CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In the visual arts, art foundations represents a common practice in higher education of baseline requirements for bachelor's degrees. Delivered in the first year of college instruction for art, design, and art education majors, these introductory courses are meant to train students to use and master fundamental visual and technical skills when creating and critiquing artwork. These ideas are generally rooted in the concept of formalism, a "twentieth-century theory of art that privileges considerations of compositional elements and principles above all else: Subject matter, narrative, symbolism, cultural, political and religious references are deemed distracting, irrelevant, and to be ignored" (Barrett, 2011, p. 236). Thus, from a formalist perspective, visual qualities of art are universal, discoverable, and applicable to all visual art, regardless of culture and time-period. Therefore, they offer great appeal as a series of entry level courses to the discipline of visual art.

Formalism was heavily influenced by well-known early 20th century art critics Clive Bell and Roger Fry. Bell (1913) and Fry (1909) contended that viewers' aesthetic experiences occur only when their minds are unencumbered by reality, where, unhinged by the drudgery of daily life, the mind may freely open to an emotional sensibility, which fosters aesthetic experiences. The life of the artist and the viewer, the story of the work, the cultural connectivity, or the visual narrative is irrelevant and is, in fact, distracting from the artwork itself. Only through arranging the visual qualities of art in specific, universally pleasing ways can one's imagination experience the power of the true aesthetic experience. Artists must learn and apply these visual rules to their works to reach their singular purpose of using these

principles correctly to elevate the viewers' emotions to a heightened state of perception. All art, no matter what culture or time-period, can be analyzed according to these visual qualities, often referred to as the elements and principles of design (Bell; Fry).

As historian Arthur Efland (1987) explains in his landmark study of the curricular evolution of art education, in 1919, Germany's Bauhaus School of Design formalized college freshman level curriculum based in part on the formalist ideal that compositional excellence and technical skills are basic and universal in visual art. The Bauhaus's "first year course" curriculum focused on repeatedly practicing exercises to strengthen the art students' mastery of these visual and technical skills. Once teachers from the Bauhaus School, forced out of Germany by the Nazi regime, relocated to faculty positions in the United States, this curriculum gained widespread popularity in college art programs. The term *foundations* was ultimately adopted by college art departments to reference the idea that this curriculum teaches aspiring artists the fundamental basic universals needed to effectively master their craft. Almost 100 years later, first-year art students continue to learn these universal compositional and technical skills, demonstrating the firmly rooted influence of formalism on college art foundations curricula.

Formalism has been critiqued for purposely divorcing art from daily life and denying the relevance of subject matter and cultural context on art. For example, leaders and scholars in the field of art education argue that "the purpose for teaching art is to contribute to the understanding of the social and cultural landscape that all individuals inhabit" (Efland, Freedman, & Stuhr, 1996, p. 2). Furthermore, the National Art Education Association's (NAEA, 2013/14) standards for art teacher preparation agree that teacher education programs

in the visual arts should teach teachers how to help students, "Synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experiences to make art" (Anchor Statement #10), and "Relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural and historical context to deepen understanding" (National Visual Arts Standards, 2014). Within this context based conception of art education, art is intrinsically tied to the time it is created, the culture it is within, and the experience of the artist or community from which it comes. The formalist model firmly ignores experience, context, and culturally imbedded meanings within art works and can thus fail to address the needs of today's art students who tend to prefer to view the world through personal and social contexts to contribute relevant ideas to our culture. If instruction in the visual arts is to be relevant to a broad number of students, and not an arcane set of skills that only a select few have the interest to master, then art foundations practitioners cannot continue supporting a curriculum that disconnects art from lived experiences. To remain relevant to contemporary students, art foundations curriculum must evolve to include a multiplicity of perspectives, aesthetic judgments, varied forms, and contextual meanings.

While some colleges have taken steps to re-imagine the foundations curriculum, it is unclear how prevalent these changes are. Further, there is little research on the extent of the impact that formalism, or other art education theories, has on the current foundations curriculum. The lingering impact of formalism is anecdotal. This study seeks to fill this gap in research through an examination of written data gained by gathering foundations course descriptions. The purpose of this study was to compare foundations course descriptions among state and private art colleges in the U.S. to examine evidence of art theories within written course curriculum. This study resulted in an empirical research foundation and theoretical

framework for an integrated, postmodern approach to art foundations written curriculum in higher education art programs. Results of this study provide a framework that incorporates an updated foundations curriculum reflective of postmodern art and theory on which future researchers may build.

