

CCT692

Processes of Research & Engagement

PHASES OF RESEARCH & ENGAGEMENT

Examples of Student work from previous years

A. Overall vision

- Six examples of project descriptions. Note: These are revised versions—Expect your initial version to need revision.

Revised project thesis question and description

Researchable Question: *What does it mean to have found your personal center of imagination and what can be done to facilitate maintaining this type of mindset?*

This summer I devoted my free time to creative writing. It was a struggle from the beginning to the end. Wrestling with plots, characters, details, questions, perspectives, and techniques made creative writing an endeavor more difficult than I had expected. But towards the end of the summer I felt like I made a breakthrough: I found my center of imagination and words began to flow easily. The words were flashing across my laptop, images flashing in my mind's eye, scenes acted out in my head. As I sat in front of my laptop during these sessions I felt like I was beside myself. I was speaking in a voice that had been silenced long ago by external forces. The experience of letting out this creative capability was invigorating and rather emotional. It is this feeling, this moment of epiphany, this inspiration, this "being in the zone" is what I wish to center my initial project inquiry around:

- What is this experience all about?
- What are its effects on the person and his or her work?
- What can be done to stay in this center of imagination?

In my initial research I have found sparse information directly addressing this topic. It's strange, in my opinion, that such a profound part of an artist's experience has not been individually focused upon more. There is a massive potential of insight to be gained regarding the nature of creativity within this question. And since this has not been studied in detail I feel like I have something to contribute. Very exciting.

One of the few figures who *has* dedicated much study on this specific aspect of creativity is Gaston Bachelard. He was a French scientist turned philosopher from the nineteenth/twentieth century. His ideas are significant because he based many of his ideas on human perception upon the powers of imagination. Bachelard also acknowledged the significant input emotions have on human perception.

I intend to further study Bachelard's ideas as a beginning to my own inquiry into the topic. I will also be looking for more thought on the topic, allowing my question to morph when necessary.

AUDIENCE OF MY INQUIRY:

Those people who are frustrated while attempting to be fully invested in the creative process. My audience is whoever have tried but failed to maintain focus on being a creative person. The range of demographics will be broad because I believe the appeal of creativity is universal among all positions in life.

PURPOSE OF MY INQUIRY:

Personally—so I can be a more fluid creative writer and so I can maintain a more creative perspective on my life and work.

Generally—to provide more public knowledge over the creative process and its beneficial effects on a person's psyche and their work.

Thesis Question & Statement:

How can I create an argument for content-based/enriched middle school foreign language instruction—supported by research in language acquisition and second language instruction—which convinces teachers to redesign curricula and teaching methods?

Statement:

Large numbers of American school children study a second language beginning in middle school or in high school, yet most of them complete their language study and cannot communicate in that language. This fact should be shocking to foreign language professionals, yet while we write and publish research for journals, we have effected little substantive change in the classroom; our students continue to complete four or more years of study without becoming proficient in the language.

In the last twenty years or so there has been a lot of research in linguistics and language acquisition. This research has led the way for research in second language instruction and has provided an opportunity for foreign language teachers to reflect on their practice and rethink their curricula. Research clearly demonstrates that students develop proficiency in a second language when the language instruction occurs within a meaningful context. A meaningful context is one that holds a level of interest for students and has relevance to their lives and their experiences. Disconnected themes like Marta and Jose go to the beach are ineffective for building proficiency because they don't provide students with the possibility of communicative tasks that are meaningful to them. On the other hand, a curriculum designed around students' eating habits provides students with a meaningful context because it is real. I want my research project to empower me and my school (I think at this point it is unrealistic to hope to effect wider-spread change) to begin to redesign our foreign language curriculum.

Harriet R. Griffin
Project Overview
November 1, 1999

Developing Writing Workshops for the Empowerment of Low-Income Women

The focus of the project will be on the importance of developing supportive communities for both leaders and participants of a Writing Workshop for low-income women. Close attention will be paid to the elements necessary for sustaining writing communities that persist through their careful attention to developing horizontal relationships in a supportive environment. Membership in a writing group of leaders trained by Pat Schneider will provide for the on-going support community needed to transfer successful AWAI writing workshop methods to low-income women. Positive feedback initiated by responses to "What did you remember?" and "What did you like?" will serve to encourage women to keep on writing. Writing and discovering voice will lead women to build their writing skills and to seek further education out of poverty.

