pedagogic text. In Short, E. C. (Ed.) *Forms of curriculum inquiry*. (pp. 187-209). NY: SUNY.

Stroud, S. R. (2014). The art of experience: Dewey on the aesthetic. In Malecki, W. (Ed.) *Critical perspectives on the arts: Practicing pragmatist aesthetics*. (pp. 33-46). Amsterdam: Rodopi.

Temple, J. B. (1928). The function of art in education. *The English Journal. 17*(3), 230-236.

Tennyson, A. (1842). Ulysses. Retrieved from http://www.poetryfoundation.org/poem/174659

Valance, E. (1991). Aesthetic inquiry: Art criticism. In Short, E. C. (Ed.) *Forms of curriculum inquiry*. (pp. 155-172). NY: SUNY.

van Manen, M. (2014). *Phenomenology of practice: Meaning-giving methods in phenomenological research writing*. Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press.

van Manen, M. (1990). *Researching lived experience: Human science for an action sensitive pedagogy*. NY: SUNY.

Virgil. (19 BC). *The Aeneid.* Retrieved from http://www.gutenberg.org.

Vonnegut, K. Jr. (1969). *Slaughterhouse five*. NY: Dell Publishing.

Warburton, C. (2007). *The art and science of teaching aesthetics: A model for secondary school teachers* (Master's Thesis). SUNY. Retrieved from ProQuest. (1441999)

Ward, J. S. S. (2002). *The aesthetics of mathematics in teaching and learning: A case study* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest. (3043367)

Webster, R. S. & Wolfe, M. (2013). Incorporating the aesthetic dimension into pedagogy. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education, 38*(10), 21-33.

White, F. C. (1989). Love and beauty in Plato's symposium. *The Journal of Hellenic Studies, 109,* 149-157.

Whitehead, A. N. (1929). *The aims of education and other essays*. NY: The Free Press.

Whitman, W. (1865). When I heard the learn'd astronomer. Retrieved from http://www.poetryfoundation.org.

Willis, G. (1991). Phenomenological inquiry: Life-world perceptions. In Short, E. C. (Ed.) *Forms of curriculum inquiry*. (pp. 173-186). NY: SUNY.

Appendix A: Informed Consent Letter

Dear Participant,

I am a doctoral student in the Curriculum and Social Inquiry program at National Louis University. As part of fulfilling the degree requirements, I am conducting original research in the field. Since my research focuses on the perceptions and experiences of students, I would love to gather your thoughts and ideas regarding the topic of the study.

I value your input very much and would appreciate your participation in my research project. However, I am only presenting this information to you so you can decide whether or not you'd like to participate. Rest assured you are free to decide not to participate or withdraw at any time without affecting your relationship with me in any way. Your participation is entirely voluntary.

The goal of the study is to understand the student experience of beauty. I'm interested to know more about the meaning students to ascribe to beauty, school experiences that come to mind when you think of beauty, and things like that.

The study is phenomenological, so the research design will rely on collecting data through qualitative means: questionnaires, semi-structured interviews and focus groups. You are being invited to complete one questionnaire, participate in one focus group interview, and participate in one individual semi-structured interview.

The questionnaire would come first, in which you would reply to demographic questions about your background and interests and general questions about your experiences relevant to the topic. Then you would meet with three peers in a focus group interview to share your ideas regarding the same topic. Then we would meet one more time individually for an exit interview to share any final thoughts and ideas about the topic of the study.

The two individual meetings will last approximately 15-30 minutes. The focus group interview will be approximately 30-45 minutes. The interviews will take place here at school at a time that is convenient for you.

1	Questionnaire	15-30 minutes
2	Focus Group	30-45 minutes
3	Interview	15-30 minutes

The interview will be video-recorded (pending your consent) and transcribed. The recording and transcription will not be used in any other way or shared publicly. The only purpose of recording and transcribing the interview is to insure accurate interpretation of the data and to facilitate referring to the conversations. For confidentiality purposes, the interview transcripts and all files

pertaining to your participation in this study will be stored securely and responsibly. To insure your anonymity, I will not use your name in the study; your name will not be associated with the research findings.

I will be happy to share the findings with you after the research is complete.

This study does not have any risks or discomforts associated with it. The expected benefits from your participation include learning more about the topic of the research, contributing to the project, and experiencing a study like this.

Do not hesitate to ask any questions about the study either before participating or during the time you are participating. Please feel free to contact me at paul.reiff@d128.org or (847) 327-7183.