Contemporary Context

The Bauhaus model promoted formalist exercises intended to instill strategies for art students to construct and critique compositions based on universally accepted visual qualities (Dockery & Quinn, 2007; Efland, 1987; Freedman, 2003; Gude, 2004; Tavin, Kushins, & Elniski, 2007). Contextual, narrative, and varying perspectives of compositional excellence are excluded in the model, contributing to its critique. For example, as Freedman (2003) wrote,

> The application of formalism in curriculum present(s) a dualistic problem….it close(s) off symbolic interpretation as a critical foundation of art education. It became the definition of aesthetics in education and in the process reduced the importance of social and cultural meanings of art in education. (p. 31)

Consequently, the implication is that one single, universal method of visual design is correct and that various other ways of interpreting art go unacknowledged. This idea of singular meaning lay in contrast to postmodernism, in which Freedman (2003) further noted that

> an important message of postmodernism for general education and art education is that teachers should make their students aware of the many layers of interpretation that exist, that continual flux influences and shapes understanding, and that this flexibility of knowledge is vital because it enables creative thought. Irony, metaphor, and double-coding, given attention in postmodernism, could not exist without the wealth of possible interpretations that language and other forms of communication provide. (p. 46)

When a singular framework for making and creating art is taught through formalist curriculum, multiple voices remain silent, rendering curriculum undemocratic and elitist. The consequence is that this curriculum tacitly teaches students that in visual art only one answer is correct. While this concept of a right answer in art may appeal to some in our time of standards based testing, arguably the value of the arts is that it demonstrates different ways of thinking and problem solving (Eisner, 2002). Therefore, progressive art educators advocate for multiplicity of ideas and creative practice inspired by ensuring that students may view and create from multiple viewpoints. Notions of an ideal art form “are historically conditioned, ideological, and subject to argument” (Duncum, 1990, p. 207).

In K-12 art education, a scientific (right answer), skill-based approach to art teaching marked a trend in art teacher education for pre-service art teachers in the middle part of the twentieth century. In a model akin to formalism in its scientific, universalist underpinnings, noted Art Education researcher and professor, Manuel Barkan (1966), argued that art education curriculum should focus on combining artistic, critical and historical perspectives, much like the disciplines of math and science (Efland, 1987). This discipline-oriented movement lost force during the 1970s, but gained popularity in the 1980s in art teacher preparation programs because of declining test scores throughout the U.S. (Efland et al., 1996).

With the publication of *A Nation at Risk* (National Commission on Excellence, 1983), the government called on educators to toughen standards in schools to compete with growing technological advancement overseas. Thus, an effort to systematize art in schools to reflect discipline standards found a home in Disciplined-Based Art Education (DBAE; Dobbs, 1992). Lesson plans focused on four components: art history, art production, art criticism, and

aesthetics. Funded by the J. Paul Getty Trust, DBAE promoted a style similar to formalism through standardized stages of development and the establishment of universally accepted art elements. The goal of DBAE was to induct learners into the discipline, or "a component of the literate culture" (Schiro, 2013, p. 19). DBAE supported viewing art education as a discipline, or, "a set of characteristic procedures and ways of working that facilitate exploration and inquiry" (Dobbs, 1992, p. 3). Disciplines were defined by three commonalities: "a recognized body of knowledge or content; a community of scholars who study the discipline; and a set of characteristic procedures and ways of working that facilitate exploration and inquiry" (p. 3). Proponents of the model asserted that "these disciplines of art provide knowledge, skills, and understanding that enable students to have a broad and rich experience with works of art" (p. 9). Curriculum structures included "sequential organization, the centrality of works of art, a balanced integration of content from all four disciplines, and organization of materials" (p. 3). By structuring art education to mirror frameworks commonly associated with math and science, art became universalized. In this hierarchical approach to curriculum, students are exposed to art through what educators allow to be visible, rendering a variety of perspectives invisible, and unexplored. In this manner, DBAE is linked to formalism.