A generic grant proposal for Writing Workshops for Low-Income Women will further summarize and define the problems, goals, and strategies for such a program. Personnel, timelines, and subsequent evaluations will also be discussed. Specific places for a Writing Workshop program will likely be more carefully explored after the completion of this part of my intended project.

"The construction of Down Syndrome as a maternal problem"
Peter Taylor

When women who would like to be mothers enter their thirties childless they hear a biological clock ticking. Menopause is usually many years off; it is the increased incidence with age of many certain genetic abnormalities that set's the clock's alarm. The routinization of amniocentesis and development of other prenatal diagnostic tests builds on such concerns. Together with the selective abortions that usually follow a "positive" diagnosis of genetic condition in the fetus, these technologies are providing a new power over the types of individuals which may be born. Of course, we might respond differently to abnormalities associated with genetic conditions, by enhancing the community and social supports given to differently abled and sick individuals. My concerns about the consequences for society in emphasizing the "genetic purification" route motivates this investigative research project into people's understanding of and social policy regarding the major genetic condition diagnosed pre-natally, Down Syndrome (DS).

DS refers to a suite of physical conditions of variable severity resulting from the individual bearing three, rather than the normal two chromosome 21s. The incidence of DS is known to rise with age at birth of the mother. Several years ago it occurred to me that a DS child might equally well have obtained its extra chromosome from the father. Yet I hadn't heard any mention of a father's biological clock. In this research project I propose first to ascertain what is known about the paternal contribution to trisomy 21 and its age-dependency, and how this is known. Then I want to investigate the history of DS research to see whether any differential contribution of fathers and mothers was known when the publicization of DS relationship to maternal age wound up the women's biological clock.

By examining the way responsibility for a genetic condition is assigned in the case of DS, I hope to have illuminated an issue of more general interest given that social responses and genetic purification are vying for our imagination, attention, funding and other resources.

General areas

Genetic purification
Routinization of amniocentesis
Main case: Down syndrome (Trisomy 21)

Specific questions to investigate

1. What is the incidence of DS fetuses in the USA & other countries?
2. How does this vary by maternal age?
3. How does this vary by paternal age? If unknown, why?
4. When were figures first collected for DS vs. age of mother?
5. What's the relative contribution of males and females to trisomy 21?
6. What's the science used to establish this?
7. Who did this science and how recently?
8. Who decides today what data should be collected?

Suzanne M. Clark
CCT 698 - fall 2000
Due: 10-2
Revision

Thesis Question:

Can the Asian healing arts of tai chi, chi gung and ba gua play a role in performing arts medicine as therapy for a musician's recovery from an overuse injury and/or be used for prevention of such injuries?

Thesis Statement:

Performing arts medicine has developed in recent years as an answer to the unrelenting injuries that musicians face. Across the globe, various institutions have formed organized networks for distribution of information to musicians and the professionals who treat them. Related clinics and practitioners provide specialized services, such as nutritional therapy, neurological assessment and testing, acupuncture, laser therapy, homeopathy, muscular therapy, physical therapy, and chiropractic care as treatment for playing injuries.

Despite the services available, many musicians do not recover fully, and some not at all, from their debilitating injury. Unfortunately, overuse injuries not only interrupt or even displace a career, but often they inhibit everyday life due to their penetrating and relentless nature.

Simple tasks like combing one's hair, washing dishes, taking out the garbage, buttoning shirts, or picking up a child are no longer within an injured person's ability. Since many musicians feel their playing is their "true voice", the sudden onset of musical speechlessness can be disturbing on a deeper level. The loss of one's career, autonomy and emotional expression can be devastating.

Since the available treatments may not cure the problem, perhaps one needs to consider a different approach to healing. In China, the Asian healing arts are used as prevention and treatment for serious diseases, such as cancer and arthritis. How do these therapies work and could they fill in the gaps that Western medicine and alternative therapies have not been able to fill? My project will look at the healing arts on a physiological level as well as emotional, mental and spiritual. They will be viewed not only in contrast to the therapies used in performing arts medicine for healing overuse injuries, but also as a foundation to support and enhance those therapies. Perhaps the missing link between a limited, painful music career and its restoration will be found.

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