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TEACHING, LEADERSHIP,
AND CURRICULUM STUDIES

IMAGINATIONS OF DEMOCRACY: THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF ARTISTS
ENGAGED IN SOCIAL CHANGE (276 pp.)

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The purpose of this study was to examine the nature of the experiences of teacher / artists who engage in art making with social change as the end-in-view. Building on Dewey's notion of educative experience (1938) and art as experience (1934), the study illuminates particular experiences of personal and social transformation through this way of working. Although considerable theorizing has explored the relationship between art making and social change, this study explores this theorizing as it applies to teacher / artists.

Through qualitative methodologies of narrative and phenomenological analysis, data from field observations and participant interviews were coded for narrative constructions and then a narrative for each participant was constructed from the data. Next, phenomenological analysis revealed themes that were confirmed and further developed in the focus group session.

Findings of the study indicated the following integrated categories of experiential transformation at both personal and social levels: mind, body, and spirit. Within these categories, the data revealed the significance of embodied knowing, physical presence, identity and voice, finding locations of memory and awareness, cross-difference dialogue, spiritual presence and emergent working, finding guidance concerning purpose and truth making, sustenance and nurture, as well as pain and loss.

Implications for this study include further consideration of the nature of the experiences provided for students as well as the entire community of learners with regard to experiences with the arts. Epistemological and ontological positions allowing for experiences with the arts as a means to gain understanding and to seek truth might provide a means by which teachers might develop sophisticated educational artistry. Implications for further research include exploring art making as a dialogic experience, especially in cross-difference dialogue. Exploration of research protocol among arts based researchers might reveal means by which data is gathered and analyzed so that it might become more consistent with arts informed practice. Further research is implied for the development of educational artistry through experiences with art.