Critics of DBAE have rallied against this model since its inception for its undercurrent of conservative ideology and the "tendency to see art education as the study of past cultural achievements certified by credentialed experts" (Efland, 1987, p. 254). Art education scholars argued for the inclusion of visual and popular culture in art education, and protested the advancement of DBAE, viewed as a systemized set of visual ideals based on a one-sided conception of art, disconnected to students' lives (Balengee-Morris & Stuhr, 2001; Carpenter &

Tavin, 2010; Duncum, 1990, 2002; Efland, 1987, 2004; Efland et al., 1996; Freedman, 2003; Freedman & Wood, 1999; Tavin et al., 2007). Duncum (1990) wrote, "The assertion of common-sense, self-evident, ideal standards must give way to an acknowledgment that standards are historically conditioned, ideological, and subject to argument" (p. 207). Visual Culture scholars argued that combining the study of the fine and popular arts are equally necessary locations for art education and should further be promoted in college art foundations.

While art education fell victim to this standardization, a movement toward a more postmodern approach to teaching art became an alternative. As Art Education Professor Kerry Freedman (2003) recounted, "In the 1980s, critical social theory became part of the discourse of art education and fueled the growth of social perspectives of the field that lead to broader conceptions of teaching visual culture" (p. 7). As a result, art educators supported curriculum that included the everyday visual and popular culture experiences of students as sites for learning. This type of curriculum supports the development of contemporary artists. Artists of today are not singularly influenced by Modernism, but instead they reflect on multiple subjects, including large and globally relevant stories, small personal narratives, political ideology, and problems of oppression. Artists are no longer bound by convention or specific visual rules or theories that confine subject matter, remove cultural stories, or ignore political stances. Instead, artists allow their work to carry multiple meanings. In fact, "in postmodern art, different interpretations may result from deliberate use of contradiction, irony, metaphor, and ambiguity, also called double-coding." (Efland et al., 1996, p. 40).

Efland et al. (1996) contended that postmodernism is a theory of art and society that supports art as a document of a culture, continually in flux, a marker of the conditions and

contexts in which it is created, and a generator of creativity. Barrett (2011) furthered the argument against formalism in curriculum by defining postmodern art theory as

> a condition of loosely connected ideas that assert that art and aesthetics cannot be separated from social, ethical, and political worlds. Postmodernism critiques Modernism and all its tenets, such as the possibility of originality, the uniqueness of the artist, and distinctions between 'high art' and 'low art' and rejects Formalism as a theory of art. (p. 239)

Applied to art and art education curriculum, postmodernism is inherently democratic, exposing art to multiple interpretations. In a postmodern framework, "aesthetic discussions analyze art as a method of revealing characteristics of a culture" (Efland et al., 1996, p. 38). Students are encouraged to view, create, and analyze art in connection to the context of its production, the history it reveals, and the multiple readings and interpretations imbedded in the work. A postmodern art education deconstructs universalized visual standards, revealing the underlying power structures and multiple meanings associated with art forms (Duncum, 1990, 2002; Efland et al., 1996). This idea lies opposite to the singular concept of universally pleasing visual compositions devoid of subject or context specific narratives supported by formalist theories.

Postmodern art education includes the study of visual culture. Freedman (2003) defined visual culture art education as encompassing all visual forms, not exclusively those categorized as fine art, but including traditional fine arts as well as the popular arts. Freedman argued that our notion of the aesthetic manifests in a multitude of forms ranging from the visual culture of our everyday encounters to those in fine art and includes the little narrative, the power-knowledge link, deconstruction, and double-coding.

The little narrative applied to postmodern curriculum suggests that curriculum focuses on smaller snapshots of a theme or idea (Efland et al., 1996, p. 92). The philosopher Jean-Francois Lyotard influenced the development of the little narrative when he affirmed that part of the condition of modernism is the simplistic categorization of an epoch in time, creating meta-narratives that influence and simplify our conception of conditions of the past (Efland et al., 1996, p. 92). According to Efland et al. (1996), "large, epoch-driven narratives can create an exclusionary curriculum, but, a curriculum built on the idea of little narratives could deal with several stories, each one emphasizing a different content" (p. 87).

The French philosopher Michel Foucault believed that those controlling institutions also control what we know (Foucault, 1979). Applied to curriculum it follows that those in positions of power influence what we teach, linking power to knowledge. As applied to art teaching, "postmodern teachers need not impose an aesthetic on students in ways that past generations were taught about 'good design' and the principles that supposedly make it good" (Efland et al., 1996, p. 101). This idea exemplifies the power-knowledge link. Instead of teaching art through one conception of visual qualities, the art teacher can expose students to a multitude of ideas and aesthetic conceptions.. As a result, power is overturned and students may develop their own ideas about art and visual qualities.

