EDITORIAL

The Arts and Cultural Sector, Research, and Art Education

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Bill Ivey, as chair of the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) from 1998 to 2001, eloquently conceptualized the complexities and intersections of the arts and culture in the United States (US). As a folklorist, Ivey’s broad-based view of the arts and culture was unique in the history of the NEA. In his remarks to the American Folklore Society (AFS) on October 22, 1999, Ivey firmly positioned his conception of the arts and culture in America in relation to “creativity” and “living cultural heritage” (Ivey, 1999). He used creativity and cultural heritage to emphasize the importance of investing time and funding in America’s cultural life. Ivey affirmed that creative expression is fundamental to all people, that aesthetic traditions are a prerequisite to social life, and that traditions thrive on creative interpretation and effort.

While chair of the NEA, Ivey advocated for a “more vigorous and broad based commitment to art and art making in America” (Ivey, 2000). Art and artmaking would move to the center of society from the margins (Ivey, 2000). Quality of life for individuals and communities would be enhanced and the interconnectedness necessary to a healthy democracy would be encouraged.

Ivey’s systemic orientation to arts and culture was not unique. A little over a quarter of a century earlier Kavolis (1973) described America’s arts and cultural heritage as an extensive network through which children, youth, and adults could engage with art. This network included educational institutions as well as community arts centers, museums, churches, and health care facilities among many others. Becker’s (1984) Art Worlds amplified Kavolis’ overview by describing in detail the cooperative networks required for the production and appreciation of fine art, multimedia, folk art, and craft among other forms. In 1997 The American Assembly (2007) produced a report on the arts in American life. Reiterating the findings of Kavolis (1973) and Becker (1984), the Assembly described an extensive and inclusive arts and cultural sector existing across, and within, not-for-profits, for-profits, and volunteer or informal organizations. The Assembly affirmed the interdependence of these sectors and resisted “conventional categories of high and low, fine and folk, professional and amateur, pop and classic” (p. 1). Integral to the public purpose of the arts, according to the Assembly, was education.

Deborah B. Reeve’s (2007) “From the Director” column in the December 2007 edition of the NAEA News reinforces a view of art education consistent
with the systemic and proactive orientation to the arts and culture exemplified by the sources cited here. Also significant to Reeve’s December 2007 column was its emphasis on the importance of research. I anticipate that there will be some debate by scholars in the field about Reeve’s emphasis on an “evidence based practice” (EBP) orientation and its philosophical approach to knowledge, method for generating knowledge, and the socio–cultural-political complexities in which any practice occurs. Such debate is integral to the learning community that Reeve believes the NAEA to be. However, there is no doubt that Reeve, in her position as Executive Director of the NAEA, understands not only the importance of research to the field, but also that research can “drive the change that will foster even greater strides in ensuring a quality education for all of our nation’s young people” (p. 3). She challenges the membership of the NAEA “to expand, enhance and leverage our organizational research and knowledge-transfer capabilities” (p. 3). Reeve specifically mentions superintendents’ offices, state departments of education, and other professional associations. She is forceful in articulating that it is only by recognizing and working within a larger system that change can occur. In my view, this larger system must be as broad based as that described by the American Assembly (2007).

Scholars associated with the NAEA have a history of exploring and embracing a systemic orientation to the plethora of cultural forms available for study. The vigorous discussion about visual and material culture now taking place exemplifies current thinking in this regard. In addition, readers need to look no further than this issue of the journal to witness other examples of this occurrence. Art education scholars have also been diligent in examining scholarship from outside of the field and considering the implications of that scholarship for art education. Again, the articles in this issue of the journal exemplify the facility with which this is occurring.

Where I think additional attention needs to be given is to those other venues beyond preK-12 public education, as described by the American Assembly (2007), where learning about the arts occurs. Degge (1987), writing in this journal two decades ago, admonished the field of Art Education for ignoring the art education experiences that children, youth, and adults were receiving outside of the schools. She offered the beginnings of a corrective by systematically looking at the “professional preparation, perceptions, career aspirations, instructional aims and practices” of those teaching art in community based settings (p.164).

Degge’s (1987) observation continues to be accurate. While art education, as it occurs in museums, does receive some attention in this journal, very few of the manuscripts submitted and published attend specifically to the many other places in which art education occurs within the arts and culture sector. Few manuscripts submitted and published attend to a lifelong learning perspective within the sector. This is unfortunate because there are very few articles published in any academic journal, associated with any
EDITORIAL: The Arts and Cultural Sector, Research, and Art Education

field or discipline, that routinely address art education as it occurs within the larger arts and cultural sector. Although some organizations, such as Americans for the Arts, have a robust research agenda, this research does not undergo the rigors of a masked review process prior to publication in an independent forum.

I can only speculate about the reasons for the narrowness of the arts and cultural sector being addressed in the manuscripts submitted to this journal. One reason may be that most of those who submit to this journal are primarily associated with academic units providing inservice and preservice education to people who will be certified as public school educators. Many of those who submit manuscripts to this journal are also members of the NAEA. The NAEA membership has been historically largely composed of people with a primary interest in preK-12 art education. In addition, the professional associations for those interested in, for example, community arts, are not academically oriented in the way that the NAEA is. The preparation of community arts educators is not institutionalized within higher education as is K-12 teacher preparation and curriculum development.

Ivey, in his capacity as Director of the Curb Center for Art, Enterprise, and Public Policy at Vanderbilt University, continues to explore, define, and critique the arts and cultural sector. In an article originally published in the Chronicle for Higher Education, Ivey (2007), like Reeve (2007), wrote about the importance of research to shaping the future of the cultural landscape. He cites the need for research that assists in understanding the systems that support the arts and culture, models for the preparation and cultivation of people who participate in the sector, the forces that limit innovation, the forces that limit participation, and the relationship between the arts and culture and the public interest. As the NAEA and its membership become more active within the larger coalition of national arts and cultural organizations advocating for arts education, I can imagine Studies in Art Education simultaneously becoming a masked review research journal contributing broadly to foundational research associated with those many venues in which people of all ages participate in, and learn about, the arts and culture.

References
Ivey, B. (October 22, 1999). Keynote address. American Folklore Society Conference, Memphis, TN.


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