You will be given a copy of your signed consent form. Please acknowledge with your signatures below your consent to participate in this study.

Thank you.

Paul Reiff
Doctoral Student, Curriculum and Social Inquiry, National Louis University,

I consent to participate in this study:
Name: Date:

_____ _____
[Signature]

I give my permission to videotape the interviews:
Name: Date:

_____ _____
[Signature]

Appendix B: Questionnaire

Name:

1. Demographic information:

Tell me about areas of school at which you feel successful?

Tell me about your Involvement in extracurriculars at school?

Tell me about your personal interests and activities?

Looking at school in general, what do you like about school?

Looking at school in general, what do you dislike about school?

2. Reflection questions:

When you think of *beauty*, what comes to mind?

When you think of *experiencing* beauty, what comes to mind?

When you think of experiencing beauty in relation to school, what comes to mind?

On a piece of paper, please draw an image that illustrates the relationship between beauty and school in a visual way, or think of a metaphor that compares beauty in school to something else (Beauty in school is like...).

3. For next time:

Please think about times in high school when you had an experience that involved beauty. We'll talk more about that when we meet next.

Appendix C: Focus Group Interview Guide

Interview Guide (focus group)

Thank you for meeting as a group with me to talk about your experiences in school. Please contribute freely to the conversation. That's so important. Also, please respect the privacy of what we share here today.

Before we get started, do you have any questions or concerns about the study so far?

I have met with each of you, had you complete a questionnaire, and asked you to think about a specific time when you had an experience in high school that involved beauty. Now I'd like to talk about your experiences as a group. Let's go around the circle. When it's your turn, please share with the group your experience of beauty. Tell it like a story, give lots of details, and tell it like you experienced it, from the inside. But - just stick to the facts, try not to interpret or analyze the event or give your opinion of the experience.

So, when you think about times in high school when you had an experience that involved beauty, what comes to mind?

Follow-up questions; "Tell me more about" questions...

- Where were you? What place were you in? What were your surroundings like? Describe the space around you. How did you impact the space? How did the space impact you?
- What were you doing? What happened? What did you do? What happened next?
- What did you say? Who said what? And what did you say then?
- What did you think? What thoughts went through your mind? How did it feel? What emotions did you experience?
- How did your body feel? What senses did you use? What did you see, hear, feel?
- How did the involvement of others (teachers, peers) matter? How did you feel toward others?
- How did the involvement of things (material, resources, supplies, technology) impact the experience?
- How did you experience the passing of time?
- What else do you remember about the event?

Closure questions (if necessary and if time permits)...

- What was shared by others that was shared by all of you *in common*?

- What was shared in common in terms of the *space* people were in?
    - How were interiorities experienced differently from exteriorities? How did the space shape or impact the experience? The person going through the experience? How did the person having the experience impact the space? How important was the place important to the experience? Was the space actual or virtual? Worldly or unworldly? What was the mood of the space?

- What was shared in common in terms of people's *bodies*?
    - Was the use of senses important? Was it important to be able to feel, see or hear? Was the body actively involved in the experience? How did the body experience the experience?

- What was shared in common in terms of the *time*?
    - How was time experienced during the experience? How did objective and subjective time differ? How did time impact the experience?

- What was shared in common in terms of people's *relationships to others*?
    - How did individuals seem connected? Did the involvement or presence of others matter?

- What was shared in common in terms of *things*?
    - How did materials impact the experience? How did supplies, tools or resources impact the experience? How did "things" contribute to the meaning of the experience? How did things enhance or diminish the experience? How did technology impact the experience? How did media impact the experience?

Based on what has been shared, what seems to be the *essential* characteristics of what it is like to experience beauty? What seems to lie at the core or at the heart of experience?

Is there anything else anyone would like to add?

I will be in touch so we can meet for an exit interview, at which time you can review the transcripts from our discussion just now, you can review my notes and conclusions, and you can offer any last ideas or comments you may have.

Thank you so much for sharing your memories with me today and helping with this study!

Appendix D: Exit Interview - Interview Guide

Interview Guide (exit interview)

Thank you for meeting with me and the group to talk about your experiences in school. I sincerely appreciate your willingness to share your memories and your time and to participate in the study.

Here are the transcripts from the focus group discussion. Please look them over for accuracy.

Here are my conclusions. What do you think: is this what it means to experience beauty? Is this what the experience of beauty looks like?

Finally, do you have any questions or concerns about the study, or do you have any last thoughts or ideas you'd like to share?