The French philosopher Jacques Derrida introduced the term *deconstruction*. From a postmodern curriculum perspective, conflicting information in a work of art can show that many meanings can all be correct (Efland et al., 1996). The elements and principles of design, taught as if they are fact suggests that it is the only way to create meaning.

Efland et al. (1996) attributes the terms ‘double-coding’ to Charles Jenks, who “identified ‘double-coding’ as the principle characteristic that distinguishes postmodern objects from the modern” (p. 108). This characteristic is a condition in which postmodern principles reside with modern ideas, reflecting multiple messages and “codes” (Efland et al., p. 112).

More recently, Siegesmund (2013) suggested that the curricular goals of art education can transform from training in a discipline to a form of thought that allows for civic engagement. Although K-12 art education has worked to evolve toward this postmodern approach, art foundations programs in higher education appear to have remained virtually unchanged. They are rarely studied, and tend to keep art away from our daily visual experiences in a formal, fixed, elite, separate, universalist realm.

Connecting curriculum to art students’ personal histories supports an evolution of creativity and visual investigation that artists need. In contrast, a curriculum devoid of any personal connections to students’ lives or interests supports a passive student and a lack of learning (Pinar, 2012). Art education scholars have continuously argued for curriculum connected to the lives of students through the inclusion of visual and popular culture, protesting the proliferation of a systemized set of visual ideals based on a one-sided conception of art (Ballengee-Morris & Stuhr, 2001; Carpenter & Tavin, 2010; Duncum, 1990, 2002; Efland, 1987, 2004; Efland et al., 1996; Freedman, 2003; Freedman & Wood, 1999; Gude, 2004, 2007; Tavin et al., 2007). When a curriculum implies that only one way of seeing the world is relevant and is presented as a universal truth, students are further divorced from the possibility that more perspectives exist, that their personal perspective is as valid as any other, and that the multiplicity of perspectives represent the democratic condition.

Authentic artistic inquiry is a result of experiences and interactions with the world (Dewey, 1934). To restrict students of opportunities to examine their personal experiences and interests to inform art making is to deny them of their ability to think critically about their lives and to create work that reflects their personal beliefs, empowering and challenging viewers in similar reflections. Meaningful knowledge construction occurs through students' personal connections with subject matter and connectivity to their interests, values, and communities. As Dewey (1929) believed that the experiences of the students, and not subject matter, should drive curriculum. Dewey (1902) implored educators to locate students' experiences as central and vital to curriculum, where it is not fixed and formal but is fluid and adaptable to the way students experience and interact with the world.

As discussed previously, postmodern curriculum, inclusive of students' own perspectives and reflective of their interests and life experiences, engages students in the process of learning. For artists, creativity is further engendered. In her book studying the nature of creativity in schools, Anna Craft (2006), Senior Lecturer in Education at The Open University, stated, "facilitating the evolution, expression and application of children's own ideas forms the heart of 'creative learning', which, it is proposed, engages children powerfully in knowledge production" (p. 55). Because written curriculum, once enacted in the classroom is mediated by all within a class, it is an inherently political activity. What we choose to leave out of curriculum teaches students what we value as a society. Discounting students' own interests in curriculum development not only creates a fixed environment, stifling creativity, but it also de-values students' affections and invalidates their ideas, resulting in disempowered apathetic students ill equipped to succeed in arts related practice or to practice thinking

democratically. Unfortunately, the formalist foundations framework serves as an example of a curriculum with little connection to students' interests.

Personal Experience

As a professional artist, former foundations faculty member, and foundations department chair, my experiences are relevant to the context of this study. From a young age, I enjoyed all aspects of two-dimensional art and was encouraged by my mother, an artist, and my elementary art teacher to keep practicing. In sixth grade, after years of spotty attendance and difficulty in class because of instability at home, I was given permission to leave the classroom and use the art room any time I wanted, provided my class work was complete. My attendance improved because of this agreement; I was motivated to complete my class work, and I suffered less anxiety overall through arts practice. At this young age, I realized the importance of art to me personally, as it was always there to meet me where I was and, with the support of my mother and elementary art teacher, creating art gave me the freedom to explore darker places I was afraid to discuss in words.

I attended a large, middle class suburban high school in the late 1980s. Art course offerings included commercial art, photography, and painting. I was very excited to take a freshman level art course; however, a teacher who focused on a single talented student, at the expense of the remaining class members, discouraged me from taking classes in my sophomore and junior years. Nonetheless, I took advanced painting as a senior. I was bored, as the curriculum, much like my freshman year experience, focused on creating work that exactly copied the work of famous artists or replicated a well-known period in art. I created a

pointillism landscape, illustrated a cubist self-portrait, and painted a Georgia O'Keefe style cactus flower. I loved art history, but I was not encouraged to find my personal voice, nor was I given demonstrations or instructions on how to use the materials or how to create strong compositions. I applied to art colleges on my own without the help of my art teacher, making mistakes along the way as well as beginning and then dropping out of an open enrollment art college in San Francisco.

Thereafter, I was admitted to the University of the Arts in Philadelphia, where I completed my Bachelor of Fine Arts (BFA) in painting and drawing, and my Master of Art Teaching (MAT) in Visual Art Teaching. I thrived in the foundations year, finally feeling as if I were learning something useful to my practice. The two semester courses consisted of Two-Dimensional Design, Observational Drawing, and Three-Dimensional Design. While projects focused solely on visual characteristics, composition, and use of materials, I felt more confident as my foundations teachers taught and demonstrated techniques and visual qualities I had never understood. I also took the required two semesters of Modernism, where I learned art's purpose was to elevate the emotions of the viewer to an aesthetic experience, allowing them to escape into the imagined worlds that only art can provide. I did not understand that this was just one perspective of art's purpose, but believed it to be true since it was presented as fact. Although I was unsure how the non-objective artwork and the color exercises I created would inspire such viewer experiences, I was excited to move forward with a better understanding and greater confidence in my technical skills when I declared my major.

During my sophomore painting class, I was suddenly challenged to come up with more thematic work based on my own research into various concepts and ideas. I did not know

where to begin, and I felt lost and confused, often skipping classes. I was told to sketch in my sketchbook and paint what I wanted. I turned toward the visual techniques and skills I learned in foundations, but my professors told me to disregard what I learned and let my work reflect meaning. One professor encouraged me to add moose (the animal) and Cheerios to my drawings, although I had never mentioned an interest in either subject. I did not understand at the time that perhaps he was pushing me to appropriate popular elements into my drawing, but I had no context or conception for this. I came to sophomore year with the belief, fostered by my professors, that the elements and principles of design were facts. I did not think there were multiple or alternative elements and principles, I had not considered non-Western views, and I had never been encouraged to create work that included narrative elements, such as perhaps the combination of moose and Cheerios. I felt as if I was trying to reach an unspoken expectation from my professors, but I had no idea what that was. I continued feeling lost throughout the rest of my undergraduate years. In my senior thesis review panel, the five members argued with each other, in my presence, about the fact that I had brought poems in from my youth and matched them up with my paintings. They said my work could not be tied to a time or place. I did not understand what they meant, as I had been encouraged to create work meant to elevate viewers out of their own lives and transport them into an imaginative realm. I felt like a failure at graduation, and for years after I abandoned my work.

None of my art professors understood how to encourage my artistic voice. I knew this was poor teaching, and when I entered the Master’s in Teaching program my suspicions were confirmed. I was driven by the fact that the only strong teachers I had for art had been my elementary art teacher and my foundations teachers. My elementary art teacher encouraged

personal and conceptual growth, and my foundations teachers taught me how to build my skills with materials and the elements and principles of design. I had not yet experienced them integrated; however, I knew that no matter what level of education art is being taught, teachers needed to foster student learning by clarifying expectations and techniques and encouraging the integration of skillful use of materials, visual qualities, and conceptual growth. These expectations needed to be reflected, and clearly explained, in course descriptions. I wondered why this was not part of my own experience.

Later in life, I left K-12 and became a foundations teacher myself, where I found that my art teacher education training program gave me the skills to build curriculum. In teaching Color Theory and Fundamentals of Design, I taught the elements and principles of composition I had learned in my own foundations experience. I quickly found that students needed a personal reason to care about these visual principles, so I created projects focused on concepts and themes students were interested in, while continuing to teach skill-building and the elements and principles of design. Teaching foundations re-inspired my arts practice, and I began to understand how to use these visual qualities in my own work. As time went on, I noticed students entering my courses with various art skills. Some could not read a ruler to measure and create a layout, while other students were well beyond understanding how to use the elements and principles of design since they had done so throughout high school. I also noticed the difference between my style of teaching and those of my colleagues. Some had no knowledge or inclination to design curriculum or revise projects to incorporate student ideas. Some believed their jobs were to weed students out before they reached sophomore year. I

remembered what it was like feeling lost and feeling like my professors did not believe in me, so I worked to meet each student where he/she was.

I eventually led a foundations department. In my administration of the curriculum I saw some great teachers who had gained teaching skills by trial and error, without formal training, but through many years of personal experiences. I also found others who taught to serve their own artistic ambitions. I found teachers who cared deeply for their students and fervently believed it was important the students memorize what the elements and principles of design were without integrating them into more conceptually driven work. I tried to develop all teachers best I could.

I entered the doctoral program at Northern Illinois University (NIU) where I found, for the first time, theories of curriculum based on the marriage of skill and concept. I tried incorporating these ideas into faculty development at the art college where I taught. Still, some faculty felt that students needed to build skills before concepts were introduced, so they continued teaching students to create non-objective works driven by demonstrating their understanding of specific art elements. The problem was that students who had already learned these principles were bored and those who needed to learn them did not understand why they should without some type of personal or social connection to the work. Our department often heard from upper level faculty that students did not know how to create strong compositions. I thought the answer was clear—that there was rarely integration of skillful use of visual qualities and conceptual work in their foundations year. Eventually, I went back to teaching foundations, where I tried incorporating visual and technical skill building with concept-driven projects.

I began looking back on my own foundations experience with a more critical eye. What had been the point of teaching me to improve my technical skills and create good compositions if they did not communicate anything? Why did my foundations teachers not prepare me to use these visual and technical skills to communicate about and question the world around me through my art? Why, 20 years later, did this situation seem unchanged? Plus, who cares if you know the skills unless you say something with them? Conversely, how can you get your visual message across if your skills and compositions are poor, distracting from the meaning of the work? I realized that although my foundations professors taught me much, I lacked any understanding of how to integrate these qualities into my voice as an artist. I finally understood what I had missed throughout the rest of art school. I wondered how many other students were like me. Artists are integral to the growth of society, both economically and culturally (Pink, 2006). When we rob students of their artistic voice and teach them that their ideas are irrelevant, we rob them and society from true democratic practice. When we ignore contextual questions in teaching art, we lessen the likelihood of preparing future artists to contribute relevant and culturally shifting ideas to the world. These questions led me to embark on this study. To revise the foundations curriculum, we need research into the theories underlying faculty's beliefs about foundations and we need to introduce contemporary strategies of making art into teaching art at every stage.

Problem and Purpose

Traditional art foundations models promote rudimentary exercises intended to instill technical material skills and universal strategies of visual composition in aspiring artists based primarily on a formalist view of a constructed system of fundamental layout skills known as the elements and principles of design (see Wucius Wong, *Principles of Two-Dimensional Design*, 1972, and Mary Stewart, *Launching the Imagination: A Guide to Two-Dimensional Design,* 2002; see also Dockery & Quinn, 2007; Duncum, 1990, 2002; Freedman, 2003; Tavin et al., 2007). Formalism is critiqued by Freedman (2003) as "a pseudoscientific conception of aesthetics developed in the late 19th and early 20th centuries at a time when science was gaining currency as applied to all areas of life" (p. 27). This scientific approach to teaching art enforces skill building as the primary artistic goal through the creation of non-objective compositions adhering to a constructed, universalized system of visual balance, hierarchy, form, and space, devoid of context, narrative, or historical connections to the art maker.

Conceptions of the field of art foundations are changing with contemporary issues, as demonstrated by the organization Integrative Teaching International (ITI; n.d.). Created by foundations practitioners meeting and discussing foundations education at the biennial conference, Think Tank, ITI's mission promotes a reevaluation of curriculum:

> Foundations teaching can and should be an ideal conduit for familiarizing students with the competencies necessary to cultivate not only sound drawing and design skills, among others, but also critical thinking and, relatedly, contextualization practices integral to a 21st century education. While traditional Foundations classes can offer, for example, background or historical information about art objects, a lack of time in the classroom customarily prevents in-depth study, leaving students without adequate proficiencies to realize how each of their products "speaks" to the cultural context of its time. (Curzon, 2017, p. 69)

It appears that first-year college art programs continue to proliferate this formal methodology. Further, the traditional separation of subjects into silos of drawing, painting, two-dimensional (2D) and three-dimensional (3D) design does not match the blurred disciplinary lines in many art practices today (Freedman, 2003). Art's value is not solely visual, aesthetic, and one-dimensional, as the formalist model suggests, but it is social and contextual, supporting the need to study multiple art conceptions. As Efland et al. (1996) stated,

> The fundamental reason for teaching the arts is to enable students to understand the social and cultural worlds they inhabit. These worlds are representations created with the aesthetic qualities of art media. To understand how these qualities function to create meaning, students need to encounter these in their own experience with media. An art curriculum should also enable students to encounter the interpretations and understandings made by philosophers, art historians, and critics who have studied the arts in their complexity. Because these fields are interpretive in character, the statements of such scholars are not presumed true in the sense claimed for scientific representations but they are valued when they enable us to see possible worlds portrayed in the arts. (p. 73)

Contemporary aims in art education serve democratic ideals by defining art "as a form of cultural production whose point and purpose is to construct symbols of a shared reality" (Efland et al., 1996, p. 72). While art education scholars support this context-based approach to teaching art, it is unclear how or if this approach has been integrated into the college foundations curriculum. Some foundations faculty support an updated curriculum (Dockery & Quinn, 2007), but art foundations programs in higher education have not been universally revised to include contextual approaches to art theory and production for students entering the arts at the college level. We live in a postmodern time that calls for ever changing and evolving discourse, but we are still teaching foundations from a Modernist, structural perspective of one way is the right way. This signifies an historical disjunction in much of the way traditional

technical and formal based foundations curricula are written. This incongruity affects college art foundations students and their ability to assimilate these ideas into their artistic growth, and practice democratic participation and choice making in art and in life.

This gap in research demonstrates areas affecting art foundations curricula not yet explored. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to examine the impact of Modernist formalism and Postmodern art theory on written foundations curricula in the U.S. This study resulted in an empirical research foundation and theoretical framework for an integrated, postmodern approach to teaching foundations.

Research Questions and Sub-Questions

This study explored the following research question and sub-questions:

1. Do theories of art education impact art foundations curriculum?
   a. What is common content in undergraduate art foundations curriculum based on course descriptions?
   b. What similarities and differences exist among state university art foundations curriculum content and private nonprofit art foundations curriculum content based on course descriptions?
   c. What similarities and differences exist between art foundations course descriptions among four regions of the United States?

Significance of the Study

Results of this study will help higher education art foundations faculty acquire knowledge regarding art education theories underlying the content of their curriculum, so they may attempt to write and incorporate more postmodern approaches into foundations curriculum for their students. Art foundations students will also benefit from results of this study, as art students will experience a relevant, useful curriculum reflecting a more holistic and contemporary approach if faculty choose to rewrite curriculum based on the provided framework resulting from this study. This study will also help upper level higher education studio and applied art faculty and administrators connect their curriculum to a revived foundations curriculum relevant to today's art student needs.

Delimitations

Written descriptions of courses were limited to two colleges or universities a state, including the largest state university offering undergraduate art education and studio art courses with an art foundations component and the most selective private nonprofit art college in the state. The largest state college art program was chosen as representative of common state run art programs. As not every state has a privately-owned art college, this pool was limited by availability.

When locating course descriptions, the researcher excluded art history, art appreciation, and theory-based art courses devoid of art production. As not all foundations programs categorize such courses in their named foundations program, excluding these courses allowed

the researcher to view the written course descriptions with equal criteria and focused on formal, technical, and concept-driven approaches to art foundations course descriptions.

Limitations

As a massive amount of written data would need to be collected to gain a full picture of art foundations through written descriptions, the choice of the largest state college art program and the most selective private nonprofit art program per state for the analysis of written course descriptions was a limitation of this study. In narrowing the amount of data gained in this phase, the resulting data only related the status of course descriptions based on those chosen colleges and not on the entirety of art foundations courses throughout the United States. However, the resulting data will constitute a representative portion of the state of art foundations, and the impact of art education theories on written curriculum. Another limitation in this data set was the possibility that web-related information might be outdated. The researcher made every effort to collect the most current data via the internet and to use the most current information collected by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 2017) to locate the largest state run art programs and most selective private nonprofit art schools per state. As the NCES site could also be slightly inaccurate due to the nature of college reporting, this could also be a limitation.

Assumptions

It is further assumed that foundation course titles and descriptions accurately reflect current curriculum at the colleges and universities chosen for study.

Definitions

The following definitions are referred to throughout this study.

Aesthetics: In a postmodern framework, aesthetic discussions analyze art "as a method of revealing characteristics of a culture" (Efland et al., 1996, p. 38).

Art Foundations: These are freshman-level higher education art courses required by art, design, and art education college students as fundamental to their chosen degree program. An art foundations curriculum helps prepare students for their advanced coursework. Traditional art foundations programs rely heavily on formalist theory rooted in the Bauhaus School of Design in Germany in the early 20th century. The curriculum's objectives were to train the eye and senses in control, seeing and arranging through compositional strategies thought to be universally pleasing. Many current foundations programs include this model, although some have moved toward incorporating a postmodern approach that accounts for context, concept, and narrative as it relates to the culture (Dockery & Quinn, 2007).

Conceptualism: "The philosophical doctrine that universals exist only in the mind. (Freedictionary, 2012). "Conceptual art is based on the notion that the essence of art is an idea or concept that may exist distinct from, and in the absence of, an object as its representation" (Conceptual art, n.d.).

De-contextualization: A formalist quality of looking at art that "tend[s] to encourage the perception of art apart from its origins and purposes, that is, to see it only as form, rather than as having specific and special meaning for its makers and its original users" (Barrett, 2011, pp. 119-120).

Discipline-Based Art Education (DBAE): The movement in art education in the 1980s supported by J. Paul Getty in the publication *Beyond Creating: The Place for Art in America's Schools* (1984). DBAE "proposed content was to be drawn from the art studio, art criticism, and art history. To these was added a fourth discipline, the study of aesthetics, but the central idea was the familiar one of basing instruction on the representative ideas of the disciplines comprising art" (Efland, 1987, p. 254).

Formalism: Barrett (2011) defined formalism as a "twentieth-century theory of art that privileges considerations of compositional elements and principles above all else: Subject matter, narrative, symbolism, cultural, political and religious references are deemed distracting, irrelevant, and to be ignored." (p. 236). The visual qualities of art are believed to be universal in their relationship to the elements and principles of design such as line, shape, rhythm, texture, unity, and color.

Modernism:

> Cultural tendencies and movements arising from changes in Western society in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The view that traditional forms of culture are outdated. An assessment of the past as different from the modern age; a recognition of a more complex world; a challenging of traditional authorities such as reason, science, government, and God. (Barrett, 2011, p. 238)

Postmodernism:

> In art theory, a condition or loosely connected ideas that assert that art and aesthetics cannot be separated from social, ethical, and political worlds. Postmodernism critiques Modernism and all its tenets, such as the possibility of originality, the uniqueness of the artist, and distinctions between 'high art' and 'low art' and rejects Formalism as a theory of art. (Barrett, 2011, p. 239)

National Core Arts Standards: The National Art Education Association's (NAEA) document of standards that K-12 art educators may follow as a guideline for curriculum.

Visual Culture: Freedman (2003) defines visual culture as encompassing all visual forms, not exclusively those categorized as fine art, and includes traditional fine arts as well as the popular arts. The study of visual culture in an art education curriculum includes the making and studying of the visual as it reveals qualities of the culture within which it was produced, providing students with multiple understandings and perspectives in society.

Methodology

Combining qualitative and quantitative research strengthens and broadens the understanding and analysis of research problems more thoroughly than by either method alone (Creswell, 2008). As the researcher asked questions seeking to understand the impact of Modern and Postmodern theory on art foundations written curriculum, data initially resulted in words and phrases. This qualitative data were quantitized to statistically answer the research questions. Therefore, a pragmatist worldview, supporting a mixed-methods design, was most appropriate for this study as it provided a methodology tailored to the research questions. Data were located through online web searches. Methods used to collect and analyze data are further detailed in Chapter 3.

Organization of the Study

This study is presented in five chapters beginning with Chapter 1, which includes an introduction to the study, the conceptual framework, the problem and purpose statements,

research questions, definitions, and methodology. Chapter 2 explores art education and art foundations literature, including related research on curriculum structures and content. The methodology used for this study is explained in Chapter 3. Chapter 4 includes an analysis and synthesis of the data. This study concludes with a discussion of the implications of this research and suggestions for future research regarding theories impacting art foundations, including a theoretical framework of foundations curriculum on which future researchers may build.